

Intercontinental Press

combined with **Imprecor**

Vol. 17, No. 18

©1979 by Intercontinental Press

May 14, 1979

USA 75¢

UK 30p



**BLACK LIBERATION AND THE FIGHT
FOR SOCIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Free the Soweto 11!

By Ernest Harsch

Eleven young Black student activists were found guilty April 30 of "sedition" against South Africa's racist system of apartheid, with sentences to be handed down May 11.

The verdict marked the end of one of the most important political trials in South Africa in recent years.

All eleven youths were active participants in the massive urban rebellions that shook Soweto and other Black townships throughout 1976. Most were leaders or activists of the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), which led many of the protests. One of the defendants, Daniel Sechaba Montsitsi, was president of the SSRC at the time of his arrest nearly two years ago.

The prosecution made no attempt to hide the political nature of the trial. The indictment against the eleven accused them of striving "to create political, social and/or cultural awareness and solidarity amongst Black schoolgoing students with the ultimate object of contributing towards the liberation of Blacks in the Republic of South Africa. . . ."

The regime attempted to use the trial to portray the 1976 uprising as the work of a handful of "agitators," who used violence and intimidation to stir up an otherwise "contented" Black population. Not surprisingly, that effort failed. Even the prosecution's own witnesses, despite the police torture that some of them had suffered,

testified to the massive nature of the protests and the deep opposition among Blacks to white supremacy.

What actually transpired in the courtroom, however, had little to do with the fate of the defendants. The regime needed a guilty verdict as a club to use against other Black political activists. The outcome of the "trial" was a foregone conclusion, regardless of the weaknesses of the prosecution's case.

Judge Hendrik van Dyk found the eleven guilty of the following "crimes":

- Organizing the initial June 16, 1976, student demonstration in Soweto, which marked the beginning of the uprisings.
- Organizing a general strike by Black workers against the regime.
- Initiating a demonstration against the visit of American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to South Africa in September 1976.
- Burning school textbooks as a protest against the racist education system.

Despite the conviction of the eleven freedom fighters, the apartheid regime can expect similar "crimes" to be committed in the future. Blacks have shown through their struggles that even the fiercest repression cannot keep them down indefinitely. In the words of one of the SSRC leaflets submitted as evidence in the trial:

"We are determined to free ourselves from the shackles of the oppressor." □

group that was monitoring the Kremlin's human rights record and for overseeing a fund to aid political prisoners.

Valentyn Moroz, a Ukrainian historian, was sentenced in 1970 to a fourteen-year term because of his writings condemning Stalinist repression and the Russification of the Ukraine.

Georgi Vins, a dissident Baptist leader, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment because of his religious views.

Certainly the release of these unjustly imprisoned opponents of the Stalinist bureaucracy is to be welcomed. At the same time, the way in which these five were released will be used by the Kremlin against the overall movement for democratic rights in the USSR.

Of course, the released prisoners were given no choice in the matter. But the fact that they were released to the U.S. government, while Washington released two Russians convicted of being Soviet spies, can only make it easier for the Kremlin to portray dissidents as foreign agents rather than people who are persecuted for fighting for democratic rights within their own country.

While Carter is milking this sensational exchange for all it is worth, he is refusing to grant political asylum to thousands of Haitians fleeing the U.S.-backed dictatorship in their homeland. And he has refused political asylum to Héctor Marroquín, a Mexican socialist who faces imprisonment or death if he is forced to return to his country.

By exiling dissident leaders, the Soviet bureaucracy reduces the ability of its opponents to reach out and win a hearing among the Soviet workers and peasants. This was recognized by Ginzburg and Vins, who stated they did not want to leave the USSR and the struggle of which they were a part.

Of course, Washington has no more interest in helping establish workers democracy in the USSR than in helping establish workers democracy in southern Africa or Iran. A democratic workers state in the USSR would imperil the very survival of imperialism by inspiring workers everywhere to follow that example.

Both Washington and the Kremlin fear the potential for a broad *working class movement* in defense of Soviet dissidents. The possibility of such a movement was shown by the successful campaign for the release of Leonid Plyushch, a campaign that won the support of the French and Italian Communist parties and trade union organizations in many countries. Both Carter and the Kremlin hope that their prisoner exchange will undercut the future development of such labor actions by associating the dissident movement with the U.S. government.

It is not imperialism, the deadly enemy of democratic rights the world over, that will help win the struggle for these rights in the USSR. Nor is it secret meetings

The U.S.-Soviet Prisoner Exchange

By Marilyn Vogt

A secret deal between Washington and Moscow led to the exchange on April 27 of five imprisoned Soviet dissidents for two Soviet citizens convicted of espionage by U.S. courts.

The five dissidents were paraded before reporters for a well-publicized news conference April 28. Capitalist politicians lost no time in trying to use the exchange to portray themselves as defenders of freedom.

President Carter shared a church service with one of the released dissidents April 29. Meanwhile, cabinet member Patricia Harris, together with senators Daniel Moynihan, Jacob Javits, and Henry Jackson, appeared alongside some of the other dissidents at a New York rally.

These Soviet human rights activists suffered years of persecution for their ideas. All five had inspired considerable defense work internationally and within the USSR.

Edward Kuznetsov and Mark Dymshits, two Jewish activists who were repeatedly denied the right to emigrate, were finally driven to the kind of individual action against their oppression that many Palestinians have resorted to. In 1970 they were sentenced to fifteen years in prison by the Kremlin rulers for trying to hijack a plane to go to Israel.

Aleksandr Ginzburg, twice imprisoned for his anti-Stalinist writings in the 1960s, was sentenced to an eight-year term in 1978. He was jailed for participating in a

between Brzezinski and Dobrynin. Only the power of the Soviet workers and peasants, in alliance with the oppressed and exploited around the world, can win these rights. It is to this force that the Soviet dissidents must appeal. □

Five Trotskyists Face Deportation From Peru

By Fred Murphy

Sixteen members of the Socialist Workers Party (PST) were released without charges by Peru's military rulers on April 27, after having been held incommunicado for six days at the State Security prison in Lima.

They were among twenty-one persons arrested in an April 22 raid on the PST's public headquarters in Lima by State Security agents.

Five persons were still detained as of May 2—four foreign citizens facing deportation; and one Peruvian, Narciso Fernández of the PST's Executive Committee.

The foreign citizens still jailed are alleged by the regime to have "interfered in Peruvian politics." Sylvia Heidel and Lidia Vásquez are Argentines; they are in danger of being turned over to the Videla dictatorship. Colombian Edgar Martínez could be deported against his will to Colombia, where the Turbay Ayala regime is carrying on a witch-hunt against "subversives," and recently jailed two Trotskyists. Martínez's companion, Italian citizen Pia Limongelli, is also being held and threatened with deportation.

State Security agents ransacked the PST's headquarters during the April 22 raid and then occupied it for six days. The offices were turned back to the PST on April 28.

The regime retreated after Constituent Assembly deputies Hugo Blanco and Enrique Fernández* began a hunger strike at the Legislative Palace in Lima on April 25 to demand a halt to the attacks on the PST. Protest telegrams were sent to the dictatorship from Amnesty International in London, from leaders of Swiss trade unions, and from a number of Socialist and Communist deputies in the Swiss parliament.

Telegrams demanding the release of the five remaining prisoners and safe passage to countries of their choice for Heidel, Vásquez, Martínez, and Limongelli are still urgently needed. Send them to Peruvian embassies or to Gen. Francisco Morales Bermúdez, Presidente de la República, Palacio Presidencial, Lima, Peru. □

*Fernández is a leader of the PST and Blanco is a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT). Both groups are sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International and are currently discussing unification.

Seven Trotskyists Arrested in Hong Kong

Seven persons identified as members of the Revolutionary Marxist League, a Trotskyist group in Hong Kong, were arrested April 22 at a city park where they had scheduled a rally to protest repression of dissidents in China.

The arrests followed an earlier protest organized by the RML outside the Hong Kong offices of the Xinhua news agency. (See *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, April

30, p.440.)

According to the April 23 Hong Kong *Star*, police refused to issue a permit for the April 22 rally, and the attorney general of Hong Kong ordered the arrests of activists photographed at the earlier protest.

Those arrested were released on bail. Their names, and the charges against them—if any—were not immediately available.

In This Issue

Closing News Date: May 6, 1979

IRAN	476	Hundreds of Thousands March in May Day Demonstrations—by Gerry Foley
PUERTO RICO	477	Cuban Activist Carlos Muñiz Gunned Down —by José G. Pérez
SOUTH AFRICA	478	Black Liberation and the Fight for Socialism—Interview With Siphon Buthelezi
WESTERN EUROPE	481	Abortion Rights and the Workers Movement —by Jacqueline Heinen
	486	The Reformist Workers Parties and the European Elections—by Anna Libera
FRANCE	484	How the OCI Viewed Steelworkers March on Paris—Interview with Pierre Lambert
	485	CP Claims 140,000 New Members
INDOCHINA WAR	490	Vietnam and the Overthrow of Pol Pot Regime —Statement by Japan RCL
MIDEAST	491	Israeli Regime Steps Up Attacks on Lebanon
USA	492	Proletarian Orientation and Revolutionary Party—by Fred Feldman
NEWS ANALYSIS	474	Free the Soweto 11!—by Ernest Harsch
	474	The U.S.-Soviet Prisoner Exchange —by Marilyn Vogt
	475	Five Trotskyists Face Deportation From Peru—by Fred Murphy
COVER PHOTO	473	Scene from demonstration in Soweto, June 1977—Rand Daily Mail

Intercontinental Press (ISSN 0162-5594). Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 116, Village Station, New York, N.Y. 10014. Published in New York each Monday except the first in January and third and fourth in August.

Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y.

Editor: Mary-Alice Waters.
Contributing Editors: Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan, Ernest Mandel, George Novack.

Managing Editor: Michael Baumann.
Editorial Staff: Jon Britton, Dan Dickeson, Gerry Foley, Ernest Harsch, Fred Murphy, Susan Wald, Will Reissner.

Business Manager: Harvey McArthur.
Copy Editor: David Martin.

Technical Staff: Paul Deveze, Larry Ingram, Arthur Lobman, Kevin McGuire, James M. Morgan, Sally Rhett.

Intercontinental Press specializes in political analysis and interpretation of events of particular interest to the labor, socialist, colonial independence, Black, and women's liberation movements.

Signed articles represent the views of the authors, which may not necessarily coincide

with those of Intercontinental Press. Insofar as it reflects editorial opinion, unsigned material stands on the program of the Fourth International.

To Subscribe: For one year send \$24 to Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 116, Village Station, New York, N.Y. 10014. Write for rates on first class and airmail.

In Europe: For air-speeded subscriptions, write to Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 50, London N1 2XP, England. In Australia: Write to Pathfinder Press, P.O. Box K208, Haymarket 2000. In New Zealand: Write to Socialist Books, P.O. Box 3774, Auckland.

Subscription correspondence should be addressed to Intercontinental Press, P.O. Box 116, Village Station, New York, N.Y. 10014.

Please allow five weeks for change of address. Include your old address as well as your new address, and, if possible, an address label from a recent issue.

Intercontinental Press is published by the 408 Printing and Publishing Corporation, 408 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. Offices at 408 West Street, New York, N.Y.

Copyright © 1979 by Intercontinental Press.

Iran—Hundreds of Thousands March on May Day

By Gerry Foley

The May Day demonstrations held in the major Iranian cities showed a deepening of the radicalization of the masses of working people throughout the country. In Tehran, hundreds of thousands of persons participated in rallies May 1.

The capitalist Bazargan government and the religious leaders who support it found themselves unable to prevent massive celebrations of the international workers holiday.

The May 2 *New York Times* reported:

The call for marches and rallies to mark the traditional worker's holiday was first issued by leftist groups. . . .

However, in recent days, the call was taken up by the religious revolutionary leadership [i.e., the forces around Ayatollah Khomeini] in an apparent attempt to dilute its leftist content.

Unfortunately, the mobilization of the working people in Tehran was not united or on a clear class basis. There were several demonstrations. The two largest were called by the Islamic Republican Party led by Khomeini's ideologist Abdul Bani Sadr and by the Coordinating Committee dominated by the Fedayeen, a guerrilla organization with left-centrist politics. One to two hundred thousand persons participated in each.

In addition, tens of thousands of persons attended a rally called by the Mujahedeen-e Khalq, a left-wing Muslim guerrilla organization, in Karaj, an industrial suburb of Tehran. And the Stalinist Tudeh Party held its own much smaller, separate, sectarian rally.

The Islamic Republican Party leaders tried to turn the demonstration they called in a rightist direction. Groups of rightists within it raised anticommunist slogans. But large numbers of working people also shouted demands for the nationalization of industry. The Iranian Trotskyists sold their paper on this demonstration, getting a generally friendly reception.

The demonstration called by the Fedayeen was organized in a sectarian way. The Coordinating Committee consisted of so-called unions, actually union organizing committees dominated by the Fedayeen, sometimes in alliance with Maoist groups.

These "unions" have a very small membership, and most of the workers resent their claims to represent them. No other organizations were allowed to participate officially. Although the monitors often prevented Trotskyists from selling to the marchers, sales were conducted nonetheless, with a generally good response.

Despite the divisions and confusion that existed, the general meaning of so many working people coming into the streets and raising calls for nationalizations was quite clear. However, the significance of the demonstrations was badly obscured in the reports in the Iranian and international capitalist press, which were fragmentary, often wildly inaccurate, and contradictory.

In the first place, the May Day rallies broke an effective ban on mass demonstrations of the working people in support of their own demands.

In the period following the insurrection that overthrew the old regime, the new authorities and their supporters tried hard to keep the masses of working people from returning to the streets to demonstrate for their demands.

With the exception of the International Women's Day marches in Tehran, which were subjected to attacks by rightist goon squads, no large street demonstrations not approved by the authorities took place in the Iranian capital in the two months after the fall of the dictatorship.

Active mass opposition to the government's policies aimed at restabilizing capitalist rule was essentially confined to the centers of the oppressed nationalities.

The struggles of the oppressed nationalities have continued to spread and deepen. Only three days before the May Day rallies, 100,000 persons demonstrated in the southern city of Khorramshahr protesting intimidation of the Arab population by the local Imam's Committees, which in this case were basically Persian racist gangs.

The Khorramshahr demonstration was the largest rally yet held to back up criticisms of the new authorities. The Arabs are the most proletarian of the oppressed nationalities in Iran. Thus, it is likely that in their struggles national and specifically working-class demands will be combined.

Now, the May Day demonstrations have indicated that the Persian and Azerbaijani workers can no longer be effectively held back from mobilizing behind their own demands. So, the capitalist government and its religious backers find the ground slipping under their feet.

It was in this context that the rightists sought to exploit the assassination of one of the leading ayatollahs, Morteza Motahari, who was murdered on the evening of May 1.

The assassination was claimed by a clandestine group calling itself the Forghan. This group presents itself as a

Muslim fundamentalist organization opposing a clergy that it claims has become too worldly. It also took responsibility for shooting former army chief of staff General Vali Ullah Gharani, on April 23.

The Forghan group first became known in 1978. During the struggle against the shah, it adopted as its main objective combating the clergy that was in the leadership of the movement. Correspondent Eric Rouleau commented in the April 26 *Le Monde*: "It is not surprising then that . . . it was denounced as being manipulated by the shah's secret police."

Even prominent progovernment figures have been compelled to acknowledge that the Forghan has nothing to do with the left. After the murder of Gharani, for example, Sadeq Ghotbzadeh, head of the radio-TV network and notorious for his purging of liberal and left broadcasters, said:

It is out of the question that the left committed this crime. . . . The murderers are very probably former SAVAK agents who infiltrated the Forghan organization.

Nonetheless, rightists tried to turn the massive funeral march for Motahari into an anticommunist demonstration. That was the way it was portrayed, for example, in the May 4 *New York Times*.

However, Iranian Trotskyist leaders report that the anticommunist slogans begun by the rightists were taken up only by a minority of the marchers.

For three days after the assassination, the authorities used all their resources to whip up an anticommunist hysteria. This campaign had some effect. For example, in some places Trotskyist activists selling their paper were attacked in the streets and beaten. But the Trotskyists refused to hide, as the other left organizations did. They maintained that the only way to defeat the hysteria campaign was to confront it. They asserted their right to continue their work. They also made their attitude to the assassination clear.

Immediately after Motahari's murder, the Trotskyists issued a statement printed in *Ayendegan*, the morning Teheran paper, denouncing the act as a counter-revolutionary crime and explaining the opposition of Marxists to assassinations and other acts of terrorism.

The anticommunist hysteria campaign failed to take hold among the broad masses. This will probably not be the last attempt to create such an atmosphere. But the Trotskyists have given an example of how to fight it. □

Cuban Activist Carlos Muñiz Gunned Down in Puerto Rico

By José G. Pérez

[A longer version of this article is scheduled to appear in the May 21 issue of *Perspectiva Mundial*, a Spanish-language revolutionary-socialist fortnightly published in New York.]

* * *

NEW YORK—Simultaneous news conferences were held at the United Nations here and in Miami, Washington, Los Angeles, and Texas, on May 2 to protest the April 28 murder of Carlos Muñiz Varela, a young Cuban exile who lived in Puerto Rico and organized trips to Cuba.

Muñiz was gunned down in Guaynabo, a suburb of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Three men pulled up behind Muñiz's car and fired at least seven shots. Muñiz was mortally wounded in the head. A counter-revolutionary Cuban terrorist group claimed credit for the attack.

At the May 2 news conferences, a number of U.S. Cuban organizations—including the Antonio Maceo Brigade, Operation Cuban Reunification, and the Cuban Evangelical Church—denounced the murder of Muñiz as "one of a long series of bombings, attempted bombings, assassination attempts and various other tactics used by Cuban exile terrorist groups in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, not only against Cuban targets (such as diplomatic missions and visiting groups) but also and primarily against persons and/or institutions which are associated with a policy of peaceful relations with Cuba."

This danger was underscored the day after the news conferences when Rev. Manuel Espinosa was fired upon by terrorists as he was driving toward the Miami airport. He escaped unhurt. Espinosa is the pastor of the Cuban Evangelical Church in Hialeah, Florida (near Miami), and one of the best-known participants in the "dialogue" begun last year between the Cuban government and representatives of the Cuban community abroad.

Among the results of the "dialogue" were commitments by the revolutionary government to release some 3,600 counter-revolutionary prisoners, facilitate the reunification of divided families, and make it possible for Cubans living abroad to visit the island.

Carlos Muñiz played a key role in the "dialogue," although he did not participate directly in the talks. As the manager of Varadero Tours, a travel agency, he organized trips to Cuba by more than 3,000 exiles. He was also a founding member of

the Antonio Maceo Brigade and a member of its National Committee at the time of his death. The brigade is an organization of Cuban youth abroad that supports the "dialogue" and calls for the lifting of the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba and normalization of relations between Havana and Washington.

Counterrevolutionary Cuban terrorists stepped up their attacks after the first sessions of the "dialogue" were held in late 1978.

A group called "Commando Zero" claimed responsibility for Muñiz's murder in calls to several Miami radio stations. The caller declared that there was now one dead and only seventy-four to go—an apparent reference to the "Commission of Seventy-Five," the group of Cuban exiles that took part in the initial talks in Havana last September.

Muñiz was not among those seventy-five, so the figure must have a symbolic meaning for the terrorists. They are threatening to eliminate all those who have been most prominent in the improvement of relations between Cuba and the Cuban community abroad.

The May 2 statement by pro-"dialogue" Cuban groups emphasized that the U.S. government has a grave responsibility in permitting the new wave of terrorist attacks. It pointed to "the relative impunity with which [the terrorists] have acted with respect to the local and federal authorities."

The statement explained that, far from being unknown individuals, the terrorists operate under various names in a relatively open way. According to the U.S. authorities themselves, the main above-ground apparatus of these groups is the Cuban Nationalist Movement (MNC), which has a public headquarters in Union City, New Jersey.

A number of exile publications function as though they were the organs of the terrorists—publishing their communiqués, interviewing their leaders, and hailing their crimes. For example, the paper *La Crónica*, published in Puerto Rico, printed a letter from MNC leader Guillermo Novo Sampol last November in which Novo called for the assassination of participants in the "dialogue." (Novo is currently serving a U.S. prison term for the 1976 murder of Chilean exile leader Orlando Letelier.)

"And it is not just the fringe newspapers who have participated in this conspiracy against the dialogue," the May 2 state-

ment said. "Two Cuban journalists who attended the talks, Nisso Pimentel from Channel 23 in Miami and Manuel de Dios Unanue from *El Diario-La Prensa* (New York), have been transferred from their positions at the time of the dialogue and into other duties where they could not report to the community about these developments. . . ."

The *New York Times* failed to say a word about the political reasons for Muñiz's murder and did not even mention the attack on Reverend Espinosa in its May 4 editions.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has refused to investigate the murder of Muñiz, claiming it is a local matter over which the FBI has no jurisdiction. This is simply a lie, since a federal crime—violation of civil rights—is clearly involved.

Neither the FBI nor the local police in New York and New Jersey have been able to solve even one of the numerous bombings, bomb threats, and death threats that have taken place in recent months.

Fidel Castro pointed out in a news conference on the "dialogue" last December 9: "If the United States wants to put a stop to the terrorists, let it go ahead and do so. The U.S. government knows perfectly well who the terrorists are, what weapons they possess, where they live, what they do."

Castro added that one explanation for Washington's failure to finish off the terrorists "is that it does not want to."

Counterrevolutionary terrorism in the Cuban community in the United States is nothing new. From the beginning, such groups have been organized, trained, financed, and armed by the U.S. government. And even if Washington's current claim that it no longer engages in such activity were true, there would still be no doubt that it is doing nothing to dismantle the terrorist groups and that its policy of hostility towards the Cuban revolution inspires the terrorists and fosters a political climate in which they can act with impunity.

"Dialogue" leaders in the United States are urging that telegrams demanding an immediate investigation of Muñiz's murder and the attack on Espinosa be sent to Attorney-General Griffin Bell, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Send copies to the Antonio Maceo Brigade, Box 1125, Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025. □

Black Liberation and the Fight for Socialism in South Africa

[The following is an interview with Siphos Buthelezi, a leader of the Black Consciousness movement, the most influential Black nationalist current within South Africa. He was the first secretary-general of the Black People's Convention, which was banned along with most other Black Consciousness organizations in October 1977.]

[Buthelezi now lives in exile. He has edited *The Black Peoples' Convention (BPC)—South Africa: Historical Background and Basic Documents* (New York: Black Liberation Press, n.d.). The interview was obtained in Britain in early 1979 by John Blair.]

* * *

Question. First, can you tell us something about your own political history?

Answer. I first became active in the SASO [South African Students Organisation] when it was formed in 1968. I was its main convenor at the University of Zululand. Later, in 1972, I became involved in the BPC [Black People's Convention]. First I was chairman of the Zululand Branch, and then at the [full] BPC convention in Hammanskraal in December 1972 I was appointed as the first secretary-general. After being imprisoned and banned I left the country in 1974 and became the BPC's first external representative, residing in Botswana. At the moment I am still in the leadership of the BPC externally.

Q. The Black Consciousness movement first appeared in the late 1960s after a long period in which political opposition seemed to have been thoroughly suppressed. What were the main reasons it emerged at that time?

A. It's necessary to appreciate the consequences of the banning of the ANC [African National Congress] and PAC [Pan Africanist Congress] in 1960. Harsh repression followed. Most of the leadership were banned, imprisoned, or exiled. That meant a political vacuum within the Black community.

Historically speaking there were other particular factors that led to the formation of SASO in December 1968. There had been Black student organizations before SASO, like the African Students Association, the African Students Union of South Africa, and the Progressive Students Organisation. These collapsed, however, with the formation of segregated Black campuses. Then most students participated in the activities of the NUSAS [National Union of South African Students, a white-

led student federation]. But there was general dissatisfaction with the NUSAS because many people felt it had assumed a self-appointed role as spokesman for these campuses.

With the formation of the UCM [University Christian Movement] in 1967, a new channel of communication was established. Students were able to come together during conferences sponsored by the UCM. Eventually the idea arose of Black students thinking for themselves. While the UCM was still considered to have more radical politics than NUSAS, there was still a large degree of dissatisfaction amongst Blacks involved in it. We still felt that it was not possible to articulate the aspirations of Black students within a white-dominated organization. Thus SASO was ultimately formed to try to do this.

Q. Did SASO therefore emerge out of a split in the UCM?

A. Not really. What happened was that Black students had no real political platform. They had found this in NUSAS, but there were various frustrations confronting them there. The UCM appeared more radical but it was still essentially a white organization with a sprinkling of Blacks. Because of its more radical politics it did however attract a rather larger participation. Eventually however those who worked within it found that even the UCM did not provide adequately for their aspirations. It was only after this that SASO really became a mass movement of the Black students.

Q. What were SASO's main political positions?

A. When SASO was first formed it had no very clear political ideology. It was only later, in the early 1970s, that the idea of Black Consciousness as a mobilizing agent amongst the Black oppressed began to appear. At first SASO was limited to the Black campuses. But this was felt to be limiting since it was realized that a student group could not articulately express the aspirations of the mass of the oppressed.

Hence the formation of the Black People's Convention in December 1971 with the aim of filling the political vacuum that had prevailed during the 1960s. It is not however correct to say that the BPC was formed by SASO alone. It was a coalition of many social forces. At the first conference that was held, in Bloemfontein in April 1971, organizations involved included the Association for the Educational

and Cultural Advancement of the African People of South Africa, the Independent Churches Association, the Interdenominational African Ministers' Association, the Young Mens' Christian Association, SASO, and many other smaller organizations. From this you can see that it was really a coalition of many social forces in the Black community.

Q. What sort of political program came out of this founding convention?

A. The first conference did not really talk about the BPC as such. There was simply a feeling that there was a vacuum in the community and that there needed to be a coalition movement that would coordinate all sorts of activities that were going on; political, cultural, and social. But this first conference decided that a further, larger one had to be called, involving more organizations, with the aim of forming an effective coordinating body. This was called in August 1971 at Pietermaritzburg but broke down in disagreement about what kind of body was needed.

Ultimately in December 1971 a fresh conference took place where the BPC was formed as a political organization. At first people had visualized a mere umbrella body which would be mainly cultural in function. The idea that eventually emerged however was the formation of a political movement, and the BPC was founded.

Its main aim was to solidify and unite all the oppressed people in the struggle for their "physical and psychological liberation," as it was put at the time. At this time great stress was laid on the need to supersede the multiracial liberal establishment that, with the suppression of the traditional organizations, appeared to have become the main spokesperson for the oppressed. There was also strong emphasis on the need to counter the Bantustan program which was then escalating rapidly.

Q. Was the BPC a completely new movement in the sense that no one in it had links with organizations from the past?

A. There were individuals, but not very many, who were connected with past traditions. But it was a new movement in the sense that the general mass of the people who got involved in the movement had no real political links with the past. It was however of course a logical continuation of the process of national liberation. In fact if you look at how the ANC was formed in 1912 it involved the very same forces coming together.

Q. What were the main elements of the program finally thrashed out in December 1972?

A. The first important thing was to mobilize the oppressed masses. Amongst these the working class, which was seen as the vanguard force of the potential struggle for national liberation, was prime. Hence various workers programs were developed.

For instance, the Black Workers Project employed experienced trade unionists to organize amongst the working class. This program was funded and assisted by both SASO and the Black Community Programmes. The methods that were used then were not of course always necessarily effective. But what is important politically is that it was being realized that it is only the working class that can lead the struggle to its successful conclusion.

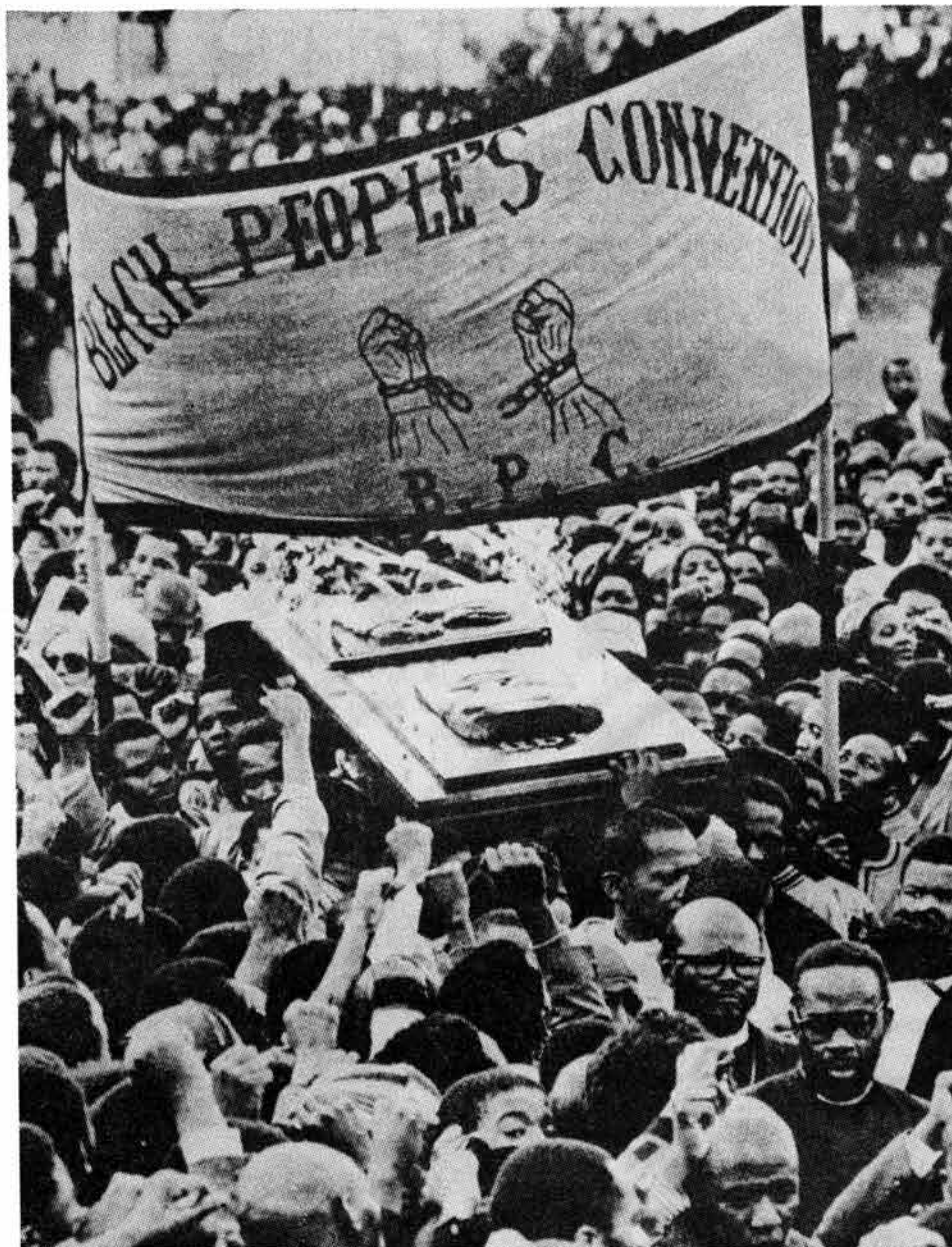
It's true that the program of BPC was not as explicitly socialist in content as that of the ANC in its 1955 Freedom Charter. The most important thing, however, is to appreciate the different conditions under which the respective programs came about. Now there was brutal repression, and there had been this long period of vacuum. In addition, as I already indicated, the BPC was formed as a coalition of many varied organizations so that to come out with a clear program at that stage was not very possible. What was most important was to reestablish the main political principles that had been forgotten in the previous period.

Q. What are the main political currents now developing in the Black Consciousness movement?

A. Basically there are two strong currents. One stream of petty-bourgeois nationalism and another very strong section which is Marxist-Leninist in orientation. At this point there is no organized division between these two tendencies, especially inside the country where political debate is restrained by legislation and repression. But it is possible to see the clear emergence of such differences.

Q. What kinds of things are the two tendencies debating?

A. For Marxist-Leninists the most important thing is the formation of an independent working-class organization. This is a vital issue for the general development of the struggle. It comes about from a realization that in the whole long history of the national liberation movements in South Africa, workers have always been left out in all the struggles that have been going on. When they have participated they have merely done so as spectators. They've not had a leadership of their own; they've not had a revolutionary ideology of their own. To Marxist-Leninists within the movement this is vital. Of course there



Funeral of Steve Biko, murdered by police in 1977.

have been many problems, not only in the Black Consciousness movement but also in the ANC and the PAC, which have always been led by a petty-bourgeois leadership that follows opportunism, personalism, and, at times, even tribalism.

Q. Does this mean Marxist-Leninists inside the movement differ with those who see the Black population as a single group capable of uniting as one to overthrow apartheid?

A. We see an independent working-class organization as vital and as acting as the vanguard force in the struggle for national liberation. We appreciate that there should be a united front of all the "patriotic" forces in the country, but we recognize that

we need to ensure, if we're to establish a socialist society, that the Black working class is the leading force.

Q. Does the South African Communist Party (SACP) not say the same thing?

A. The main difference that we have with the SACP is that they maintain the two-stage theory of the struggle. That is to say that they state that the present fight is for a "national democratic" state and only after this has been achieved will the way be open for the struggle for socialism.

As far as we are concerned, South Africa being a highly industrialized society, there is no real reason why there should be two such stages in the struggle for socialism. Certain sections within the Unity Movement for instance also agree with this sort of line. We believe that while the struggle

is one for national liberation it also has to be raised at the level of class struggle. We don't think that we should first simply achieve national independence and then after that struggle for socialism. We believe we shall have the combination of the two stages into one.

Q. Do these differences within the movement reflect class divisions within the Black community?

A. Yes, they really do. As I've indicated, we have a petty-bourgeois leadership that has always led the movement from 1912 until now. Recently there has developed a very strong feeling that the petty bourgeoisie has really led the movement into disarray, into the present stalemate that we are all facing.

The Marxist-Leninists in the Black Consciousness movement have realized that this central problem can only be resolved through the formation of an independent working-class organization with its own structures and its own revolutionary theory. In any case the present "revolutionary theory" that has evolved over the last fifty years is quite unacceptable; it is regarded by most of us as pure formalism. It does not answer the aspirations of the oppressed people, that is the Black working class and other working people.

Q. Do you think that elements of all the existing movements will be involved in this new development of a working-class organization devoted to leading the socialist revolution in South Africa?

A. Our major aim within the BPC was to unite all patriotic forces within our country in the struggle for national liberation. In other words we recognized the existence of the ANC, the PAC, and the Unity Movement as contributory organizations in the struggle. But we feel that all these organizations, including the BPC, are really petty-bourgeois nationalist groups that do not actually express the aspirations of the working class, which is the majority of the South African population. In all the struggles they put themselves to the forefront.

A clear example is provided by the



Ernest Harsch—IP/1

Johannesburg street scene.

BAWU [Black Allied Workers' Union], itself part of the Black Consciousness movement. It was formed as a political trade-union movement, but it was still largely dominated by the petty bourgeoisie. This has stifled the formation of an independent working-class leadership, which would in our opinion be an essential step.

We see the role of the ANC, the PAC, the Unity Movement, and the BPC as independent nationalist organizations within a national united front led specifically by a working-class leadership.

Q. How much influence do you think the ideas of the Black Consciousness movement had during the two big waves of struggle in South Africa in the 1970s: the strike wave of 1972-3 and the Soweto and other uprisings in 1976?

A. The mass strikes were largely spontaneous, which is not to say they were not political in content. What happened first, to deal with Durban, is that a group of workers were sacked from the Durban Brick and Tile factory as a result of the economic demands that they put forward. The wave of strikes that followed could be seen as an act of solidarity with this. In some factories they were appeased by economic concessions to come back to work. But the main demand was for the reinstatement of those workers and the release of the strikers who had been arrested. It was thus essentially a political act.

In 1976 it was clearly the Black Consciousness movement that was instrumental in bringing about the events. As the upsurge spread throughout the country SASO became directly involved. It was in fact only in those universities where it was active that we find uprisings, for instance in Zululand, Turfloop, and Fort Hare.

Q. Is it true, as has sometimes been claimed on their behalf, that the ANC and PAC had considerable influence during these uprisings?

A. No. It's not true. Completely incorrect. I know this because people I worked with at the time were directly involved. Of course there exists in South Africa a long tradition of struggle which is never entirely erased from memory. Thus leaders like Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobukwe [of the ANC and PAC, respectively] could remain a source of inspiration—clearly shown by the number of occasions on which demonstrators would chant their names, for instance. But this is different from there being an organized presence by ANC or PAC. That was certainly not the case in 1976.

Q. Are you optimistic that a genuine united front of all organizations of the oppressed can be built?

A. Here we need to distinguish between the situation in exile and that inside the country. It is true that sectarianism and even factionalism tends to be widespread in the former. Everybody is anxious to defend the name and the position of their own organization, especially because their own livelihood can sometimes depend on continued receipt of outside aid.

Inside the country however people have no time for the old splits which they see as based around cliques rather than political principles. In my opinion, this pressure from the "home base" will mean that in the future leaderships will be forced to accept the united front or they will be pushed aside by their own supporters.

Q. How do you envisage the creation of an independent working-class leadership?

A. We think this has to be built step by step through involvement in the day-to-day activity of the Black working class. At this stage it would be quite wrong for a small group of us, without any serious base inside the class, to proclaim ourselves the leadership. It is only after serious work with the class in its struggles that we shall see the emergence of a genuine proletarian party. The party must be built in this way and not by simply announcing it.

Q. How optimistic are you about the future of the South African revolution?

A. We have to understand that the racial oppression of every Black in South Africa means that there is a massive potential unified bloc against the regime. Only a tiny, numerically insignificant, minority of Bantustan leaders, Indian big merchants, etc., have been bought off into collaboration by the government.

Secondly, I am certain that the 1973 strike wave marked a real leap forward in the consciousness of the Black working class, the leadership of the revolution. Although there have not been any such massive waves of action since then, the organization and consciousness of the class remains at the much higher level it then achieved.

Thirdly, I believe that the present economic recession poses the ruling class with insurmountable problems that cannot be effectively solved within the framework of the present system. In particular there is the objective need for it to attack the extraordinarily privileged position of the white working class. Since this is however the National Party's base, it will be very difficult for them to tackle this problem.

For all these reasons I am very optimistic that we may enjoy much more rapid change in South Africa than might be envisaged if you only look at the obvious power of the state's repressive machinery. Even the CIA didn't predict what's happening in Iran. Hopefully we are involved in a similar situation. □

Abortion Rights and the European Workers Movement

By Jacqueline Heinen

A few years ago, some people might have thought that the bourgeoisie was ready to retreat on the question of abortion and to grant women a right that, when all was said and done, would not cost it very much.

Under pressure from the feminist movement and mass mobilizations demanding freedom of abortion and contraception at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, a number of governments in Europe and North America were actually compelled to make some legal concessions.

But to believe that this would lead the most reactionary governments to follow suit and that the restrictive laws in question would open the royal road to women's right to freely decide whether or not they wanted children meant discounting the extreme right-wing currents—the great defenders of the rights of the fetus—which have since become stronger. And in particular, it meant underestimating the social and economic implications of such a reform.

Conceding to women the right to control their own bodies opens the way to many other demands. Why would a woman demand the right to do as she pleases, if not in order to overcome her condition of dependency—she whose “fate” is supposed to center around the kitchen and nursery?

And how can women become economically independent without waging a battle for the right to work and everything it implies—job training, equal pay, social services to relieve women from household chores and child-raising, the fight against sexism and all the forms of discrimination women face on the job? There has been no lack of struggles around these issues in the past ten years.

Consequences of 'Austerity'

The international bourgeoisie is faced above all with economic problems that undermine the possibility of making the laws on contraception and abortion effective in places where they have been changed. The capitalists generally fall back on ideologically reactionary arguments to justify their backward policy. This comes through clearly from statements made by certain representatives of the right-wing parties—especially [French Gaullist leader Jacques] Chirac—during the European parliamentary election campaign.

In the context of the economic and social crisis, far from unfreezing the necessary

funds, legislatures and governments continually nibble away at the budgets allocated to social services, particularly the hospital sector (with the closing of some departments, especially gynecological services; staff cutbacks; raising the cost of medical insurance premiums; and so on).

In France, for example, this austerity policy is being carried out with great fanfare by the current minister of health—the same Madame Veil who sponsored a bill to liberalize the abortion laws four years ago.

In Italy, the abortion law passed last year cannot be implemented for lack of funds, bed space, and medical personnel. In 70 percent of cases, doctors hide behind the “conscience clause” to justify their refusal to do abortions, and most hospital staff do the same—either for ideological reasons or to avoid an extra burden of duties that is not compensated either by improvements in existing facilities or by the hiring of new workers.

In Britain, women have been realizing the hard way for years that in order to get an abortion in a public hospital it is necessary to sign up months in advance. This creates good business for private clinics that charge exorbitant fees.

Attacks By the Church and the Right Wing

Added to all this is the increasingly aggressive campaign being mounted by the “right-to-lifers.” Patterning themselves after what is happening in the United States, they have recently stepped up their propaganda, even finding ways to systematically coordinate their activities. International conferences of physicians have been held in Switzerland, France, and Britain, where the problem of the “fetus's soul” has been gravely discussed. Identical leaflets have been handed out in London and Brussels. A book called *Babies to Burn*—which accuses certain doctors of doing abortions in order to conduct “experiments” on the fetuses or even to make soap out of them (*sic!*)—has been distributed in several languages. All this indicates that reactionary forces are at work to try to still women's demands as well as to roll back legislation in places where the laws have already been liberalized.

Sermons by the pope and all the bishops of the “holy church” since it launched its campaign around the “right to be born” have only strengthened the determination of these forces. Such statements have

given unexpected support to all the anti-abortion currents that are developing around the world, particularly in Europe.

These include the far right in Spain, which proclaimed loud and clear during the recent election campaign its total opposition to abortion rights; the Christian Democratic Party in Switzerland, which is now sponsoring a ballot initiative on the “right to life”; the current in France that finds the “Veil law” too liberal and would like to see it abolished; and those who back the repressive policy of the Belgian authorities not only toward doctors but also toward women who break the law.

This entire situation explains both the failure to implement the laws passed in various countries and the attempts to roll back legislation that is on the books. It makes clear why the laws have still not been changed in a number of European countries (Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands) or have been modified in such a restrictive way that women continue to be denied the right to abortion (West Germany, France, Luxembourg). This is the case despite parliamentary debates that in most cases have been going on for years. For the sake of appearing liberal, the “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie makes a few stabs from time to time at liberalizing the abortion laws, only to retreat immediately in the face of attacks by right-to-lifers as soon as they threaten to upset the delicate equilibrium of parliamentary dealings.

But women have shown that they are not about to wait patiently and indefinitely to be granted what many consider an elementary democratic right. The widespread mobilizations at both the local and national levels in recent years bears witness to this.

In many cases, however, such actions have not succeeded either in forcing the bourgeoisie to retreat or in putting a stop to attacks by the far right. This is because the passivity of the working-class organizations and the refusal of their leaderships to get involved in the fight have contributed to isolating women's struggles and discouraging many feminists. The reluctance of the workers movement to take up the specific demands of women, including the right to abortion, is no small factor in the problems that many European women's movements face in coordinating their activities to wage a counteroffensive against the attacks of the bourgeoisie.

Experiences in several countries have

proven, however, that it is possible to involve the workers organizations. Their support, and sometimes their active participation, in the battle for the "right to choose" has had a tenfold impact on the rise in consciousness and active commitment among the most exploited women and among workers in general.

The patient work carried out in Britain by both the National Abortion Campaign and the LARC (an abortion-rights grouping within the Labour Party) bore fruit last November in a conference that drew some 400 delegates from the principal British trade unions. These delegates voted to support the NAC's campaign to increase the number of walk-in abortion clinics, as well as the March 31, 1979 International Day of Action.

Most importantly, the conference mandated the delegates to organize a demonstration by the workers movement in the event the British Parliament made the slightest move to restrict the abortion laws.

Of course, it remains to translate this attitude on the part of the trade unions into action. However, the actions led by the feminists in the NAC after 1975, when the legislators began to reconsider the law, did force the Labour Party after a long battle to support a resolution in favor of abortion rights at its 1977 conference. Naturally, the party leadership has never done anything to back this up. Labour ministers even waged an ideological offensive last year focusing on the crisis of the family, thus reinforcing the idea of women's status as an auxiliary supply of labor. But the stand taken by the party conference must have helped to provoke discussion within the union locals on what steps to take.

The outcome of the battle to extend the 1967 law—which is restrictive in many ways and does not give women themselves the right to decide—will now depend on the capacity of the NAC, the LARC, and the most militant trade-union activists to launch initiatives that can compel the trade unions and the Labour Party to implement their position and actively participate in the actions carried out by local committees.

In a similar fashion, the breadth of the mobilizations carried out for more than three years by the Committees to Decriminalize Abortion in Belgium and the national demonstrations they organized on two occasions (March 8, 1977, and March 8, 1978) have had obvious repercussions on the attitude taken by the reformist parties. To begin with, this has been shown in the parliamentary arena, where three SP deputies have introduced a bill that makes abortion simply a medical procedure. Corresponding to this is a bill put forward by the CP—for its own narrow interests—which says more or less the same thing. But it is especially in the area of mobilizations that there has been a significant change for slightly over a year now.

Thanks to the massive and ongoing character of the initiatives taken by the movement to decriminalize abortion, as well as to the feminists and members of the trade-union left wing who have insisted on raising this question within their organizations, the SP has included for the first time the demand for decriminalization and for women's right to decide in its own election platform. Followed by the FGTVB (the biggest trade-union federation in the country, controlled by the SP) and the Femmes Prévoyance Socialiste (Women's Socialist Forethought, an orga-

nization with close ties to the SP), the SP resolved to support the Day of Action called for March 31 in Brussels. The presence of party leaders at this demonstration—while no guarantee of the actual policy to be followed thereafter by the SP—nevertheless showed that the behind-the-scenes work of the committees has paid off. This cannot fail to lead to all kinds of contradictions within the reformists' ranks, given the policy of class collaboration pursued by the leadership.

There can be no doubt that the question of abortion will help win the most militant SP activists away from their party if the movement for women's right to decide continues to grow and gains a following within the workers' ranks.

A Radicalization That Sharpens the Contradictions

The positions adopted by many reformist parties under the pressure of mass mobilizations and the radicalization that found expression within their own ranks are profoundly contradictory to their overall orientation and their integration, to a greater or lesser degree, into the state apparatus.

To take but one example, the Italian CP was compelled to make a 180-degree turn after demonstrations by tens of thousands of women in the streets at the end of 1975 and beginning of 1976. Its avowed hostility to abortion suddenly became transformed into a more or less liberal position, which it used as a bargaining chip with the Christian Democracy as the parliamentary debates went on.

Hence the contradictory nature of the law that the CP helped to promulgate, and the very limited liberalization it involves. If the Italian CP changed its position, it is because it could hardly do otherwise given the breadth of the demonstrations and the "wildcat" participation—in defiance of the CP leadership's orders—of many of its own women members in the first demonstrations called by the Women's Liberation Movement. Apart from the desire to keep control over its ranks, the CP hoped to prove the validity of its strategy of "historic compromise" in the eyes of the masses by showing them that it was possible to reform the bourgeois state through the introduction of a law that could only better the lives of millions of women.

But this was a two-edged sword. Agreeing to be the caretaker of capitalist interests and to implement the austerity policy imposed by the ruling class leaves little room for pulling the wool over the eyes of women who demand to see the implementation, at long last, of a right that they have just won in principle. In the big cities where the municipal governments are under the control of the CP, women's eyes are beginning to be opened. Of course, the statistics compiled less than a year after



March 8 rally in the Netherlands.

Klassen Strijd

passage of the law show that it is much easier to get an abortion there than in the areas controlled by the Christian Democrats. But even so, the lines forming at the doors of hospitals, which cannot keep up with the demand, are showing many of these women who had thought victory was theirs that this law is nothing but a chimera for the vast majority of them.

Moreover, the resistance of the Italian CP—like most of the European CPs—to recognizing abortion as a right also has explosive implications, given the growing radicalization of the women influenced by these parties.

This is expressed in the answer given by the leadership of the CP-controlled Italian Women's Union (UDI) to the appeal from the International Campaign for Abortion Rights to support March 31. The UDI leaders said they could not officially join the campaign, which has as one of its central demands the right of women to abortion. According to the UDI, liberalization of the law was necessary in Italy because of women's "right to health"; they refuse to consider abortion as a "civil right" inasmuch as they continue to see in it a form of violence against women.

This did not prevent UDI women in Turin from joining the action organized there by our comrades of the GCR (Revolutionary Communist Groups, Italian section of the Fourth International), or from calling, together with the GCR, for a rally as part of the international solidarity day.

This is neither the first nor the last example of reactions by rank-and-file women that directly challenge the leadership's position on abortion. And this is not limited to the Italian CP. In the French CP as well, activists from the Paris region united around the bulletin *Luttes et Débats* also recently refused to rubber-stamp their party's sectarian policy.

In an open letter published in *Le Monde*—after it was rejected by *l'Humanité*—these women pointed to the inconsistency of the CP leadership, which makes big statements about the need to wage a campaign around abortion while refusing to take part in any unified activity in the local committees that are being formed.

Nevertheless, in spite of a similar attitude on the part of the CP-dominated General Confederation of Labor (CGT), we are seeing more and more activists of that party and trade union take part in local mobilizations, either as individuals or as members of trade-union women's commissions.

The same is true in Spain. To call itself "the party of women's liberation," as the Spanish CP does, and to keep making speeches from the podium of campaign rallies, has not failed to provoke ferment in the ranks. Carrillo—just like Marchais—will learn the hard way if the campaign for freedom of abortion acquires strength within the Spanish state, as the rally in



British women picket antiabortion forces.

Seville on March 31 began to indicate. (See the report on the March 31 actions in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, April 30, p. 429.)

What is true for the CP leaderships is just as true for those of the SPs and of the trade-union movement in general. The problem facing the reformist bureaucracies is that satisfying the needs of women, particularly in regard to abortion and contraception rights, runs directly counter to their policy of class collaboration.

The greater the number of women and men who begin to realize this, the harder it will be for the bureaucrats to keep control of the reins.

Just as a number of immediate demands have now been taken up in a massive way by the ranks of the trade unions—such as a thirty-five-hour work week, across-the-board wage increases, and protection of buying power—the question of the right to abortion and contraception is one of the issues that revolutionists must systematically take up as part of their activity in the workers movement.

The battle around this issue will help raise the anticapitalist consciousness of working women and men, who will realize how incompatible their demands are with the continuation of the capitalist system. But it will also make it possible to take a step forward in the struggle to get the workers organizations to fight for the specific interests of women and against all further manifestations of sexism within these organizations.

Initiatives such as the conference of

British trade unions that we spoke of earlier are an example of the kind of goals we should set. Of course, the situation of a given workers movement and the amount of control exerted by the bureaucrats will make things more or less difficult according to the country. However, it is obvious that only the active involvement of large sectors of the working-class organizations alongside the feminist movements that have been fighting for abortion for many years can enable the latter to emerge from the relative isolation in which they find themselves and give the necessary weight to mobilizations in order to make some gains in face of the ruling-class attacks.

What we are facing is a fundamental task. The idea raised by some of a uniform abortion law that the bourgeoisie might manage to adopt in the framework of the European parliament has more to do with myth than with reality. But it is quite true that the bourgeois governments will take full advantage of the situation if there is a major political setback in one of the countries where the laws have been liberalized. They will rely on any downturn in the current mobilizations to try to deal new blows to women's right to choose.

That is why the International Campaign for Abortion Rights is so crucially important for sustaining and intensifying the battle being fought by hundreds of thousands of women throughout the world. The demands raised by this campaign should be one of the axes of revolutionary propaganda in the election campaign for the European parliament. □

How the OCI Viewed the Steelworkers' March on Paris

[The following interview with Pierre Lambert, a member of the Political Bureau of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI—Internationalist Communist Organization), was published in the April 6-12 issue of the French Trotskyist weekly *Rouge*. The translation is by *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*.]

* * *

Question. The LCR [Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire—Revolutionary Communist League, French section of the Fourth International] has supported the idea of a united national march on Paris by workers in all industries, called by all the trade unions and workers parties, around these slogans: "No layoffs; For a thirty-five-hour week right now; Throw out the government and the National Assembly!" The OCI has waged a similar campaign. Can you explain what its political underpinnings are?

Answer. As you remember, we convened a national conference of delegates from unity committees on November 11-12, 1978. It was at that conference that we raised the perspective of a united, central demonstration by workers and youth against the National Assembly, based on the SP-CP majority that emerged from the first round of elections in March 1978.

When the CGT [Confédération Générale du Travail—General Confederation of Labor, dominated by the Communist Party] leadership took up the slogan of a national march on Paris, they lost no time in limiting the character of it so as to focus only on the regions hardest hit by unemployment. All their efforts were aimed at putting the maximum limits on mobilizations.

In these circumstances, our policy was the following: we, the OCI, support a national march. We see that the leaders are now in the process of sectioning and fragmenting what they call a national march on Paris. If they really wanted to have a national march, they would call on all workers from all regions and all trades to come to Paris.

We did not condemn the CGT's march, but we did not take responsibility for it, because the very conditions under which it was organized connected it very closely, in fact, with the statements of CP leaders, like Ballanger and Marchais, about respecting the legislative process, and so on.

Q. You called for a central demonstration, in the framework of a united front of the working-class organizations. When you draw up the list of those working-class organizations, is the CFDT [Confédération

Française Démocratique du Travail—French Democratic Confederation of Labor, influenced by the Socialist Party] included? Did you fight to have the CFDT support such a call?

A. Naturally, we think that the call for a central, united demonstration in Paris equally applies to the CFDT.

Q. Does this mean that the OCI now characterizes the CFDT as a labor federation like the others?

A. Our position is unchanged in that regard. We do not think that the CFDT, either because of its origins [as a Catholic union federation] or the role it plays in the class struggle, can be put on the same plane as the FEN [Fédération de l'Éducation Nationale—National Education Federation], CGT, or FO [Force Ouvrière—Labor Force]. But of course, just as we are for the CGT participating in demonstrations and strikes, we think it is necessary for the Catholic trade unions to be an integral part of them.

Q. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that this campaign was not being carried out in a very positive way in your press. . . .

A. We did not campaign for the March 23 demonstration. We said that it is the CGT that has taken responsibility for it. In our view, it was being deliberately undercut by the CGT. That being the case, if [CFDT leader] Edmond Maire did not want to participate, I can't blame him. When Maire bowed out, he had every reason to do so, from his own standpoint, because the CP leadership of the CGT had given him an excuse. For André Bergeron [leader of FO] or André Henry [leader of the FEN], it's the exact same thing.

Q. When you supported the idea of a national march on Paris in the framework of a united front, that wasn't just an OCI march, that was a battle for a march that would be organized by all of the working-class organizations. So I guess that that fight was carried out inside FO too. . . .

A. You haven't followed our line carefully. When we issued the call from the National Conference of Workers and Youth, the problem we raised was an immediate political problem. For us, the emphasis today is not on a united front of the trade unions, which would be joined by the workers parties; the emphasis is on a united front of the SP and CP to replace the Giscard-Barre government with an SP-

CP government without capitalist ministers.

Q. But before the CGT made its decision, what kind of campaign did you carry out inside FO?

A. The battle we fought was not organized inside the trade unions. We did not ask the union locals in which we hold office to take a position on a central, united demonstration—neither in the CGT, where the majority of our members are active, nor in FO, nor in the FEN. Our battleground was the democratic assemblies, the unity committees, which are organizations of a political, not a trade-union nature, whose objective is to help the toiling masses achieve unity to finish with the Giscard-Barre government, the National Assembly, and the regime, and establish an SP-CP government. The goal was to get the CP and SP to assume their responsibilities. Our fight is a political fight, one that we do not try to make the trade unions take responsibility for.

Q. On March 23, there were a number of CFDT and FO locals that chose, without being in agreement with [CGT leader Georges] Séguy, to participate in the demonstration. This was particularly true for FO, in a number of locals led by members of Lutte Ouvrière [Workers Struggle]. What do you think of this decision, and how did OCI members in FO respond on March 23?

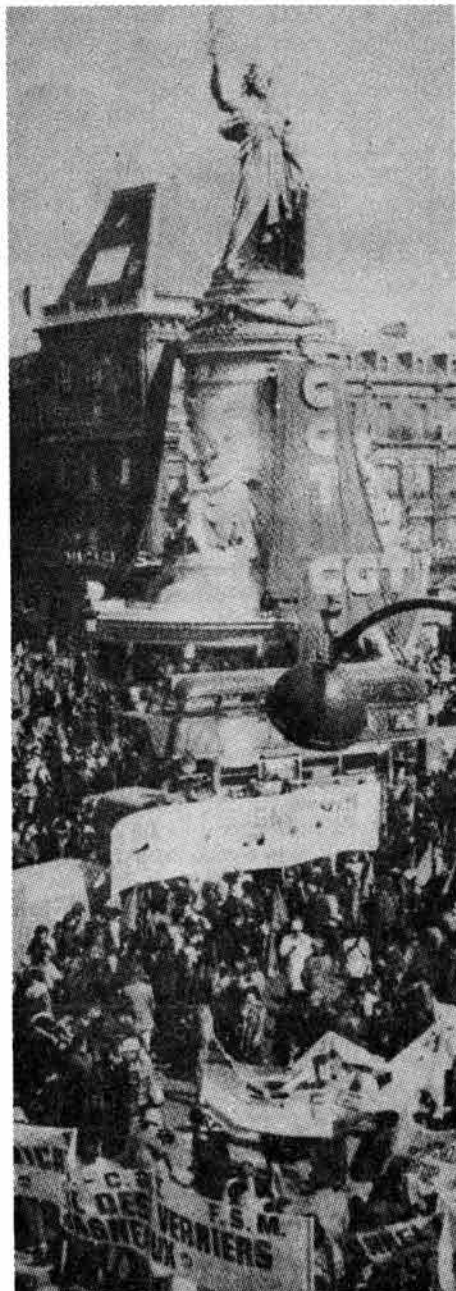
A. In the FO trade unions where we are present, when the question came up, we asked: What target is the CGT offering us? If it's l'Opéra [Place de l'Opéra, a large public gathering place in Paris], that is not where demands should be brought. To fight against layoffs of steelworkers and for jobs for the other unemployed, you have to go where the decisions are made. Wouldn't it have been necessary, under these conditions, to call for a demonstration at Matignon, headquarters of [Premier] Barre, the one who orders the layoffs, along with the French employers' association? So our position was as follows: March 23 was organized as the latest in the endless series of days of action. The OCI comrades who were in the CGT participated in the demonstration, since it was their federation that had called it, while raising the criticisms that we had.

I can't criticize the comrades who went to the demonstration as CFDT or FO members. As CFDT members, if the majority of trade unionists were for going to it, I don't see why they should have opposed it. What I do object to, on the other hand, is

the way the LCR said, "All out to the march on Paris!" when in fact it was a deliberately restricted march that did not raise the question of the government.

Q. There were two ways, as a matter of fact, to fight for unity inside the CFDT or FO. One was to say that what we need is a demonstration at Matignon. The CGT demonstration isn't going there, so we won't be part of it. That's more or less the position you outlined, which in practice isn't much different from Bergeron's. There is another way to fight—to criticize the limited character of the action, while at the same time calling on trade unionists from both federations to take part in it to show their desire for unity.

A. That's one of the differences between



March 21 steelworkers march on Paris.

us. I believe it is necessary to mobilize around concrete demands. The FO trade union I belong to, for example, achieved unity with the CGT and CFDT in a sixty-seven-day strike around a concrete demand. That, in my book, is real unity in action. I think that this march on Paris of the CGT's was a countermarch on Paris. That being the case, the problem is not what Bergeron thinks of it. What Bergeron thinks is one thing, and what I think is another. I did not call for participation in a countermarch on Paris.

Q. Don't you think that as an FO activist, by putting the emphasis on a condemnation of the "countermarch on Paris," with different arguments, in practice, it amounts to the same rejection of any initiative of whatever kind? And in terms of his abstentionist and divisive policy, do you think Bergeron was embarrassed by this type of intervention?

A. Of course. It's public knowledge that Bergeron is opposed to unity!

Q. Do you think you gave him difficulties by intervening in this way?

A. That wasn't my problem. My intention wasn't to get someone in trouble, it was to raise my own politics. In the FO trade unions where we have comrades, we didn't campaign against the march on Paris. But we weren't for it. As OCI activists, we carried out a political campaign to rally the workers, regardless of their political allegiances, around the slogan of a democratic assembly and an SP-CP government.

My political positions are not the same as Bergeron's. That is also a matter of public knowledge. I think that your approach toward the march on Paris was wrong. But that doesn't mean I think you are in Séguy's pocket!

Q. At the time that march took place, while failing to publicly criticize FO, you made some very harsh public criticisms of the Longwy CFDT in regard to the occupation of the television station, which you described as a "provocation."

A. It so happens that I am a traditionalist in terms of the class struggle. I think that there are methods of struggle which are tried and proven methods of the proletariat. These are the methods of mass struggle. However, in the present case I have not followed the events. I should not have said before looking at the facts that it was a provocation; given the dead end that the workers of Longwy have been brought to through the policy of their leaderships, actions of this kind are liable to take place and must be evaluated in light of the mass struggle. I remain opposed to minority actions of the vanguardist type that aim to "goad" the class struggle into action.

Q. In the local elections, what emerged was an obvious majority for the CP and SP. However, on page one of Informations Ouvrières you announced a majority of 55 percent. Can you tell me what vote totals of what political parties you added up to get that figure?

A. We think that the vote for the Left Radicals [a small bourgeois party that was a component of the Union of the Left] was not really a vote for the Left Radicals. Moreover, we think that the more and more pronounced collapse of the Left Radicals demonstrates that that party has no political following except in terms of the CP and SP leaders' needs to continue a policy that, at a given stage, will culminate in a popular front. Under these conditions we think that the votes that went to the Left Radicals are votes for the SP and CP (more for the SP than for the CP, in fact). □

French CP Claims 140,000 New Members

The French Communist Party announced April 27 the results of a membership survey, the first since 1966-67. In that period, the party claims to have grown from 350,000 to 702,864 members, with 140,000 of the new members having been recruited in 1978.

The survey results, said to be based on 607,893 replies, gave the following profile of the party, beginning with the age breakdown:

Under 25	83,000 (11.8%)
25-30	106,000 (15.0%)
30-35	97,000 (13.8%)
35-45	132,000 (18.8%)
45-60	170,000 (24.1%)
Over 60	115,000 (16.3%)

The number of women in the party was

said to have grown from 90,000 (25.5%) in 1966 to 250,000 (35.7%) today.

The social composition of the "active" membership (12,000 students, 90,000 retirees, and 62,000 women are counted as "inactive") was given as follows:

270,000 (51%) industrial and agricultural workers.
145,000 (28%) white-collar workers.
23,000 (4.4%) technicians.
70,000 (13.5%) intellectuals.
17,000 farmers.
20,000 artisans and shopkeepers.

At the news conference announcing the figures, CP leader Georges Marchais said he expected the party to move "very quickly" toward a membership of one million.

The Reformist Workers Parties and the European Elections

By Anna Libera

The coming elections for the European parliament make it possible, if that were still necessary, to uncover the real character of the policies of the traditional leaderships of the working class.

In this new stage in the construction of a capitalist Europe—whose trademark is the seven million unemployed—the parties that claim to defend the workers are simply transferring their policies of class collaboration to an all-European level.

The European Social Democracy is presenting itself as the motor force for the construction of imperialist Europe. The sirens of "Eurocommunism" sang for only a single summer, before giving way to the realism of the "national roads." As a result, the CPs are not only approaching the elections with their forces scattered but are also putting forward positions that are sometimes diametrically opposed from one country to the next.

While claiming to struggle for a "Europe of the workers," both the SPs and the CPs are in fact only exposing their adaptation to their own bourgeoisies, or to factions of those national bourgeoisies in this campaign.

What is this "Europe of the workers" that Helmut Schmidt, the leading light of the European Socialists, has cooked up with Giscard d'Estaing, the representative of French imperialism? And what kind of "Europe of the workers" do the various Communist parties put forward?

If we listen to the Italian, Belgian, or Spanish CP, it means a greater push toward integration, a parliament with real

powers, and enlarging of the membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).

But if we listen to the French CP, it means defense of the "French nation," sovereignty for the French parliament, and rejection of the countries that have applied for EEC membership.

And according to the English and Irish CPs, it even means the immediate withdrawal of Great Britain and Ireland from the EEC.

All of this has very little to do with the interests of the European workers, as the Lorraine steelworkers are now learning. In the face of these exhibitions of class collaboration, the revolutionary Marxists are focusing their campaigns for the June elections around one essential task—restoring the true meaning of the anticapitalist struggle of the workers: internationalism.

The Social Democrats

Helmut Schmidt's SPD,¹ working in the interests of the dominant sector of German capitalism, has long been leading the fight for the consolidation of Europe. In this endeavor Schmidt has found himself in almost total agreement with Giscard d'Estaing. If Schmidt has often appeared to be a more resolute "European" than the French president, that is only because he represents a stronger economy in which the big corporations have an imperative

1. Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands—Social Democratic Party of Germany.—IP/I

need to move ahead with European consolidation.

Thus the SPD is right where one would expect it to be in the election campaign for the European parliament. The SPD nonetheless put its main trade union leaders at the head of its ticket. This reflects the German Social Democratic leaders' awareness of the relationship of social forces in Europe.

Under the guidance of its president, Willy Brandt, the SPD has unified the campaigns of all the European Social Democratic parties for this election—even involving those like the French SP that have established a privileged relationship with the Communists in recent years.

In 1973 François Mitterrand's SP held a special convention at Bagnolet on the question of Europe. This convention—held amid the euphoria of the Union of the Left—revolved entirely around "the struggle for socialism in southern Europe" and the fight for a "Europe of the workers." While accepting Europe as it exists, the final declaration focused on two points—the rights of European workers and the struggle against the big multinational corporations. This resolution won the support of the SP's left wing, the CERES,² and was later adopted by the Nantes convention of the SP in 1977.

In June 1978 the same leadership that had been elected at Nantes signed the platform of the European SPs for the following June's elections. The document, which was worked up by the SPD, is a good program for the consolidation of a capitalist Europe.

The CERES attacked this campaign platform as a "European Bad Godesberg,"³ particularly with regard to the question of enlarging the EEC (which the French SP had already come out against). To get the platform adopted, Mitterrand explained in July 1978 that he had been able to secure some "changes in nuance" and an "attitude of greater caution, not toward accepting the enlargement of the EEC" but rather to the conditions, arrangements, and "timing" of the enlargement. What he was actually talking about was a short sentence stating that each national parliament should discuss the timing of the enlargement.

2. Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches, et d'Education Socialistes—Center for Socialist Studies, Research, and Education.—IP/I

3. The SPD rejected the perspective of the struggle for socialism at its 1953 convention in Bad Godesberg.



Schmidt, Giscard: Architects of "new Europe" with 7 million unemployed.

According to Willy Brandt, this little sentence was added so that "Mitterrand wouldn't have problems with his elected officials from the southwest." But the sentence did not improve the SP's situation in southwestern France, a wine-producing region that will be particularly hard hit by Spain's entry into the EEC. Socialist notables there have, in fact, seen their share of the vote fall and have suffered the backlash of the chauvinist campaign the CP is waging in the area.

Since March, five local Socialist federations have decided to join the "My country is being skinned alive" movement that is leading the campaign against the enlargement of the EEC. But the bulk of the SP has agreed to be part of the Europe-wide ticket. In France itself, acceptance of this platform foreshadows the possibility of a future convergence with the Giscardian majority.

The Italian SP also fell into line with the German Social Democracy on the question of Europe. In the mid-1970s the Italian SP reassessed its long collaboration with the Christian Democrats in center-left governments and decided this collaboration had had negative effects on the party. So it carried out a "left turn."

In line with this, the SP came out against the CP's attempt to establish a "historic compromise" with the Christian Democrats, calling instead for the establishment of a "left alternative" to the Christian Democratic regime along the lines of the French Union of the Left. But because of the difficulty in carrying out such a policy in Italy and the change in the SP's expectations regarding Europe (with the defeat of the Union of the Left), it changed its perspective at its February 1978 convention in Turin.

There it relegated the "left alternative" to the distant future, launched a virulent polemic against the CP's "Leninism," and reaffirming its "Western choice." (We should recall that during the Cold War the Italian SP was the only Social Democratic party that chose to defend the Soviet "camp.")

So the Italian SP hopes that by hitching its wagon to the rising star of European Social Democracy it will make big gains in Italy itself.

The only discordant note in the European Socialist concert comes from James Callaghan's Labour Party. Although it is pro-European, the Labour Party has to speak for the special needs of British capitalism, which is in a weak position and maintains a special relationship with the United States.

Furthermore, the Labour Party is divided on the question of Europe. The Labour left called for a vote against Britain's entry in the referendum on joining the Common Market.

Callaghan already has enough troubles with the uproar over his wage policy, and he doesn't want to add any more problems.



Mitterrand, Brandt: United on procapitalist campaign.

Thus he must simultaneously try to avoid arousing the anti-Europe lobby in his own party while doing nothing to interfere with the process of European consolidation that is already under way.

Despite the reticence of the British, the Social Democracy will put itself forward as a rather homogenous current on a Europe-wide scale. While we do not object to the Socialist parties running on a united basis in this election (as the French CP does, accepting the SP's internationalist label for good coin), we do object to the proimperialist orientation the SPs are putting forward.

The "National Roads" of the Eurocommunists

For all their supposed "Eurocommunism," the attitudes taken toward the elections by the various Communist parties show the full extent of their adaptation to the interests of their own national bourgeoisies.

The argument that broke out last August between the Spanish and French CPs regarding Spain's entry into the Common Market was only the tip of the iceberg of differences between these two parties.

Faced with the French CP's chauvinist campaign in southwestern France against Spain's entry into the EEC, the leaders of the Spanish CP—who view this entry as the cornerstone of Spain's development—denounced "Marchais's parochial patriotism" and accused him of "stirring up reactionary demons among the backward farmers."

The French CP self-righteously responded with a paragraph in *l'Humanité* explaining that "each party had the right to freely determine its own positions."

In fact, the positions of the various

Communist parties go beyond merely being discordant, as a brief sampling of their positions shows.

In July 1978, CP leader Georges Marchais wrote in the Gaullist magazine *Appel*:

It is clear that for our part we categorically refuse to be tied to any sort of mini-international or to subordinate our national demands to some Europe-wide party. This would be self-evident if it were not for the fact that we are now seeing a regrettable trend among all the other French parties, without exception, toward formations or groupings that, while calling themselves Europe-wide, in the majority of cases actually represent interests that are at the very least in opposition to the national interest.

Leaving aside the French Communist Party, of course, this is true for every other single party—for the Socialist Party, which worked out a preamble and a list of common proposals with its European partners; as well as for all the right-wing parties, which have united with the reactionary parties of other European countries.

Despite our deep solidarity with the struggles and aspirations of the European workers, and with the struggle of the Communists of the Nine [countries now in the EEC], we are too conscious of the national interest to act in this manner.

I should point out that this is not something new in our attitude. The French Communist deputies who have been members of the European parliament since 1973, and who for organizational reasons belong to a European Communist group, have always stated that their sole function in the assembly itself was defense of the French national interest.

In contrast, Giancarlo Pajetta, the Italian CP's shadow minister of foreign affairs, states:

What is needed is an organization that can really act—one that would be based on a transfer of power agreed to by the governments and parliaments of the member states and could therefore take up the crucial problems that the

member states cannot deal with on their own.

The people of the member states will be reassured about this multinational power if it is based on firm democratic control directly exercised by the European parliament with much wider powers than it has at present. As we see it, these multinational powers must be very different from those of the present Council of Europe. The powers of the parliament and the commission must be strengthened, and there must be a better balance between these bodies and the Council of Ministers.

It must be a democratic power that can exercise on a Europe-wide scale those prerogatives that the national parliaments turn over to it, and that can assure effective popular participation in the planning and application of Community policies. Without this, there is no chance of breathing new life into this Community.

For its part, the Communist Party of the Netherlands "rejects the idea that the construction of a supranational power should be an inescapable fact" and fights "for the protection of the national sovereignty of our country and for the protection of the Dutch constitution, which stipulates that the Dutch parliament is the sole elected representative of the people."

On the other hand, the Belgian CP holds that :

In reality, it is wrong to counterpose national measures to Community measures as if they were incompatible. To deny the possibility of national economic measures today would be to disarm the working-class and democratic movement, which of necessity carries out its struggle within national borders. This would, in fact, leave the way free for big capital. *

But on the other hand, if we do not also present perspectives at the level of the Common Market, that would allow these same big-business forces to make the decisions by themselves at that level—decisions against which "national" resistance would then be more difficult. . . . The [economic] problems require coordinated policies that cannot be carried out without the transfer of certain powers from the national states to integrated bodies, so that decisions made with common consent can be applied.

But the Communist Party of Ireland is "opposed to the direct election of the European 'Parliament'" and favors Ireland's withdrawal from the Common Market.

And the list could go on.

These differing positions reflect the national conditions that are specific to each country, to which the CP's class-collaborationist policies are adapted. This means that the Spanish and Italian CPs, which espouse the interests of the big monopolies of their countries and are trying to establish a policy of national union with the representatives of those monopolies, are dyed-in-the-wool "Europeans."

The French CP's anti-Europe campaign combines its traditional chauvinism with its policy of deepening the split with the Socialist Party and its search for a "Union of the People of France."

An analysis of the policies toward Europe of the two principal Communist

parties—the Italian and French—shows the divergent paths that can result from identical adaptations to the interests of the national bourgeoisie.

The Italian CP's 'Europeanism'

Since the beginning of the 1960s the Italian CP has followed a pro-European policy as the framework for the "Italian road to socialism." This "road" requires maintaining the international status quo, and one of the existing realities that must



French CP daily pushes chauvinist poison: "France must not be Bonn's suburb."

be taken into account is European consolidation.

Moreover, the deepening of the "Italian road" that came with the "historic compromise" proposal and the effort to establish a national union with the Christian Democracy—the party of the Italian monopolies—confirmed and amplified the Italian CP's European policy.

The CP stands not only for the enlarging of the Common Market and the election of the European parliament by universal suffrage, but also, as the quote by Pajetta shows, favors a transfer of powers from the national parliaments to this Europe-wide institution. And the CP goes even further, accepting the framework of military alliances in Europe—NATO in particular.

One might recall that CP leader Enrico Berlinguer declared during the June 1976 Italian election campaign that he felt more secure in the NATO camp than in the Warsaw Pact when it came to developing his experiment of "progress toward socialism."

Recently, leaders of the Italian CP participated in a conference on the security of Europe. This conference was held in the United States by the Research Institute on International Change at Columbia University (an institute set up by Brzezinski). Among those participating were all the European Socialist parties, plus the Italian and Spanish Communist parties and the League of Yugoslav Communists.

Professor Bogdan Denitch, of the above-mentioned institute, made this comment on the policy of the Italian CP:

The Italian Communists made a very, very strong impression. They appeared to be a serious movement, a government party that is not trying to hide from difficulties. There were differences between the various parties, but there were also differences between the Socialists and the Americans present. I think, for example, that the views set forth by [CP] Senator Calamandrei regarding NATO and its role in the maintenance of a strategic equilibrium as a precondition for détente were very well articulated, reasonable, and certainly represented a basis for discussion. It is true that he presented some reservations—on consultation, standardization of armaments, and limitation of the sphere of influence, for example. But in this the Italian CP did not seem very different from some Social Democratic parties. The Norwegian Undersecretary of Defense said more or less the same thing.

This was a surprise not only for the Americans, but also for some Socialists present, who tend to be more neutralist and to have more reservations than the Italian CP does today regarding the usefulness of the NATO defensive alliance.⁴

The leaders of the Italian CP are leaving no room for misunderstanding regarding their objective in the consolidation of Europe. Pajetta brought this to mind last September at a public conference in Turin: "I do not think that the socialist transformation of Europe is on the agenda." Just as the Italian CP has opted for austerity and national union to save Italian capitalism, it is lining up behind the consolidation of Europe as an indispensable complement to this salvage operation.

The French CP's Fight Against 'National Abandonment'

The French CP has taken up a very different banner—defense of the "French nation," which it claims everyone else wants to sell out for a handful of deutsche marks! Here the CP has sunk to unparalleled depths of chauvinism and, with obvious relish, is again taking up the "anti-kraut" accents of its policy during the Second World War.

Even if our criticism of the CP's policy toward Europe was solely limited to attacking its chauvinism, it would still be necessary to wage a strong fight on this ground. Its policy is spreading nationalist poison in the working class, stimulating divisions and opening the way to racism. We are already seeing Communist mayors coming out in favor of limiting the number of immigrant workers in their towns.

Ever since the first step in the consolidation of Europe, the French CP has stood for defending "its nation" against the national abandonment that was showing itself.

4. Interview in the October 4, 1978, issue of *La Repubblica*. The Communist daily *l'Unità* of the same date also gave extensive coverage to this conference.

Jacques Duclos stated in October 1953: "We are ready to participate in any political actions that can and should be organized, in a powerful campaign throughout France, with all those French people, whomever they may be—we say clearly, whomever they may be—who like us do not want to see a new Wehrmacht."

To show the "national" continuity of its policy, the CP features this old statement of twenty-five years ago in its just-published book—*Europe: La France en Jeu* (Europe—France is at Stake).⁵

In fact, the CP led virulent campaigns during the 1950s and 1960s against all moves toward European consolidation and integration—always in the name of defending the French heritage.

In 1965, however, CP General Secretary Waldeck Rochet made a timid initial turn, explaining that it was necessary to take the Common Market's existence into account and to fight for its democratization. Later, in signing the 1972 Common Program of government of the Union of the Left, the CP sanctioned that document's European perspective—the acceptance of capitalist Europe as the field of action for the Union of the Left.

This acceptance of Europe was clearly tied to the adoption of the Common Program, a program of class collaboration that did not oppose the capitalist system. Regarding the enlargement of the Common Market, the French CP put forward only one precondition—the establishment of democratic regimes in Greece, Spain, and Portugal. By now those conditions have been met.

Following the break-up and defeat of the Union of the Left in March 1978 the CP returned to its extreme nationalist course regarding the European question. This position fulfills several objectives for the CP. It can use its chauvinist campaign to hide its acceptance of capitalism and of the capitalist (nonenlarged), Common Market, and thus its inability to provide any perspective for the workers who are being buffeted by the economic crisis.

The CP also uses this campaign to bolster its policy of deepening the split with the SP (a "European" and even a "German" party par excellence) and to clear the way for establishing a "Union of the People of France," thus returning to the Gaullists' camp with a defense of the "French nation."

Unless one reads the French CP press it is hard to imagine the actual scope of its chauvinist campaign. We will provide a few examples.

The CP press no longer speaks of trusts or monopolies; instead it uses the German word *konzern*. And when it has to refer to a capitalist, the only names it can think of are Krupp or von Thyssen!



Marchais, Carrillo, Berlinguer: French, Spanish, and Italian CPs in head-on collision over "national roads."

And what can we say about the cartoon in *l'Humanité* that depicts France, bearing a sign that reads: "For Sale: 40 Million Marks"? And what of the poster plastered on the walls of Paris that says simply: "No to the German Europe"? Or what about Fitermann's report to the CP's September 1978 Central Committee meeting, in which he explained that Germany wanted to use the EEC to win what it couldn't get through the war!

What about the CP's poster campaign for "French production," and the campaign of the FFTL (the book industry union it controls) for the repatriation of "French" printing work now being done in Belgium?

The book the CP recently published about the European question offers up a real brew of nationalism. The book's introduction, dealing with the "European idea," presents "great Europeans" from Churchill to Hitler and from Goebbels to Robert Schuman!⁶

A single theme runs through the entire book: "For the people who govern us, as well as for the Social Democrats, setting up Europe means dismantling France" (p. 8). To prevent such an abandonment it is necessary to "develop all the potential of the French nation . . . to guarantee national sovereignty . . . for a strong France resting on the abilities of its workers, technicians, and engineers . . ." (p. 9).

After lengthy descriptions of German hegemony over Europe, the authors exclaim: "In clear language, this means that the people—our people—might have decisions made by foreign majorities imposed upon them" (p. 84). Invoking the extremely reactionary Gaullist writer Maurice Druon, the authors state: "These facts do not fail to worry large sectors of French opinion,

and ex-minister, to ask: 'Are we going to reconcile ourselves to a Europe under German domination?'" (pp. 101-102).

But this chauvinist, nationalist outburst cannot paper over the contradictions in the CP's policy. The CP organizes demonstrations against Spain's entry into the EEC, but in no way does it oppose the capitalist Common Market as such. It leads a battle against increased European integration in the name of defending national capital—and therefore the national exploiters!

It is the CP's refusal to oppose the capitalist system, national and international, that provides this whole reactionary—in the literal sense of the term, a return to the past—dimension to its position on Europe. At the present level of development of the productive forces, to fight for the repatriation of "French" capital and productive forces to capitalist France provides no solution to the economic crisis. In fact, it does just the opposite. If this policy were actually carried out, there would be a crisis of overproduction accompanied by massive destruction of the productive forces by the capitalists. This would mean a rise in unemployment, not to mention the layoff of workers employed in French-owned companies abroad.

Any campaign against the Common Market that is not accompanied by a radical campaign against capitalism, for the concrete international solidarity of the workers, for international economic planning, and for the Socialist United States of Europe can only take the reactionary character of the French CP's policy.

To underline the completely pragmatic character of the CP's policy, we should also recall that it refused to lift a finger in late 1977 against the extradition of Red Army Faction lawyer Klaus Croissant, the first victim of the European judicial system that the CP is now raising a storm about. □

5. D. Debatisse et al., *Europe: la France en Jeu* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1979).

6. Robert Schuman, French foreign minister in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was the architect of the European Coal and Steel Community, a forerunner of the EEC.—IP/I

Vietnam and the Overthrow of the Pol Pot Regime

[As part of the discussion in our columns on the Indochina conflict, we are publishing below a document by the JRCL (Japan Revolutionary Communist League, Japanese section of the Fourth International). This is a summary of a longer document adopted by the Central Committee of the JRCL in January, prior to the Chinese invasion of Vietnam.]

* * *

1. We support the Vietnamese government and the new Kampuchean government of the National Salvation Front against the Chinese government and the former Pol Pot regime.

2. As a result of problems at home and abroad—particularly with the Chinese regime—the Vietnamese government and state were compelled to resort to military intervention in order to liberate the Kampuchean people from the Pol Pot regime and put an end to the direct military confrontation between Vietnam and Kampuchea. The main force in the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime was the Vietnamese army, whose rapid victory was due to the collapse of the Pol Pot regime and its army, which received no active support from the Kampuchean masses.

The level of consciousness of the Kampuchean masses was extremely uneven and generally weak as a result of the whole process set in motion by the 1954 Geneva Accords, which led to the dissolution of the armed liberation forces and the formation of the colonial bonapartist regime of Sihanouk. Sihanouk was in turn replaced by the counterrevolutionary puppet regime of Lon Nol, which was finally overthrown and replaced by the military dictatorship of Pol Pot, the first political regime of the Kampuchean workers state.

Under these conditions, it would have been preferable—were it possible—for the National Salvation Front to have carried out a prolonged struggle with Vietnamese assistance, gradually expanding the liberated zones under its control. This would have made it possible for the Kampuchean masses to be reorganized politically to free their own country from the Pol Pot regime.

However, the Vietnamese government decided to overthrow the Pol Pot regime using the Vietnamese army as the main striking force in support of the Kampuchean National Salvation Front. They were compelled to make this political choice in view of the concrete conditions prevailing, such as the reactionary hostility of the Chinese bureaucracy toward the Vietnamese workers state, and the serious political and military difficulties facing

the Kampuchean masses' own struggle under the Pol Pot regime.

3. The overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in the Kampuchean workers state, and the formation of the new government of the National Salvation Front with Vietnamese support, represent an attempt to reestablish the solidarity and fighting unity that the peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea had forged in their common struggle against U.S. imperialism. It serves to defend and strengthen the three countries of Indochina as an international revolutionary stronghold in Southeast Asia.

Thus, internationally, it represents a blow to American and Japanese imperialism and to the anticommunist neocolonial regimes of the ASEAN countries. It is also a blow to the reactionary foreign policy of the Chinese bureaucracy, which has pursued a policy of openly blocking with imperialist and neocolonialist forces against the Soviet Union and which is hostile to the Vietnamese workers state.

4. At present, in view of the historical conditions of the liberation struggles and the socio-economic structures of the three Indochinese countries, mutual assistance among the three countries, with Vietnam in the lead, is politically and economically indispensable for the reconstruction and the progress of the three workers states. Vietnam occupies the central place politically and socio-economically in relations among the three workers states by virtue of its richer experience in the class struggle internationally and nationally, and also because of its more advanced economy.

The Pol Pot regime, characterized by extreme nationalism, and with the army as its sole political base, rejected all collaboration with the Vietnamese workers state. It adopted extreme social and economic policies of "village communism," and established an extremely repressive, autocratic political regime which prevented the worker and peasant masses exercising any democratic rights.

The class interests of the Kampuchean workers state and the political and economic interests of the peasant masses of that country make it indispensable to establish collaboration between Vietnam and Kampuchea. Such collaboration, if limited to the three Indochinese workers states, will not suffice to solve all the contradictions among them. There are also various problems of bureaucratism and nationalism in each of these countries. Nevertheless, the establishment and development of cooperation among the three workers states is fundamentally in the

class interests of those states and their peoples. It will strengthen all three workers states as strongholds of revolution in Southeast Asia. From this standpoint, we support and defend the reestablishment and consolidation of mutual cooperation among the three workers states of Indochina.

5. The basic perspective needed to solve the problems facing the three workers states today is that of uniting and linking up internationally with the rising revolution in neighboring Thailand. But the subjective and objective conditions today are extremely difficult for the three workers states of Indochina.

The rise of an alliance of Indochinese countries headed by Vietnam has deepened the class hostility of imperialism and the neocolonial, anticommunist ASEAN regimes toward Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea. The political and economic isolation of the three countries is being exacerbated. The reactionary hostility of the Chinese bureaucracy toward them is also escalating, with political and military consequences.

Under such conditions in the region and internationally, and in view of the seriousness of the problems in Vietnam itself as well as in Laos and Kampuchea, the Vietnamese government cannot help but become increasingly dependent on the Soviet workers state and the Kremlin bureaucracy.

Of course, this does not automatically mean that the Vietnamese leadership will lose its national independence and be totally subordinated to the Kremlin bureaucracy.

Relations among the three Indochinese workers states now stand at a new point of departure for the development of cooperation, free from the nationalist and military pressures of the Pol Pot regime. At the same time, such a situation internationally and domestically, with the problems it implies for the Vietnamese workers state, exerts powerful pressures on that state and on the worker and peasant masses of Indochina. These are factors which promote bureaucratization of the three Indochinese workers states, making it even more difficult in practice to solve the various national questions in these countries really democratically.

Under these sorts of international conditions, the foreign policy orientation of the Vietnamese leadership in Southeast Asia for the time being cannot but be a defensive one, cannot but be a policy of peaceful coexistence, maintenance of the status quo. This will pose sharply the problem of

relations between the Vietnamese workers state and the neocolonial anticommunist regime in Thailand. In the present situation, the Chinese bureaucracy opposes the revolutionary movement in Thailand and supports the Kriangsak regime.

For the time being the Vietnamese leadership, given its historical character and the conditions that Vietnam faces today, cannot adopt an orientation of uniting with and actively aiding the rising revolutionary movements in Thailand and other countries of Southeast Asia. Their choice of orientation in the past has always been a matter of responding to changes in the situation. In other words, the rise of revolutionary struggles in Thailand and the pressures they exert on the Vietnamese leadership will be decisive in influencing Hanoi's orientation. The same is true of upsurges of class struggle in the other countries of Southeast Asia or in Japan, and of the deepening crisis of the imperialist system in East Asia as a whole.

Developments such as these will enable Vietnam and the other Indochinese workers states to link up with the international revolutionary movement in Southeast Asia and in East Asia as a whole. In the absence of such developments in the near future, socialist construction and collaboration among the three workers states will inevitably follow a very tortuous course, with many sacrifices.

Hence our struggle throughout East Asia will be decisive for the defense of the three workers states of Indochina. The task of the Japanese proletariat—to bring down Japanese imperialism—represents an important contribution to the building of socialism in the Chinese workers state and in the workers states of Indochina.

January 1979



Sadat, Carter, and Begin celebrate signing of "peace treaty."

Israeli Regime Steps Up Attacks on Lebanon

[The following appeared as an editorial in the May 11 issue of the *Militant*, a revolutionary-socialist newsweekly published in New York.]

* * *

Formal documents putting the new treaty between Israel and Egypt into effect were exchanged by the two governments April 25. But even as the documents were changing hands, the Zionist regime was making crystal clear what its plans are for the future. And they have nothing to do with peace.

Israeli gunboats and artillery pounded Lebanese towns for the fourth day in a row during the treaty ceremonies April 25. At least 57 people were killed and 100 injured, and as many as 40,000 were forced to flee their homes.

"According to UN and US observers," Joseph Harsch reported in the May 1 *Christian Science Monitor*, "Israelis used American weapons supposedly limited by

agreement with Washington to defensive action only."

Harsch was referring to antipersonnel cluster bombs, which are used by the Israeli armed forces to maximize civilian casualties.

Israeli Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman, before boarding a plane taking him to talks in Cairo, told reporters he was not worried about the reaction of the Egyptian government.

"This is one of the problems we are going to be facing in the future. But I think they will understand," Weizman declared.

Weizman's assessment proved accurate. His diplomatic mission proceeded as planned, with the Egyptian regime issuing only a mild protest.

But where do the Zionist rulers plan to stop?

- On April 10, Israeli bombers raided the Lebanese towns of Tyre and Damur, causing dozens of casualties.

- On April 18, right-wing Christian forces declared the strip of southern Lebanon they control "independent." Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin denied responsibility, but the rightists are completely dependent on Israeli support and could not have moved without their tacit approval.

- On April 22 Israeli forces began a savage bombardment of Lebanon that went on for five days.

- Also on April 22 the Israeli cabinet gave the lie to the Palestinian "autonomy" promised in the Sadat-Begin treaty by voting to establish two new settlements in the occupied West Bank.

- And finally, on April 29, the Israeli cabinet voted to impose the death penalty on Palestinian guerrillas convicted of "inhuman terrorist crimes."

But the real terrorist in the Middle East is the Zionist regime. It has taken the treaty with Egypt as a green light for stepping up its attacks against the Arab masses, and especially against the Palestinian people. □

Your First Issue?

Why Not Subscribe?

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Country _____

- \$24 enclosed for a one-year subscription.
- \$12 enclosed for a six-month subscription.
- \$6 enclosed for a three-month subscription.
- Send information about first-class and airmail rates.

Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, P.O. Box 116, Village Sta., New York, N.Y. 10014

Proletarian Orientation and the Revolutionary Party

By Fred Feldman

[Sections and sympathizing organizations of the Fourth International in many countries are currently discussing or carrying out a turn toward the industrial working class. The following article provides a useful summary of some of the difficulties encountered by the American Trotskyists in carrying out a similar turn in the late 1930s. It points up the importance of proletarian composition for revolutionary Marxist parties.

[Feldman's article forms the introduction to a collection of documents by Leon Trotsky, James P. Cannon, and George Clarke prepared by the Education Department of the Socialist Workers Party and recently published by Pathfinder Press under the title *Background to "The Struggle for a Proletarian Party"*.

[The new pamphlet is available for US\$1.75 from Pathfinder Press, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014. James P. Cannon's book *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* is available from the same publisher for US\$4.45.]

* * *

Program is the fundamental determinant of the class nature of any party. A party like the Socialist Workers Party that fights to place the working class in power is a workers' party even if at a given moment a majority of its members are students, lawyers, or Wisconsin dairy farmers.

On the other hand, a party can be predominantly working class in composition and still be capitalist or middle class in its program. A majority of registered Democrats may be workers, but this party is directly controlled by and serves the capitalist ruling class.

A Social Democratic party like the Labour Party in Great Britain serves the ruling class indirectly through the intermediary of the labor bureaucracy and its ideology. Similarly, Stalinist parties like the French Communist Party serve imperialism by way of the Soviet bureaucracy and this is expressed in their basic program.

But composition is far from being irrelevant to program. A party that aims to lead the workers to power needs to be working class in composition. Specifically, it must be centered in the industrial working class, the most powerful section of the class and the section that plays the leading role in decisive battles with the bosses.

If a revolutionary socialist party is pre-

dominantly composed of nonworkers, it means that it can't yet make its program a reality. It is not a contender for power. It is still in the initial phase of refining its program and accumulating forces.

The Russian socialists were like that in the first years of the movement. They were mostly students and professional intellectuals arguing for a working-class perspective.

But when the situation changed and workers began to fight, the most determined socialists turned toward that movement. The composition of the party changed rapidly. By 1905 the Bolsheviks were primarily a party of industrial workers, and despite some big downturns they basically remained so.

A radicalization of the working class is a decisive test for a revolutionary party, once it has reached a certain size. If it can't recruit industrial workers and root itself in the industrial working class at such a time, it signifies a contradiction between program and practice that must be resolved. Program or practice must change.

James P. Cannon's *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* covers a time when this contradiction overtook an important section of the SWP and produced a deep split over basic questions of program, organization, and orientation. The materials in this volume provide some background to Cannon's book.

These items do not center on the theoretical issues that were in dispute, like the nature of the Soviet Union or the necessity of defending the degenerated workers' states against imperialism. They focus instead on the obstacles that the SWP faced in turning toward a radicalized industrial working class.

When the Trotskyists were expelled from the Communist Party for opposing Stalin in 1928, they had few forces and even fewer bases in the unions. These revolutionists devoted themselves to trying to win the most advanced political elements—the members of the Communist Party—to the ideas of the Left Opposition.

At that time they rejected proposals that they devote themselves primarily to "mass work" in the proletariat as a whole, since they had insufficient forces. The class itself was somewhat passive under the impact of the beginning of the depression. These first years until 1933 were a time of great isolation, even though an important nucleus of revolutionists was consolidated around Trotskyist ideas.

After Hitler's rise to power, the International Left Opposition gave up the idea of reforming the parties of the Comintern. Broader arenas opened up as a mass radicalization began to take hold. A centrist group called the American Workers Party came into being, moved toward us, and fused with the Trotskyist organization (the Communist League of America) in 1934.

Then, reflecting a general mass upturn, the Socialist Party turned left, the extreme right wing split away, and a big left wing formed that was more radical than the central leadership around Norman Thomas.

In 1936 the Trotskyists joined the Socialist Party in order to win over this left wing and build a bigger revolutionary organization. They were expelled from the SP a little more than a year later for opposing the SP's political support to the capitalist coalition government during the Spanish civil war. Trotskyists also opposed the SP's endorsement of the Republican candidate for Mayor of New York, La Guardia, who was being supported by the union bureaucrats and the Communist Party.

The Trotskyists took with them the best people in the SP, including virtually the whole Young People's Socialist League. There were now about 2,000 people in the Trotskyist movement.

In the months preceding the founding convention of the SWP Trotsky pressed for a sharp change in orientation. While the Trotskyists had been in the Socialist Party the industrial workers exploded in sitdown strikes and other battles that began the organization of workers in the key industries into the CIO.

The peak of mass activity had passed by the time the Trotskyists formed an independent organization again. But the unions had become areas for sharp debate over political orientation. A new economic crisis developed in 1937, and the approach of the new world war spurred great antiwar sentiment among working people. These developments shook workers' faith in the Roosevelt administration.

The radicalization of workers proved deep and longlasting although it was misled by the Stalinists and the union officialdom. This radicalization did not end definitively until after World War II.

The Trotskyists were not without significant trade union experience. In Minneapolis they had led big Teamsters' strikes and wide-ranging organizing drives. Fractions had been established in the auto and

maritime unions, and workers were joining the revolutionary ranks.

Still, less than half the members—and almost none of the newly-won youth—were in industrial unions. And union work had never been the central arena of Trotskyist activity.

On October 10, 1937, Trotsky wrote a letter to James P. Cannon, the central leader of the Trotskyist movement. "The party has only a minority of genuine factory workers," he stated. "This is an inevitable beginning for every revolutionary workers' party. The non-proletarian elements represent a very necessary yeast, and I believe that we can be proud of the good quality of these elements." Nonetheless he pointed to the dangers involved in a composition that was not in line with the party's program and goals.

"The task is naturally not to prevent the influx of intellectuals by artificial methods," he concluded, "but to orient in practice the whole organization toward the factories, the strikes, the unions."

In an October 3, 1937, letter to Cannon he had proposed leadership changes to facilitate this:

I have remarked hundreds of times that the worker who remains unnoticed in the "normal" conditions of party life reveals remarkable qualities in a change of the situation when general formulas and fluent pens are not sufficient, where acquaintance with the life of workers and practical capacities are necessary. . . .

It is absolutely necessary at the next convention to introduce in the local and central committees as many workers as possible. . . .

The difficulty is that in every organization there are traditional committee members and that different secondary, factional, and personal considerations play too great a role in the composition of the list of candidates. The task is to break with routine, which is the beginning of bureaucratism; to convince the organization and especially its leading stratum (which is more difficult) of the necessity of a systematic renewal of the composition of all the leading bodies of the party. Naturally, the renewal can never be complete; a nucleus selected by the whole experience of the past is necessary in order to preserve the continuity of the party's politics.

In a letter to the International leadership written in February 1938, James P. Cannon pointed out a gap that had opened up between the leadership and the ranks in implementing trade union work while the Trotskyists had been in the SP:

The locals and branches, on their own initiative, in various localities developed trade union activity, established contact and broadened their experience and connections in this field," he wrote, and concluded: "The necessary transformation from the propaganda circle to mass work is finding its full reflection only belatedly in the leadership itself. And since the initiative, for a variety of reasons, could not, or at least did not, come through the National Committee, it had to come from below.

The December 1937-January 1938 convention voted to devote 90 percent of party



Sitdown strikers occupy General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan. Occupation lasted from Dec. 30, 1936 to Feb. 11, 1937.

effort to the union movement, and to make this work the top priority for the central party leadership. But this orientation was not fully carried out.

For in fact a division in the leadership and the ranks was slowly taking shape. It was marked initially not by the existence of a contrary line or a clearly defined alternative orientation, but by reluctance, hesitation, and skepticism about taking the next step in building the party.

Four people were generally known to the ranks as central leaders in the party national office and related institutions. One was James P. Cannon, national secretary of the new party. His roots went back to the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party left wing before the Russian revolution. Then there was Max Shachtman, a veteran revolutionist who helped found the Communist Party in 1919. His specialty was political journalism. And Martin Abern, who, along with Cannon and Shachtman, had been a founder of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. Fourth was James Burn-

ham, a prominent philosophy professor who had joined the party with the American Workers Party in the 1934 fusion. Of these only Cannon threw himself fully into advancing a turn toward the unions.

There were several reasons for this.

One was the obvious difficulties of making a sharp turn from years devoted largely to propaganda work among voluble politicians to work among politically uneducated but radicalizing workers. This meant rethinking every area of party work and big shifts in party members' personal lives. The weight of this factor should not be exaggerated, however. After all, the years of propaganda work in politicized circles had been aimed precisely at preparing such a shift.

More important was the changing political mood among middle-class intellectuals, journalists, students, and similar types who had been attracted for a time to revolutionary politics. These forces tend to be drawn to whichever of the two decisive contending classes seems the most dynamic and capable of ordering society. The

capitalist social crisis shook them loose from their bourgeois moorings and turned them toward the left, but the crisis had dragged on and the workers—especially on a world scale—could hardly be said to be scoring tremendous victories.

Hitler had triumphed in Germany; Franco was heading for power in Spain; in France a workers' upsurge was successfully derailed by Stalinist class collaboration; Czechoslovakia and Austria came under Nazi rule; Stalin was killing off all of Lenin's associates and murdering millions of other people in the purges; World War II was approaching and there seemed to be no force on earth that could stop it; and the Fourth International, the only fully conscious revolutionary force, remained tiny.

True, the rise of the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] in the United States had been a historic victory for labor, but the CIO bureaucrats were successfully guiding the movement into the Roosevelt camp, and fascist formations in the U.S. had begun to grow at a more rapid clip.

Pessimism and demoralization spread like an epidemic in middle-class circles. Their professions and middle-class prospects preserved them from the conditions that forced workers to fight, and made it easier for them to adapt to the dominant bourgeoisie; and their lack of ties to the mass workers' movement deprived them of any sense of its tremendous power. The middle-class radicals—typified by people like Max Eastman—began to move rightward and their influence was strongly felt in the party. Many party leaders like Shachtman and Burnham had worked closely with this milieu, and Burnham had basically always belonged to it.

For them the pressure to turn the party's face in another direction was pressure to devote themselves wholly to building a proletarian party and to break with old, comfortable milieus. It meant looking at their activities and plans in the first place from that point of view. But many had gnawing doubts about the real possibilities of building a revolutionary working-class movement.

In *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, Cannon describes a classic statement of this mood, recording a conversation with Burnham about taking a full-time party assignment:

I proposed concretely that he end the two-for-a-nickel business of instructing college students who have no intention of connecting themselves with the labor movement, and devote his energies and talents entirely to the party [in the capacity of national secretary]. After "thinking it over" for a day or so he rejected the proposal. The reason he gave was somewhat astounding: he said he was not fully convinced of the wisdom of devoting himself to a cause which might not be victorious in his lifetime! Naturally, I could not give him any guarantees.

Burnham was a central party leader

with considerable prestige. Imagine the effect his attitude had on younger, less experienced members who were considering whether to commit themselves fully.

The youth movement of that day also presented a problem. The YPSL [Young People's Socialist League] was very different from today's YSA [Young Socialist Alliance]. The great majority of its members had come from the loose and clique-ridden Social Democracy and Social-Democratic ideas still influenced them. Much of their work was tinged with ultra-leftism, for instance in the struggle against fascism. They had few youth of working-class origin and almost none from the oppressed nationalities. Still they were good material. Trotsky summed up the problem in a May 27, 1939, letter:

"I continue to be of the opinion that you have *too many petty-bourgeois boys and girls* who are very good and devoted to the party, but who do not fully realize that their duty is not to discuss among themselves, but to penetrate into the fresh milieu of workers." [*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 112]

A fourth and particularly damaging problem was the Abern clique. This was a grouping around Martin Abern, who had taken a strong dislike to Cannon. The reasons for this are unclear. In any case, he devoted his political activity to organizing against Cannon.

He organized a grouping of people who had one or another grievance against the leadership. In a small, isolated movement under a lot of pressure in a capitalist society, there were always plenty of irritations for Abern to feed on.

Abern and his following formed a kind of mutual admiration, advancement, and protection association. They sought to push each other forward and to snipe at Cannon or at people who accepted Cannon's leadership. They subordinated political considerations to this.

One method used by this grouping was the secret circulation of material and information about what was going on in the Political Committee and in different branches. It was inevitably one-sided information. This kind of rumor-mongering gave the participants in Abern's group the feeling of being in the know. It made it possible for Abern to line people up on political questions or organizational disputes without another side being presented. It poisoned the atmosphere, and undermined the ability of leading bodies to discuss freely and function effectively.

The Abern clique represented the opposite of revolutionary Marxist politics—with them, subjective criteria and considerations of prestige or revenge ranked higher than objective political needs. This wasn't entirely deliberate. They were just blinded by hatred of Cannon and admiration for each other.

The Abern grouping was a product of the movement's isolated and somewhat in-

grown existence over many years. It was an obstacle to a turn toward the working class. The group's politics, in so far as it had any, were conservative. It had opposed every major turn made by the party in the past—after all Cannon was for it! Thus it took a negative stance toward the fusion with the American Workers Party and the entry into the Socialist Party. It was in the nature of the group that its eyes were always turned inward. They didn't look outward to the unions, because they were primarily concerned about the impact of any change on their own position. And they naturally latched on to any signs of discontent caused by new moves and developments.

On top of this, they tended to regard the trade unions as Cannon's "turf."

Now this kind of grouping had a certain appeal to those who had developed in the loose, undisciplined talk-shop atmosphere of the Socialist Party. And many of the Abernites were people of real organizational and literary talent. They emerged as the leaders of the youth movement, which they tried to use as a base against the party leadership. Under the given historical circumstances, this tended to cut off the political development of the bulk of the youth. Abern built up his group by catering to their errors, fears, prejudices, and hesitations. They were reinforced in the tendency to subordinate basic political considerations to organizational and personal concerns.

A majority of the Political Committee was made up of supporters of Abern plus Burnham and Shachtman. The problem was not that so many students and intellectuals had joined the party. That was positive. The problem was that a key part of the leadership adapted to this layer instead of educating it and integrating it into a proletarian party—and this section also adapted to middle-class layers outside the movement who were heading rightward politically.

While Cannon and others tried to press forward the turn, little fundamental progress was made. Moods of discontent spread in the party, which seemed to be stagnating. In effect, no new orientation had been put into practice to replace the orientation toward the Socialist Party.

One result of the long delay in carrying out the turn—which resulted in missing some good party-building opportunities—was growing tension between party unionists and the nonworker elements, and between the unionists and a big section of the national leadership. They were moving in opposite directions.

The problems were further complicated by the weight of supporters of Burnham, Shachtman, and Abern on the Political Committee. They often had a majority.

These problems reached explosive proportions in what became known as the "auto crisis" of January 1939, which was vividly described in an article written by

George Clarke for the majority faction in the 1939-40 struggle.

A split was developing in the United Auto Workers at the time between an open right wing led by Homer Martin and a group of bureaucrats including the Stalinists. Rival conventions were called: Martin's for Detroit, the Stalinist-backed one for Cleveland.

Neither group represented a left wing. Both were led by self-seeking bureaucrats. But a tactical decision had to be made.

The leaders of the auto union fraction met and adopted a policy. Trotskyists would propose that auto workers form a third group calling for keeping the union united and opposing both bureaucratic factions. The auto fraction met and voted unanimously for this.

The Political Committee in New York voted to reject this policy. Cannon was in Europe at the time. The PC ordered the publication of an editorial by Burnham in the *Socialist Appeal* basically endorsing the right-wing Martin group's convention. An issue of the *Appeal* was published carrying this line.

As George Clarke wrote, "Observe here . . . that there was no motion, no suggestion, no intimation that before adopting a policy completely at loggerheads with the Field Committee and the National Auto Conference, the committee was in the slightest degree interested in gaining additional information from the comrades on the scene. Not even a hint that some PC comrade or the entire PC might go out to the field to get information and debate the policy; not even a hint that one of the field comrades might be called into New York for the same purpose." Without talking to a single auto worker or trade unionist, Burnham just sat down at his typewriter and tapped out a policy.

What was involved here was an entirely tactical decision, based on a conjunctural estimate of two rival factions in the UAW. Even if the PC felt obliged to reverse a local tactical decision on principled grounds, it was totally unprecedented and wrong to do so without thorough consultation with the members who were to carry the decision out.

The Martin group now announced it was quitting the CIO, the industrial union movement the party was committed to building. This decisive shift to the right by Martin was sure to isolate him further, and the auto fraction leaders now decided that SWP supporters in Auto should attend the Cleveland convention of the anti-Martin group.

But Burnham was able to again carry his position in the Political Committee by a 3-2 plurality, along with a motion demanding instant obedience. Burnham and Abern threatened to resign from the PC if the motion wasn't carried out.

Opposition throughout the party grew and Burnham finally had to cave in, assenting to a change in the tactic along



Sympathetic farmers distribute food to striking coal miners in 1978.

lines favored by the fraction. He then sent out a letter denouncing the fraction. He had yielded, he wrote, because "the attempt to carry out the policy of the P.C. majority (that is, the policy of the party) would be certain to lead to a major internal party crisis." Burnham's attempt to transform three people into the party didn't hide the fact that the cause of the problem was that there was no support in the ranks or the national committee for Burnham's policy.

The fact that Burnham's proposal was wrong was of minor importance. Errors are inevitable when inexperienced people start trying to find their way in doing party work in the unions.

The incident was a model of how not to do union work and how a leadership can discredit itself in the eyes of the party ranks.

In a subsequent meeting of the Political Committee, Burnham and Abern were said to have complained, "It isn't so much that the Field comrades opposed us" but that "this dispute would never have arisen if Cannon were here. They would never have dared challenge Cannon the way they did us."

Clarke comments:

Is it possible to convince such people by a citation from the record that Cannon always seeks out complete information before jumping to a policy, especially on trade union matters; that where there is disagreement on a practical matter there is no political principle is involved be-

tween himself and the field comrades, he first of all attempts to persuade them that he is correct; that failing to persuade them—even though firmly convinced of the justice of his position—he yields in their favor? Can you explain to these people that this is an essential quality of proletarian organization—in conjunction, of course, with a noteworthy record of being *correct* on practical matters of tactics?

An example of Cannon's practice is provided by Farrell Dobbs in *Teamster Power*. In the chapter "Tobin Backs Down" Dobbs recounts a discussion of a tactical issue concerning the reinstatement of Minneapolis Teamsters Local 574 into the Teamsters Union.

At that time, Cannon (who was asked by the fraction to come to Minneapolis for consultation) strongly disagreed with the decision taken by the fraction.

Dobbs says, "We explained why we thought the proposed settlement with [Teamsters president] Tobin should be accepted. Jim, in turn, informed us of the hesitations among the national Trotskyist leaders about taking such a course. As the discussion then unfolded the Teamster comrades were unanimous in expressing confidence that we could retain decisive leadership control in the proposed new local. We also argued strongly for party approval of our recommendation."

Dobbs continues: "There was no question of principle involved. It was simply a matter of a choice in tactics. So he [Cannon] agreed that the party should give us

the benefit of the doubt on the tactical decision. . . .

"I don't fully agree with the decision," Jim told us, in effect, "but I will take full responsibility with you, even if it goes bad."

Burnham and Abern made the fatal mistake of thinking that party members can be led primarily by resort to formal authority. They looked at the party constitution and saw right there in black and white that the Political Committee is empowered to make decisions between meetings of the National Committee. So they started to bark out commands without regard to reality, their own experience in the given area of work, or the opinions of others who were more experienced. And Shachtman, who wavered on the concrete policy, went along with Burnham and Abern on the propriety of this procedure. This reflected his vacillating drift into the petty-bourgeois camp.

The system of democratic centralism assumes that the leadership will be alert to the thinking and judgments of the ranks; and even more that the leadership will submit to the test of events and change a policy that proves unrealistic.

The incident demonstrated a professorial, thoroughly petty-bourgeois refusal to collaborate with and learn from the working-class forces in the field. They thought the status of leaders and official titles put them beyond all that—just like bureaucrats.

The fact is that while a combat party like the SWP operates on the basis of firm centralism, it is primarily teamwork and collaboration that counts in the making of day-to-day decisions. Political leadership authority comes from the ability to contribute to and guide this process.

Burnham and Abern had forgotten Trotsky's good advice: "A functionary of a revolutionary party should have in the first place a good ear, and only in the second place a good tongue." A party leadership that remembers this stores up tremendous moral authority with the members, which can be brought to bear when decisive and disciplined action with a minimum of discussion is needed.

By the summer of 1939 Cannon had become alarmed at the problems the party was having. In a series of articles that were part of a public discussion preceding the July 1939 convention he noted a degree of "stagnation" in the party, and referred to the existence of "formal agreement" among the leadership about turning to the unions. Citing the desertion of the radical movement by intellectual figures, he stated:

Our convention must let the dead bury the dead and turn the face of the party to the workers, who are the real source of power and of inspiration and of well-grounded optimism. We had said this before. More than once we have incorporated it in resolutions. But we have not made the turn in forthright fashion. That is why

we are lagging behind. That is the main reason we are suffering a certain stagnation. That is why we are even flirting with the danger of a degeneration of the party along the lines of conservative passivity, introspection, and futility.

Earlier in the same article, Cannon wrote:

Our sluggishness in making the abrupt turn to mass work with all force and energy; the persistence of old habits of our days of isolation as a propaganda circle; our failure to reach new, fresh strata of workers; our hesitation, half-hearted, at the brink of the great stream of the workers' mass movement—herein is the root of all our evils.

In the ranks of the party, anger and frustration were building up. Contributions to the preconvention discussion in the *Socialist Appeal* showed a groping for some way to get the party off dead center. The Ohio and Michigan district committee, a strong base of the party's trade union orientation, wrote protesting the slackness that they saw around them:

From the ranks the party must now exact the highest discipline, responsibility and activity. We cannot tolerate laxness in dues payments, neglect of assignments, tardiness and absence, disorderly conduct at party functions and affairs. Above all, we cannot tolerate further the notion of first and second-class citizenship: those who can do the work and take the risks and those who exempt themselves for innumerable personal reasons from "sticking their necks out." We are determined to be a party of action. He who shuns such action signifies his desire to be out of the party.

It was clear that a sharp turn was called for, but before this could be carried out the internal situation exploded. When the Soviet Union invaded Finland in August 1939, following the Stalin-Hitler pact, a wave of anti-Soviet propaganda engulfed the country. Shachtman, Burnham, and virtually the entire middle-class membership of the party were swept away by it, refusing to defend the Soviet Union in a conflict with imperialism. While rejecting defense of the Soviet Union in wartime, they went on a war footing against the party and eventually split.

In the end the minority challenged the whole program of the party and its democratic-centralist structure. Trotsky called them the petty-bourgeois opposition not only because of their class composition—which wasn't at all accidental—but because of their program, which wavered between the capitalists and the workers in search of a mythical "third camp"; and because of their orientation, which reflected a preference for cultivated discussion among intellectual skeptics to building a party of workers.

The root of the 1939 conflict was the approaching war and the political shifts and pressures that grew as it approached. But a crisis of orientation in the leadership was a central component of the crisis. A section of the leadership resisted taking a further step toward making our program a

reality through turning the party toward the industrial unions. They resisted transforming the SWP into a party made up in its majority of industrial workers, at a time when it was objectively possible to accomplish this.

Carried past a certain point which could not be predicted in advance, this resistance inevitably fostered a challenge to our program, which points to the workers as the revolutionary class and calls for building a revolutionary party based in the most powerful sectors of that class.

Today we are carrying out a major turn toward the industrial workers after a long period when party work focused on struggles occurring outside the unions. There are many reasons why we face a much more favorable situation today in making this turn. Some important ones, in my opinion, are:

1. We have launched our turn in a timely way when the radicalization of labor is in its early stages;

2. U.S. imperialism and Stalinism were actually headed toward the peaks of their power when the SWP began its turn in the late 1930s. And the labor bureaucracy was beginning to consolidate its grip on the new CIO unions in the wake of the initial upsurge. Today all of these counterrevolutionary forces are in decline.

The changes in the world situation can be typified by comparing the impact of the Spanish Civil War on radicals and working-class fighters with that of the Vietnamese struggle, which played a similar role in many respects for our generation.

The bloody betrayal of the Spanish workers by Stalin and their ultimate defeat at the hands of the Francoists was a deep blow to the morale of the working-class movement, and even more to the morale of its middle-class periphery. In Vietnam, despite the betrayal by Moscow and Peking, the rebel forces emerged victorious.

These changed world conditions mean that morale problems on the scale of those that confronted the party in the late 1930s do not confront us today.

3. The party leadership in the center and in the branches is united in driving forward the turn.

4. The YSA is very different from the YPSL. It fully supports the turn, and its work in building a revolutionary youth organization is an important part of strengthening the party in the turn. And the YSA has been educated in our proletarian traditions, and not in a Social Democratic tradition as were most members of the YPSL.

5. We have at our disposal and have assimilated into our structure and tradition the lessons of the 1940 fight.

Of course if we were to falter and not do what needs to be done, as happened in the late 1930s, similar problems in a different form would eventually occur. But that is not the direction the party is headed in. □