

## Kill the Wall Street Debt!

# U.S. Out of Panama Now!

With doddering warhorses on both sides of the aisle pontificating about "defense of the Free World" and waving rhetorical Big Sticks, the United States Senate last week approved the second Panama Canal Treaty by a cliff-hanging 68-32 vote. While Reaganite opponents of the pact did their best to sound like Teddy Roosevelt with their jingoistic ravings against turning the canal over to Panama, President Carter and treaty supporters struck the pose of "human rights" gendarmes of the Western hemisphere, endlessly asserting a U.S. "right" to intervene militarily in defense of the canal's "neutrality" (read, American control).

The two treaties call for Panamanian jurisdiction over the Canal Zone after a three-year transition period and for handing over operation of the canal to Panama by the year 2000. They also continue a sizable U.S. military presence in the Zone (14 bases and at least eight other "military areas") until that time and proclaim an unlimited right to send in the Marines thereafter. Additionally the U.S. secured an exclusive option on construction of a sea-level canal while the Panamanian government will receive a percentage of the tolls.

Support in Panama for this imperialist swindle was already shaky following a plebiscite last fall. But in the last month, as senatorial windbags fulminated during a prolonged 38-day "debate" (broadcast live over Panamanian radio) about the threat of communism if this symbol of United States hegemony in Latin America were "given away," Carter and the U.S. chiefs of staff began to worry about a massive social explosion on the isthmus should the treaty be voted down.

For a time it looked like the yahoos might blow the deal with assorted amendments and "reservations" spelling out on paper what the Carter administration had hoped to keep more discreetly implicit. Even with the inclusion

of a face-saving reservation to earlier reservations, the final product read more like a declaration of war. But with his political career at stake and after blustering about how his 9,000-man National Guard would have invaded the Canal Zone if the treaty had been rejected, the shameless Panamanian *lider máximo*, Brigadier General Omar Torrijos, declared himself satisfied with the Senate vote and had free beer passed out in the plazas to liven up listless celebrations of his hollow "victory."

Jimmy Carter, for his part, declared the Senate approval the beginning of a "new era" in U.S.-Panamanian relations. The treaties, he said, symbolized that the U.S. would deal with "the small nations of the world, on the basis of mutual respect and partnership" (*New York Times*, 19 April). Senate majority leader Democrat Robert Byrd, who engineered the treaties' passage through that den of corrupt wheeler-dealers, was more frank when he proclaimed that the "result showed that Americans dealt from a position of strength." Immediately after the second pact was approved Pentagon sources reported that, had the Senate leaders been unable to muster the necessary two-thirds margin, contingency plans called for a massive air and sea lift to reinforce the U.S. military forces in the Canal Zone.

With a multi-fleet navy and many of the largest modern ships (supertankers, nuclear aircraft carriers) unable to pass through the antiquated Panama Canal locks, the strategic importance of the canal has diminished. But the U.S.' determination to maintain its domination of the Western Hemisphere has not changed since the 1823 proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine. With Puerto Rico at one end, the Canal Zone at the other and the Cuban revolution notwithstanding, the Pentagon still regards the Caribbean as an American lake. The new treaties write back in the U.S. "right" of intervention (which FDR removed in 1936, along with the "in



Bill Eppridge/Life

Anti-U.S. demonstrators raise Panamanian flag above fence marking the border between Panama and the Canal Zone during 1964 demonstrations.

perpetuity" clause, as a sop to Panamanian nationalist sentiment), making them the most naked formal assertion of U.S. imperial fiat since the original 1903 canal treaty and the 1900 Platt Amendment to the Cuban constitution.

The Panama Canal treaties, even with their formal recognition of Panamanian sovereignty, are in no sense a blow against Yankee imperialism, as Fidel Castro and deluded Latin American pseudo-leftists maintain. The real relation of power was demonstrated by Carter's peremptory summoning of all Latin American heads of state to Washington last September, to witness the signing of the treaty at the Organization of American States (a sort of U.S.

colonial ministry for "south of the border" client states). While ratification of the treaties may have temporarily dampened "Yankee go home" demonstrations in Panama, the reality of continued American control of the colonial enclave will set off new anti-imperialist struggles in the future.

Leninists must denounce the Carter/Torrijos deal as a fraud, whose real purpose is to tie the Panamanian bourgeoisie more closely to its U.S. patrons. A revolutionary struggle for the national emancipation of such semicolonies can be waged only by maintaining the political independence of the working masses from the domestic

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## Interview with MAC Candidate

# No to CWA Support for Bell Monopoly!

### Strike Phone for Jobs!

The following is an interview with Jane Margolis, a candidate for convention delegate of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 9410 in San Francisco, and a leading member of the Militant Action Caucus (MAC). The MAC is a class-struggle opposition group in the CWA with an eight-year history of struggle against the phone company and the sellout policies of the CWA bureaucracy. Margolis was previously elected as the Traffic (operators department) Executive Board representative in Oakland CWA Local 9415. In 1975, she was framed up on a pretext and fired for her militant union activity. After a 14-month fight by a defense committee comprised of union members and stewards, the phone company was forced to reinstate her in 1976.

WV: What do you see as the major issues confronting the union today?

Margolis: The loss of jobs and attacks on our working conditions as a result of automation. In the last four years, over 100,000 jobs have been lost in the industry and CWA membership has dropped by over 25,000. AT&T is pouring literally billions of dollars into new computerized equipment that will steal even more jobs in the future. Everything from electronic switching equipment and automated dialing systems to plug-in phones that customers can pick up in a "phone store" and install themselves.

In our local alone, there used to be operator offices in every central office in San Francisco. Now, there are only two. It's public knowledge that switchmen here will be cut from nearly 300 to 80 by 1980. The frame crews have already been reduced by more than two-thirds in the last three years. And this is going on all over the country.

WV: How does this affect working conditions?

Margolis: Well, in addition to the threat of mass layoffs, they have already begun downgrading and forced transfers in many areas. And since the company wants to get rid of a lot of people, there is an incredible amount of speed-up and harassment. Operators have always been treated like they're in a reform school for delinquent girls, in addition to being paid about half as much as people in craft jobs, and now it's getting worse. Recently, about 50 percent of new hires are fired either in training or within a couple of months

for not being able to keep up to a pace of about 30 seconds per call. Even high-seniority workers are under the gun. Last fall twelve operators were fired in a single San Francisco office in just two months. One operator with ten years seniority was suspended for making more than one error in a month, another for spending more than five minutes one day in the bathroom and another for humming while walking by a supervisor's office! A member of our caucus, Margaret Martinson, was fired in 1976 for the crime of standing up for a few moments while taking calls. There is constant secret monitoring that keeps everyone on edge.

Among the installers and repair workers, production quotas are set so high that it's impossible to keep up and you're always open to being disciplined. In many areas installer crews are regularly assigned mandatory overtime, often working nine hours a day or more. And we have an "absence control" plan where people are considered "unsatisfactory" and can be fired for missing more than six days a year, even if it's for sickness. This is being used by the company more and more just to get rid of people, especially those they consider "troublemakers."

WV: What is the CWA leadership doing about this?

Margolis: What they're doing is worse than nothing. For years, the union leaders just blatantly lied to us, saying that Bell Telephone automation would create more jobs. Then, they told us the last contract, signed last summer, would give us job security. That contract gave us one day off with pay and one day off without pay and three pages of fine print on how Ma Bell can lay us off. It has not stopped the job loss one bit.

The International's big push is to defend AT&T's highly profitable monopoly in the phone industry and telecommunications in general. The CWA bureaucrats have always supported the phone company's rate increase requests, lining them up against everyone who uses a phone. Now the union is lobbying for laws to keep independent and interconnect companies out of the business. They are pressuring Congress to impose tariffs on foreign-made phone equipment to keep it out of the U.S. This is the same kind of flag-waving garbage that the steel and textile union leaders are pushing—save the bosses' profits by pitting U.S. workers against workers overseas. And, of course, it hasn't done a thing to protect our jobs.

WV: What does the Militant Action Caucus think ought to be done?

Margolis: The CWA is going to continue to go to hell until it gets out of management's corner and fights. We say our union's power must be mobilized in strike action to stop Ma Bell's job-slashing, its harassment and its gouging of the public. We campaigned around the last contract for a national strike, with solid picket lines to keep out the supervisory personnel who run most of the automated equipment during strikes. If there's less work to do, then we say the union ought to fight to spread the work around so that nobody loses his job. If the company wants to cut half the jobs, then let's make them cut the workweek in half instead, at no loss in pay. That's how we can make

Militant Action Caucus leader and candidate for CWA Convention delegate, Jane Margolis.



automation benefit us instead of a few stockholders.

We're opposed to our leadership begging on behalf of AT&T's profits and its efforts to keep the company safe from domestic and foreign competition. The idea that more money for the company means more jobs is absurd. The more money the company makes, the more automated equipment it buys and the more jobs we lose. Phone service, which is a necessity, is one of the biggest rip-offs going—local calls ought to be free as a matter of course.

WV: What do you think the CWA leadership plans for the convention?

Margolis: The big objective of the International this time is to push through a dues increase. They just accept the fact that the membership is being cut way back and all they care about is keeping that money rolling in. They devoted almost the entire February issue of our newspaper, *CWA News*, to the need for a nearly 100 percent dues increase. But they never devoted a whole issue to the fact that our jobs are going down the drain!

Glen Watts, the president of the CWA, or his flunkies will blow our money wining and dining Congressmen and phone company executives just like

they've done in the past, instead of on organizing and strikes. We're opposed to the dues increase and we'll fight it.

What they also do at national conventions is spend the entire week paying tribute to the Democratic Party. Just like they invite management representatives to attend, they roll out the red carpet for the capitalist politicians who don't do anything but break strikes and pass anti-union legislation. This is particularly disgusting in the wake of the coal miners strike, where the Democratic Party was exposed as just as viciously anti-labor as the Republicans. A lot of union people were really inspired by the militancy of the miners' strike and we put forward a motion in our local for the entire CWA to strike in solidarity with the miners when they were up against Carter's Taft-Hartley injunction. We don't think scabherders and strikebreakers have any right at a union meeting or convention. Our position has always been that the unions should break with the Democratic Party, that we should have our own workers party, which would fight for a workers government. That way the banks, industry, transportation, communications, commerce could all be

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## Don't Let the Company Tell You Who to Vote For!

—Militant Action Caucus leaflet distributed 17 April 1978

The Company is trying to determine the outcome of the CWA convention delegate election. At the Stuart Traffic office management called security guards to kick campaigners for Jane Margolis out of the building when supporters of Margolis had refused to give up their right to discuss the issues of the election with operators in the breakrooms. Colma management also prevented us from campaigning in the Colma building. At the same time and in the same work locations, other candidates (Letha Lane, Annette Buhannon, Thelma Chetham, Marie Malliott and Ernie King) were campaigning freely in the buildings with management's approval.

When we approached Vice President Letha Lane her immediate response was "that's your problem with the Company." Management censoring union election material is an attack on the whole union. Lane now says she will back the grievance that has been filed against the Company. But grievance results can only be expected after the election. The union has been far too lax in standing up for union rights in the past. Company interference in union elections is a dangerous precedent which must be fought. It should not be swept under the rug for political advantage.

Why does the Company seek to exclude Jane Margolis and prevent you from hearing what she has to say? Margolis, of the Militant Action Caucus, is the only candidate to call for union action to stop the firing spree and harassment that goes on daily in Traffic. Jobs are on the line due to Company automation. Layoffs will follow increasing firings from absence control and arbitrary discipline in all departments unless the union is mobilized to fight these attacks. Instead of the usual celebration of sellout policies, this CWA convention could be forced to hear a voice of the membership and a program that could win against AT&T.

**DON'T LET THE COMPANY TELL YOU WHAT YOU CAN READ AND WHO YOU CAN VOTE FOR!**

**GET CWA OFF ITS KNEES—VOTE JANE MARGOLIS!**

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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# Zionist McCarthyism at the Academy Awards

While the ultra-rightist Jewish Defense League (JDL) demonstrated April 3 outside the movie industry's gaudy Academy Awards extravaganza, English actress Vanessa Redgrave accepted an "Oscar" as the year's "best supporting actress" in *Julia*. In her thank-you speech she "saluted" the Academy for refusing "to be intimidated by the threats of a small bunch of Zionist hoodlums whose behavior is an insult to Jews all over the world and to their great and heroic struggle against fascism and oppression."

The "saluted" celebrities met her statement with boos. Having, they felt, made the "artistic" choice in giving Redgrave the award despite the Zionist furor touched off by her involvement in a pro-PLO film, *The Palestinian*, they felt betrayed that she would "stoop" to politics. The posture of sanctimonious liberal detachment was exemplified by playwright/screenwriter Paddy Chayevsky who took the microphone to complain that Redgrave should simply have said "thank you" and to fume that he was "sick and tired of people exploiting the Academy Awards for the propagation of their own personal propaganda."

And just what is Hollywood propagating these days? The Redgrave controversy stirs up memories of Hollywood McCarthyism when the blacklisted lost their livelihoods while the blacklists and government flunks maintained their respectable careers. The preoccupation of Hollywood's guilty liberals in the post-Watergate era has been to lay this embarrassing memory to rest with cheap acts of ritual contrition.

Thus wallowing in that period of shame in order to forget it has become the standard rite of Academy Awards night. A few years ago they honored the great Charlie Chaplin, as if their post-

humorous praise would expiate the witchhunt which tried to destroy him and hounded him out of the country. Now, too, they remember Paul Robeson. And Lillian Hellman, upon whose autobiographical *Pentimento* the movie *Julia* was based, has become a fashionable heroine. At last year's Academy Awards fête, she was given a standing ovation when she spoke of her rehabilitation:

"I was once upon a time a respectable member of this community. Respect-



Vanessa Redgrave

Newsweek

able didn't necessarily mean more than I took a daily bath when I was sober, didn't spit except when I meant to, and mispronounced a few words of fancy French. Then suddenly even before Sen. Joseph McCarthy reached for that rusty poisoned ax, I and many others were no longer acceptable to the owners of the industry. They confronted the wild charges of Joe McCarthy with a force and courage of a bowl of mashed potatoes."

This year it was Redgrave's turn to stroke the egos of the "new" Hollywood liberals:

"...I salute all of you for having stood firm and dealt the final blow against that period when Nixon and McCarthy launched a worldwide witchhunt against those who tried to express in their lives and their work the truths they believed in."

Is this natveté talking, or simply cynicism? As if to let Redgrave know that the witchhunting spirit is still alive, biding its time for a better moment, the audience jeered even louder.

The anti-Redgrave furor is continuing, with the JDL peddling "I'm a Zionist Hoodlum" T-shirts and Hollywood Zionists like comedian Joey Adams collecting signatures and money for pro-Zionist ads. Redgrave, a prominent member of the Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) in Britain, is a particularly easy target for charges of anti-Semitism, since the WRP has become the mouthpiece of Libyan dictator Qaddafi, whose fanatical Islamic ideology spells "oppression for both Arab and Hebrew workers. However, it is not as a Healy/Qaddafi mouthpiece but as a symbol of leftist anti-Zionism that Redgrave has come under attack. And revolutionists must defend Vanessa Redgrave against the McCarthyite Zionist witchhunt. ■



Scene from "Blue Collar"

Universal Studios

## Blue Collar Director's Anti-Union Ravings

In our review of *Blue Collar*, which has been a hit in Detroit and is playing to sympathetic audiences in first-run movie houses around the country, we pointed out how gullible leftists had been taken in by writer-director Paul Schrader's facade of sympathy for the workers. The social-democratic New Leftovers of the International Socialists (I.S.) called it "great," a Hollywood movie that "successfully deals with racism, company-union collaboration and internal union corruption" (*Workers' Power*, 27 February).

Now this workerist lot has been joined by the "Revolutionary Workers Headquarters," the Maoist faction led by Mickey Jarvis that recently split from Bob Avakian's Revolutionary Communist Party. The Jarvisites, who really groove on "slice-of-life" pseudo-realism, write in Volume 1, Number 1 of their paper, "This movie really hits home.... Don't miss it."

"The power of the movie is that it shows the conditions workers, not just auto workers, face both in the 'plantations' and in their whole lives. It makes no excuses for the corporations or their lackeys in union office, or for the cops and the FBI, and it shows the different methods they use to keep us down."

—*The Worker*, March 1978

We've got news for you. When *Blue Collar* "hits home" it is the labor movement that is Schrader's punching bag. Don't believe it? Just keep reading.

First let us recall what *WV* wrote about the movie, namely that it was the device for presenting a post-Watergate liberal ideology of bourgeois individualism:

"But if auto workers see themselves in *Blue Collar* it is a reflection distorted through the cracked ideological mirror of Paul Schrader who has a use for his twisted 'truths.' *Blue Collar* is from beginning to end an ideological tract; Schrader's foremost concern is not portraying the conditions and attitudes of auto workers but reinforcing and exploiting them as a vehicle for the propagation of his politics of despair. And to this end he necessarily centers his fire on the trade unions—after all, who would now expect the company and the government to be on the workers' side? But as the workers' instruments of collective struggle, the unions could offer hope for the future. Therefore, they must be exposed as part of a giant conspiracy—big business/high government/big labor—which oppresses all free-spirited individuals."

—"Anti-Union Blues,"

*WV* No. 198, 24 March

Now our analysis has been confirmed, on every point, as the radical-liberal glossy news magazine *Seven Days* (7 April) just published an interview with Schrader that tells it all.

We should note that *Seven Days'* reviewer is just as confused as the Maoists and social democrats and thinks Schrader made a "Marxist" film

in spite of himself. But he does give a hint of Schrader's politics by reporting that three years ago during a screen writers' strike the future writer of *Blue Collar* and *Taxi Driver* was brought up on charges by the Writers Guild for calling the strike "hokey" and vilifying his colleagues as a "bunch of uneducated artists who like to think of themselves as a proletariat." Recently Schrader was overheard in New York "ridiculing the idea of boycotting the Shah of Iran's caviar party thrown in honor of the New York film festival."

It's on the next page, though, that the fun begins as Schrader tells what he really had in mind in making the film. Here are a few of his gems:

"*Seven Days*: Why did you devote so little time in *Blue Collar* to attacking management and so much time to attacking the union?"

"Schrader: In researching my material I found that there is not much love expended between the average American worker and the union. Workers are probably more pissed off at the union because it professes to help them. They know the company will work them to death. They accept it. In the end, they probably respect the company for being 'honestly' corrupt in saying, 'We'll fuck you in every way we can,' whereas the union is duplicitous."

"*Seven Days*: So your worker protagonists can think of no better way to express their hostility and alienation than ripping off their union?"

"Schrader: I think the notion of robbing their union is a perfect symbol for not liking their lives. It's so perfectly self-defeating to attack the group that is supposed to help them. They give almost no thought to it. And that's the way I feel. I hate unions. I've always been in trouble with unions. They hate the individualists, the nonconformists, as much as the company does."

"The workers in this film are sheep. I think that's the most unsympathetic work force ever put on film. It makes you almost sympathize with the factory

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# Kronstadt and Counterrevolution

"The Kronstadt uprising," wrote Leon Trotsky, "was only an *episode* in the history of the relations between the proletarian city and the petty bourgeois village" ("Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt"). It was, in essence, simply one more in the series of kulak-led peasant revolts which broke out toward the end of the Civil War (the Makhno movement in the Ukraine, hailed by the anarchists; the revolt in Tambov province led by the Socialist Revolutionaries). The difference was that in this case the insurgents were peasants in uniform (the sailors), and it received world renown as a rising of the supposed revolutionary "purest of the pure"—who could forget the heroic role of "Red Kronstadt" in 1917?—against the Bolshevik dictatorship.

Paul Avrich's *Kronstadt 1921* confirms Trotsky's description of the changes in the social composition of the Baltic fleet during the Civil War years, and the fact that most of the mutineers' demands were a direct expression of the peasant discontent. Many sailors had received furlough during the summer and fall of 1920, returning home to their native villages in the Ukraine and other border regions. There many of them were deeply affected by their rural relatives' hatred of the Bolshevik food-requisitioning policies (squads of city



Bolshevik troops cross the ice to Kronstadt.

Camera Press

## PART 2 OF 2

Review of *Kronstadt 1921*  
by Paul Avrich

workers who came to take grain, government-encouraged committees of the village poor).

As Stepan Petrichenko, leader of the Kronstadt "Provisional Revolutionary Committee," later recorded: "When we returned home our parents asked us why we fought for the oppressors. That set us thinking."

The peasant discontent spread to urban workers after the Soviet government was forced to reduce bread rations in already-hungry Petrograd and Moscow in late January (an "apparently unavoidable act" according to Avrich). Shortly afterwards 60 factories in the old capital were forced to close for lack of fuel, sending their workers out onto the streets to beg for food. The tensions flared in the last week of February when workers in the Trubochny metal factory, under Menshevik influence, sparked walkouts and anti-government demonstrations in surrounding industrial districts. At the height of the disturbances a delegation of sailors from Kronstadt visited the city and found armed Communist squads everywhere. Petrichenko wrote, "One might have thought that these were not factories but the forced labor prisons of tsarist times."

After a week of turmoil the local Bolshevik organization, headed by Zinoviev, managed to still the unrest by sending the best agitators out to the

streets and factories to explain the emergency situation, strengthening military forces in Petrograd and announcing a series of measures to meet the demands of the hungry population: workers were permitted to leave the city to forage for food, roadblock detachments of the Red Army in Petrograd province were removed, and plans to replace grain requisitioning with a tax in kind were publicly aired. Thus when the Kronstadt mutiny broke out a week later the city remained quiet. Captured seamen in prison reportedly accused the workers of selling out "for a pound of meat." But, in fact, the Petrograd demonstrations were over food and fuel shortages.

### Mutiny

The Kronstadters' grievances were of an altogether different order and their program consequently far-reaching: to overthrow Bolshevik rule. At a meeting on February 28 aboard the dreadnought *Petropavlovsk* the Kronstadt delegation gave a report on their trip to Petrograd and the assembly voted a lengthy resolution including the following demands: new elections to the soviets; no restrictions on the anarchists or socialist parties; no controls on trade unions or peasant organizations; a non-party conference of workers, soldiers and sailors of the region; freeing Menshevik and SR prisoners as well as those imprisoned during the recent rural and urban unrest; abolition of the political departments in all military units; removal of roadblock detachments; equalization of rations; abolition of Communist fighting detachments; and no restrictions on peasant farming or marketing.

This was not the pressure of backward sectors of the proletariat clamoring for an alleviation of starvation

conditions; it was the action of a well-led military elite acting as spokesman for the grievances of a hostile class—the petty-bourgeois peasant proprietor. The resolution—which became the political manifesto of the Kronstadt mutiny—was signed by Petrichenko as chairman of the squadron meeting.

The next day there was a mass meeting at Anchor Square in Kronstadt at which Petrichenko was one of the main orators, and on March 2 a meeting of the local soviet. Kuzmin, the ranking Bolshevik commissar of the northern fleet, spoke warning the seamen of the threat of attack from the West, that the flare-up in Petrograd had passed and that if they openly revolted against the government, "the Bolsheviks will fight with their last ounce of strength." Avrich, reflecting a common theme of Kronstadt supporters, complains that Kuzmin's "defiant tone" had "alienated" the audience and counsels that "a more tactful approach was surely in order."

This concern for tact is particularly touching given that what was happening was a *military revolt* by the key unit guarding the approaches to Petrograd, and, moreover, that Kuzmin and two other leading Kronstadt Bolsheviks were arrested at the close of the meeting. Yet the anarcho-liberals don't complain about the "tactlessness" of Petrichenko and his confederates! Perhaps this is too much to ask from such "rebellious spirits" as Kronstadt sailors.

As the meeting, chaired by Petrichenko, was proceeding to elect a new soviet a seaman interrupted, shouting out that 15 truckloads of armed Communists were on their way to break up the gathering. Under the impact of this provocation (there was no impending attack) the conference took a step by which, writes Avrich, "the Kronstadt movement placed itself outside the pale of mere protest": a Provisional Revolu-

tionary Committee was formed to administer the city and garrison against the Soviet power. At the conclusion of the meeting the Committee dispatched armed squads to take over the arsenals, telephone exchange, food warehouses, water and power plants, Cheka headquarters and other key points. In addition to the arrest of the Communist leaders, all military leaves were canceled and exit from the island was banned without special permission. The rebellion had begun.

### Suppression

That very night the Kronstadters sent a delegation to the nearby Oranienbaum airbase, which declared itself for the mutiny. However, within hours the barracks were surrounded by armed Communists from the district and the mutineers arrested. Thereafter the



Seaman Petrichenko, leader of Kronstadt rebellion.

rebels did not venture out from their supposedly impregnable island fortress. As Commissar of War, Trotsky issued an ultimatum commanding the sailors to lay down their arms: "Only those who surrender unconditionally may count on the mercy of the Soviet Republic. At the same time, I am issuing orders to prepare to quell the mutiny and subdue the mutineers by force of arms.... This warning is final." The Petrograd Defense Committee under Zinoviev arrested the families of the Kronstadters as hostages.

Avrich terms these measures "harsh" and asks, incredibly, "was force really necessary?" Yet everything the Kronstadt leaders had done made it clear they were bent on insurrection! Nonetheless on March 6 the Petrograd Soviet telegraphed the mutineers to inquire if a delegation of party and non-party members would be permitted to enter Kronstadt to investigate the situation. The gesture was brusquely rejected by the Revolutionary Committee, and the next day military operations to retake the island began. The first assault was led by military cadets, selected Red Army units and Cheka detachments. However it was forced to withdraw under heavy artillery fire.

The number of troops in this initial attack was clearly insufficient to storm the island. Under the command of Marshal Tukhachevsky a new assault was carefully prepared. Simultaneously the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party was meeting in Moscow and 300 delegates, over a quarter of the attendance, volunteered to accompany the troops in the perilous crossing of the ice. They also issued a leaflet to the rebels declaring that "free soviets" would mean restoring the "bourgeoisie, landlords, generals, admirals and noblemen, the princes and other parasites." The slogan was a cover for the overthrow of Soviet power. The Kronstadters would have to choose: "either with the White Guards against us, or with us against the White Guards."

The Tenth Congress also approved the abolition of grain requisitioning and an end to the militarized economic structure known as War Communism. In their place was substituted the New Economic Policy (NEP), whose cornerstone was a tax in kind on agricultural production. While this measure soon cut the ground out from under the peasant revolts, there was no time to lose in subduing the Kronstadt revolt. Already there was slush in the streets of Kronstadt and it was at most two more weeks until the ice broke (making attack impossible and provision of supplies to the mutinous garrison by Western naval forces a simple matter).

So on March 16 a Soviet assault force estimated at 50,000 men advanced on the island at night. The rebels were cold and hungry, as their supplies were all but exhausted, and their morale sapped by the lack of any echo on the mainland to their uprising. Led by Red Army officer cadets the Soviet forces breached

the defense wall at a tremendous cost in lives and by the next evening had overpowered the sailors. As soon as things began to look bleak the heads of the rebellion abandoned their men and fled to Finland. Left leaderless the bulk of the ranks followed suit, and the rebellion was over.

### White Guard Plot? The National Center

From the beginning the Bolsheviks denounced the mutiny as part of a White Guard plot. Lenin reported to the Communist Party's Tenth Congress on 8 March 1921:

"We have witnessed the passing of power from the Bolsheviks to some kind of indefinite conglomeration or alliance of motley elements, presumably only a little to the right and perhaps even to the 'left' of the Bolsheviks—so indefinite is the sum of political groupings who have attempted to seize power in their hands in Kronstadt. It is beyond doubt that concurrently the White Guard Generals—as you all know—played a major part in this. This has been proved to the hilt."

This is deeply resented by Kronstadt enthusiasts as besmirching the honor of the sailors, who only wanted to carry out the anarchist "third revolution." Avrich also tries to belittle references to White Guard connections, but his research was so thorough as to provide a mountain of evidence, to back up the Bolshevik case. While the bulk of the sailors—like the peasants who took up arms against the Soviet government at the end of the Civil War—certainly did not desire a return of the landlords, their leaders had extensive contacts with counterrevolutionary forces.

The most blatant evidence of these ties at the time was the announcement of the Kronstadt rebellion in the White Guard organ *Obschye Dvelo* as early as February 10, and in succeeding days in leading imperialist newspapers such as *Le Matin*, *L'Echo de Paris* and the *New York Times*. These reports, with details down to the arrest of the fleet commissar, would not be so remarkable but for the fact that they were printed two weeks before it occurred! Avrich remarks that "false rumors of this type...were by no means rare at the time." However, not only did these reports exactly foreshadow the mutiny, but they all apparently originated from a single source: the Russian news agency in Helsinki, Finland. This notorious center of anti-Soviet propaganda was closely tied to the monarchist/Kadet National Center. Avrich concludes that on the basis of his investigation, "there is no question that plans were afoot within the National Center to support an anticipated rising at Kronstadt. And...the Center's Baltic agents had no intention of confining themselves to a mere auxiliary role."

One of the most interesting new facts uncovered by Avrich was the existence of a handwritten, unsigned report in the National Center archives, labeled "Top Secret" and entitled "Memorandum on the Question of Organizing an Uprising in Kronstadt":

"The Memorandum is dated '1921' and puts forward a detailed contingency plan for an anticipated revolt in Kronstadt. From internal evidence, it is clear that the plan was drawn up in January or early February 1921 by an agent of the [National] Center located in Viborg or Helsingfors [Helsinki]. He predicts that a rising of the sailors would erupt during 'the coming Spring.' There are 'numerous and unmistakable signs' of discontent with the Bolsheviks, he writes, and if a 'small group of individuals, by quick and decisive action, should seize power in Kronstadt,' the rest of the fleet and garrison would eagerly follow them. 'Among the sailors,' he adds, 'such a group has already been formed, ready and able to take the most energetic actions....' The author is obviously well acquainted with the situation in Kronstadt. There is a long and well-informed analysis of the base's fortifications."

—Kronstadt 1921

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## The Mensheviks and SR's in White Guard Camp

The real purpose of all the "hue and cry" over Kronstadt has been to tar the Trotskyist Left Opposition and Lenin himself with responsibility for the Stalinist bureaucratic usurpation of the Russian Revolution. Thus the introduction to Ida Mett's 1938 pamphlet, *The Kronstadt Commune*, published by the British anarchoid "Solidarity" group states:

"The task for serious revolutionaries today is to see the link between Trotsky's attitudes and pronouncements during and before the 'great trade union debate' of 1920-1921 and the healthy hostility to Trotskyism of the most advanced and revolutionary layers of the industrial working class. This hostility was to manifest itself—arms in hand—during the Kronstadt uprising. It was to manifest itself again two or three years later—this time by folded arms—when these advanced layers failed to rally to Trotsky's support, when he at last chose to challenge Stalin, within the limited confines of a Party machine, towards whose bureaucratization he had signally contributed."

In particular the anarchists and other defenders of the Kronstadt mutiny argue that since the Bolsheviks had suppressed all opposition parties, therefore armed revolt was the only means of achieving "freedom." Mett wrote in her tract that the uprising protested "the monopoly exercised by this party [the Bolsheviks] in all fields of life." And Victor Serge claimed at the time of his break with Trotsky that, "It is indeed in the field of repression that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party committed the most serious mistakes from the beginning of the revolution," contributing dangerously, so he said, to the rise of Stalinism.

As the Kronstadt "political charter" demanded the legalization of the Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists, and as the banning of these groups has been used for decades by

anti-Soviet forces as proof of the "inherently totalitarian" nature of Leninism, it is worth considering why they were outlawed in the first place. It was not, as the unholy alliance "for Kronstadt" maintains, because of a Bolshevik plot to erect a one-party regime; rather, these pseudo-socialists and "libertarians" were gradually restricted in their activities and finally illegalized because of specific counterrevolutionary activities.

Curiously enough, these dubious bedfellows are concerned with alleged violations of Soviet liberties only after 7 November 1917, never mentioning that the Bolsheviks were viciously persecuted by the Kerensky government, in which sat Mensheviks and SR's. Following the July Days, when government troops fired on demonstrating workers and soldiers, the Bolshevik press was shut down, the party's leaders were driven into hiding and a Bolshevik leafletter was lynched in Petrograd. With this in mind, it is understandable when we are more than a little skeptical about the Menshevik/SR professions of devotion to freedom of the press, democracy and so on.

It is also necessary to keep in mind just what the Bolshevik party represented by the year 1921, namely the virtual totality of those committed to defending the gains of October. The struggle for the first proletarian revolution in history hardened the split lines among Russian social democrats, with the *Mezhrayontsy* led by Trotsky going over to Lenin in July 1917 and the *Borotba* group in the Ukraine in September. Following the victory a process of political differentiation began within the various non-Bolshevik socialist and anarchist groups, with many of their rank and file joining the Bolsheviks either individually or as part of a regroupment process. This included

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## Why the Bolsheviks Took Hostages

Faced with the grave threat to the October Revolution posed by the Kronstadt insurrection of 1921, the Bolshevik authorities ordered the families of the mutineers arrested and held as hostages. The wife and two sons of tsarist artillery officer and rebel leader General Alexander Kozlovsky, for example, were seized in Petrograd and imprisoned (although his 11-year-old daughter was released).

For pro-anarchist scholars like Paul Avrich, as well as for numerous Menshevik, social-democratic and capitalist critics of Leninism, this particular measure stands as the most barbarous "excess" committed by the Bolsheviks and the most damning confirmation of their ruthless immorality. To kill at the front is one thing, they argue, but to shoot innocent hostages is unthinkable.

The question of hostages arose within the revolutionary movement long before 1921. In *Their Morals and Ours*, Trotsky recalls that after the Paris Commune had been drowned in blood there were plenty of "democratic philistines" who, adapting to reaction, reviled the Communards for shooting 64 hostages, including the archbishop of Paris. But Marx, he points out, "did not hesitate a moment in defending this bloody act of the Commune." In a circular issued by the General Council of the First International Marx wrote: "...the Commune...was obliged to resort to the Prussian practice of

securing hostages. The lives of the hostages had been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versailles. How could they be spared any longer after the carnage with which MacMahon's praetorians celebrated their entry into Paris? Was even the last check upon the unscrupulous ferocity of bourgeois governments—the taking of hostages—to be made a mere sham?"

The tactic of taking hostages was formally recognized as a necessary defense measure by the Bolsheviks in a decree of 1919 written by Trotsky at a time when the Soviet republic was struggling for its life, wracked by civil war and imperialist intervention. It was directed in part against tsarist officers like Kozlovsky who might be tempted to betray the Red Army forces then under their command. The Bolsheviks warned:

"Let the turncoats know that they are at the same time betraying the members of their own families—fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives, and children."

The decree was invoked at the time of the Kronstadt insurrection, when the insurgents' success would have exposed Petrograd to an imperialist naval assault.

It is generally overlooked by those whose hearts bleed for the hostages taken by the Bolsheviks that this was done only after several leading Kronstadt Bolsheviks—including Kuzmin, commissar of the Baltic fleet; Vasiliev,

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Major General Kozlovsky, leader of the assault on Kronstadt fortress.

# Kronstadt...

(continued from page 5)

The well-informed counterrevolutionary agent knew the value of taking out the Kronstadt island fortress. He noted: "Furthermore, if one assumes that military operations will be launched from Kronstadt to overthrow Soviet authority in Russia, then for this purpose also the dispatch to Kronstadt of General Wrangel's Russian armed forces would be needed. In connection with this, it is appropriate to mention that for such operations—or merely for the threat of such operations—Kronstadt can serve as an invulnerable base. The nearest object of action from Kronstadt would be defenseless Petrograd, whose conquest would mean that half the battle against the Bolsheviks shall have been won."

from the "Memorandum on the Question of Organizing an Uprising in Kronstadt," reprinted as an appendix to *Kronstadt 1921*

This revealing document should be pasted to the noses of the anarchist/liberal scoffers at the notion of a White plot.

## White Guard Plot? The General and the Red Cross

Defenders of the Kronstadt mutiny are particularly incensed by any reference to the role played in the uprising by tsarist military officers. There was indeed a tsarist General Kozlovsky present at Kronstadt at the time, but the American anarchist Alexander Berkman claimed (in his pamphlet, *The Kronstadt Rebellion* [1922]) that he "played no role whatever in the Kronstadt events." Ida Mett in her tract has a whole section (entitled "Bolshevik Slanders") devoted to denying "this legend about General Kozlovsky, leader of the mutiny." "At the time of the insurrection," she explains,

"he happened to be in command of the artillery at Kronstadt. The communist commander of the fortress had defected [i.e., supported the Soviet government]. Kozlovsky, according to the rules prevailing in the fortress had to replace him. He, in fact, refused, claiming that as the fortress was now under the jurisdiction of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, the old rules no longer applied. Kozlovsky remained, it is true in Kronstadt, but only as an artillery specialist.... Kozlovsky was the only general to have been present at Kronstadt. This was enough for the Government to make use of his name."

*The Kronstadt Commune* (1938)

But, alas for the anarchists, liberals, White Guardists and other enemies of Bolshevism, on this point as well Avrigh's researches bear out Lenin's statement.

In the first place Kozlovsky was not merely a "specialist" but in charge of the artillery; and the officer who was eventually named fortress commander by the Kronstadt mutineers was another tsarist officer, the former Lieutenant Colonel Solvianov! As to the absurd claim that Kozlovsky was "just doing his job," oblivious to political events like a mutiny, Avrigh reports his remark on March 2 to the Bolshevik commissar of

the fortress: "Your time is past. Now I shall do what has to be done." And what had to be done? Avrigh writes:

"From the very outset, the specialists threw themselves into the task of planning military operations on behalf of the insurrection. On March 2, as Kozlovsky himself admitted, he and his colleagues advised the Revolutionary Committee to take the offensive at once in order to gain the initiative against the Bolsheviks. The officers worked out a plan for an immediate landing at Oranienbaum...in order to seize its military equipment and make contact with sympathetic army units, then to move against Petrograd before the government had time to muster any effective opposition."

The author of *Kronstadt 1921* concludes that the officers never played more than an "advisory" role during the rebellion, and in any case could not have won real influence because of "the sailors' independent spirit and traditional hatred of officers." His main proof is that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee frequently rejected the tsarist officers' advice. Perhaps so, although (as reported above) the mutineers *did* send a party to Oranienbaum, where the revolt was crushed only thanks to swift action by the local Communist Party. It is not hard to see that the "real influence" of the tsarist officers would have been overwhelming had the rebels scored any success on the mainland (where the sailors would be totally unprepared), and above all if the indispensable food and military aid had arrived from the Western imperialists. As it was, the White Guard commander Baron Wrangel sent a message to Kozlovsky in Kronstadt offering the aid of the imperial army as soon as it could be mobilized.

Petrichenko, the leader of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, also fulminates against Bolshevik charges of "alleged support to Kronstadt of counter-revolutionary foreign and Russian organisations":

"In their publications the Communists accuse us of accepting an offer of food and medicine from the Russian Red Cross, in Finland. We admit we saw nothing wrong in accepting such an offer. We felt that the Red Cross was a philanthropic organisation, offering us disinterested help that could do us no harm....

"Their representative, a retired naval officer called Vilken, remained in Kronstadt....

"Was this the 'aid of the international bourgeoisie'?"

—quoted in Mett, *The Kronstadt Commune*

Thanks to Avrigh's investigations, this rhetorical question can now be definitively answered...in the affirmative. He states categorically that "there can be no doubt that the National Center in its efforts to organize a supply line to Kronstadt, used the Russian Red Cross as a cover." He suspects the author of the secret memorandum to be none other than Professor G. Tseidler, director of the Russian (i.e., tsarist) Red Cross in Helsinki. Tseidler was connected with the National Center, and with its representative in the Finnish capital, D. Grimm (who was simultaneously Gen-

eral Wrangel's representative). The Center, in turn, was "in constant contact with the French foreign ministry throughout the uprising."

On March 6 the semi-official organ of the Kadet/monarchist National Center, *Obshchye Dveto*, issued an impassioned appeal "for Kronstadt": "Let the insurgents be given arms, let food be secured for Petrograd. The struggle against the Bolsheviks is our common cause!" The very next day the Russian Union of Commerce and Industry in Paris pledged two million Finnish marks to aid Kronstadt "in the sacred cause of liberating Russia," communicating this news (and the report of a promise of food aid by the French foreign minister) to the mutineers by radiogram. Already on March 16 the entire amount pledged had been deposited in Russian banks in Europe. Concerning Vilken, a former captain in the Imperial Navy who had served as commander of the *Sevastopol* (one of the centers of the mutiny), Avrigh writes: "The Bolsheviks rightly call him a White Agent...." Yes, this was the "aid of the international bourgeoisie!"

## White Guard Plot? Petrichenko and "Free Soviets"

As we have seen, a key role in the uprising was played by Stepan Petrichenko, who headed the delegation to Petrograd, chaired the squadron meeting which heard the delegation's report, authored the *Petrogradskiy* resolution which became the charter of the insurrection, chaired the conference to reelect the Kronstadt soviet (where the mutiny was declared), and headed the Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

Petrichenko was the son of a Ukrainian kulak, and apparently about as alienated from the Soviet government as possible. According to Avrigh, this "libertarian" hero "tried to join the Whites" during his furlough in the summer of 1920. The author of *Kronstadt 1921* claims that the Whites turned Petrichenko down because of his former brief membership in the Communist Party. If the Whites really did reject the application of the would-be volunteer, they passed up a prime opportunity to plant an agent in a key Bolshevik military position. Petrichenko had been in the Russian navy since 1912 and was now a senior clerk on the battleship *Petrogradskiy*, moored next to the island-fortress of Kronstadt which was the only defense of Petrograd from the sea.

The curious behavior of the Whites in turning down the application of a potentially valuable agent would be, we should note, in contradiction to their policy elsewhere. In fact, Baron Wrangel made it a practice upon capturing Red Army soldiers to shoot the officers and sergeants and then invite the surviving ranks to "volunteer" for the White army or suffer the same fate as their leaders. But even if one accepts Avrigh's rather implausible supposition that the Whites refused to recruit

Petrichenko (and then on top of this allowed the Red Navy cadre to walk away unharmed!), *Kronstadt 1921* provides plenty of evidence that he did everything possible to turn the sailors' protest into open mutiny against the Soviet power:

"...it was the bogus report that Communists were preparing to attack the [March 2] meeting that actually precipitated the formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, the step by which the sailors crossed the Rubicon of insurrection. Who was responsible for launching the rumor? According to Petrichenko it was the work of the Communists themselves, with the object of breaking up the conference. Although certainly possible, there is no evidence that this was the case.... And it is worth noting that Petrichenko himself took up the rumor and announced that a detachment of 2,000 Communists were indeed on their way to disperse the meeting."

This certainly sounds like the work of a "small group of individuals" ready to foment "the most energetic actions," referred to in the previously quoted White Guard secret memorandum!

When confronted with evidence of ties between the Kronstadt rebel leaders and tsarist counterrevolutionary forces, defenders of the uprising invariably hark back to the *Petrogradskiy* resolution, the manifesto of the mutiny. This was not a White Guard document but a "programme for the renewal of the Revolution," wrote anarchist sympathizer Victor Serge. Avrigh, moreover, argues that:

"For all their animosity towards the Bolshevik hierarchy, the sailors never called for the disbandment of the party or its exclusion from a role in Russian government and society. 'Soviets without Communists' was not, as is often maintained by both Soviet and non-Soviet writers, a Kronstadt slogan."

But whether or not the slogan "Soviets without Communists" was raised by the Kronstadters—and emigré circles which were in touch with them claimed that it was—it is perfectly clear that their aim was to bring down Bolshevik rule. They had gone far beyond merely demonstrating for a change of policy.

Here was an armed insurrection; all contact with the outside was broken off, the Petrograd government was defied, official Soviet appeals were ignored; an effort was made to incite Red Army units on the mainland to join the mutiny; hundreds of Communist Party cadres were arrested. These facts in themselves are quite sufficient proof. Add to this the references in the *Kronstadt Ivestia* to a "ninth wave of the Toilers' Revolution" which will sweep away the "tyrants with all their corruption" and the defiant reply to an ultimatum from Trotsky, the Soviet Commissar of War: "Listen Trotsky," wrote the Kronstadt Provisional Revolutionary Committee, "the leaders of the Third Revolution are defending the true power of the soviets against the outrages of the commissars" (cited in *Kronstadt 1921*).

All sides agree that the watchword of the Kronstadt rebellion was "free soviets"—"free," that is, from the control of the Bolsheviks. What would that mean concretely in the spring of 1921? Trotsky and Lenin maintained that this slogan in practice meant the abolition of the proletarian dictatorship, then exercised through the Communist Party. Moreover, the Soviet leaders were not the only ones to hold this analysis. At the very height of the uprising, the Kadet spokesman Milukov proclaimed as his own the slogan "Down with the Bolsheviks! Long live the Soviets!" and identified this as the Kronstadt slogan.

Even many who sympathized with the Kronstadters' "libertarian" rhetoric could see this reality clearly. Serge, who refused to pick up arms against the rebels, wrote later:

"After many hesitations, and with unutterable anguish, my Communist friends and I finally declared ourselves on the side of the Party....

"If the Bolshevik dictatorship fell, it was



Oppositionists in Siberian labor camp in 1928 raise banner "Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!"



The Petrograd Soviet in 1917.

only a short step to chaos, and through chaos to a peasant rising, the massacre of the Communists, the return of the émigrés, and in the end, through the sheer force of events, another dictatorship, this time anti-proletarian."

—*Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* (London, 1963)

#### Bolshevik Lies?

Supporters of the rebellion make much of supposed "lies" told by the Bolsheviks, such as leaflets attributing the rising solely to machinations by White generals. Whether or not there was some exaggeration—after all, there was considerable substance to the charges of a White plot, as we have shown—the Bolsheviks were quite explicit in acknowledging that the mutiny had a mass character. "They did not want us and they did not want the Whites either," Lenin said to the Tenth Party Congress. Addressing the troops who put down the revolt, Trotsky said, "We waited as long as possible for our blind sailor comrades to see with their own eyes where the mutiny led. But we were confronted with the danger that the ice would melt away and... we were compelled to make the attack."

These were assessments of the rank and file of the rebellion: the Bolsheviks never claimed that 15,000 sailors of the Soviet navy had consciously and deliberately gone over to the Whites. What they did maintain throughout, and what Avrich's book confirms, is that the leadership in Kronstadt included tsarist officers pursuing counterrevolutionary aims, and that success for the mutiny would quickly lead to a White Guard victory. As Trotsky put it:

"All the reactionary elements, in Russia as well as abroad, immediately seized upon this uprising. The white émigrés demanded aid for the insurrectionists. The victory of this uprising could bring nothing but a victory of counter-revolution, entirely independent of the ideas the sailors had in their heads. But the ideas themselves were deeply reactionary. They reflected the hostility of the backward peasantry to the worker, the conceit of the soldier or sailor in relation to the 'civilian' Petersburg, the hatred of the petty bourgeois for revolutionary discipline. The movement therefore had a counter-revolutionary character and since the insurgents took possession of the arms in the forts they could only be crushed with the aid of arms."

—"The Questions of Wendelin Thomas," in *The Writings of Leon Trotsky 1937-38*

The Bolsheviks were Marxists who based their action on an analysis of the class forces involved. And a striking confirmation of their analysis is pro-

vided by the behavior of Petrichenko and his comrades following the crushing of the mutiny. Let Avrich tell the story:

"In May 1921 Petrichenko and several of his fellow refugees at the Fort Ino [Finland] camp decided to volunteer their services to General Wrangel. At the end of the month they wrote to Professor Grimm, Wrangel's representative in Helsingfors, and offered to join forces in a new campaign to unseat the Bolsheviks and restore 'the gains of the March 1917 Revolution.' The sailors put forward a six-point program as the basis for any common venture: (1) all land to the peasants, (2) free trade unions for the workers, (3) full independence for the border states, (4) freedom of action for the Kronstadt fugitives, (5) the removal of shoulder epaulettes from all military uniforms, and (6) the retention of their slogan 'all power to the soviets but not the parties.' Surprisingly, however, the slogan was to be retained only as a 'convenient political maneuver' until the Communists had been overthrown. Once victory was in hand, the slogan would have been shelved and a temporary military dictatorship installed to prevent anarchy from engulfing the country." [our emphasis]

—*Kronstadt 1921*

The White general accepted these terms. A few months later the National Center held a Congress of National Union of all anti-Communist forces, to which the Kronstadt refugees sent a telegram "warmly endorsing their program." And Avrich also has discovered:

"...in the archives of the National Center there is a confidential document of October 30, 1921, signed by Petrichenko and Yakovenko (as chairman and deputy chairman of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee), which authorizes one Vsevolod Nikolaevich Skosyrev to join the Russian National Committee in Paris as a representative of the refugees for 'the coordination of active work with other organizations standing on a platform of armed struggle against the Communists.'"

—*Ibid*

This is the reality of the Kronstadt revolt. It took the Kronstadt leaders no more than two months to pass openly into the camp of the Whites, assuming that they hadn't been there all along. Paul Avrich ends his introduction to *Kronstadt 1921* with the remark: "Yet Kronstadt presents a situation in which the historian can sympathize with the rebels and still concede that the Bolsheviks were justified in subduing them." We can certainly agree that he has proved the latter point beyond all doubt. Anyone who after reading this book condemns the suppression of the Kronstadt mutiny by the beleaguered Soviet regime must be counted among the conscious allies of counterrevolution. ■

## Hostages...

(continued from page 5)

chairman of the Kronstadt soviet; and Korshunov, commissar of the battleship squadron—had been taken hostage by the mutineers. Avrich notes this, although consistently referring to these and the rest of the 300 Communists locked up by the Kronstadters as "prisoners" rather than hostages. These loyal defenders of the Soviet regime, he admits, lived in constant fear of being shot.

As for Serge's claim that "hundreds and more likely... thousands [of Kronstadters] were massacred at the end of the battle or executed afterward" (*New International*, February 1939), this is refuted in *Kronstadt 1921*. Although no precise figures are available, Avrich writes that "losses on the rebel side were fewer" than among the Bolshevik attackers, and estimates the number of Kronstadters killed in the fighting at 600 and those executed in the aftermath at 13. Perhaps his more sober assessment will help lay to rest the anarchist/liberal myth that the Bolsheviks' suppression of Kronstadt assumed the proportions of a latter-day massacre of the Communards.

Today the term "White counterrevolutionary armies" probably does not convey the same meaning to many militants as it did 50 years ago, when their bloody deeds were common knowledge in the workers movement the world over. But the question of taking hostages and the Bolsheviks' military measures in suppressing the Kronstadt revolt cannot be fully understood without a knowledge of what a White victory would have meant.

In Siberia, the White admiral Kolchak turned on and killed even the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries who tried to ally with him against the Communists. In the south the Whites were led by General Denikin, whose regime was described by the American historian G. Stewart (not a pro-Bolshevik) as "a simple dictatorship of the sword" where "pillage became the order of the day." The same writer credits other White leaders with deeds which "would have done credit to Genghis Khan" and of being responsible for "murders and plundering which would have disgraced any medieval footpad."

General Wrangel was as ruthless as his comrades. In fighting outside Stavropol he captured 3,000 Bolshevik soldiers, lined up all the officers and NCOs and had them shot, offering the ranks similar treatment unless they "volunteered" for the White forces.

Even the American officers intervening in Russia were appalled by the sheer savagery of the Whites. General W.S. Graves, with the American forces in Siberia, described one of his White counterparts as a "notorious murderer, robber and cut-throat," and "the worst scoundrel I ever saw or heard of." Not even pro-White authors can conceal the real character of the tsarist reactionaries. In *The White Generals* by Richard Lockett, the pro-monarchist author notes that:

"...it was in their treatment of the Jews that the Whites were at their most inconsequentially brutal. The Jews were the traditional scapegoats: now they were widely believed to be directly responsible for the spread of Bolshevism. The combination of hallowed prejudice with the certain knowledge that several prominent members of the Bolshevik party were of Jewish origin was irresistible.... The terror went on..."

By the end of 1920 the White forces had been driven from Soviet soil by Trotsky's Red Army. This fact is sometimes cited by defenders of the Kronstadt mutiny who wish thereby to debunk Bolshevik fears of a counter-revolution. But, as Avrich noted in his descriptions of the social and economic climate of Russia as 1921 began, the very fact of the defeat of the Whites threatened to unleash powerful internal

forces which could well play into their hands. For the Whites still existed and were very much alive outside of Russia. They had a "National Center" in Paris which coordinated their activities around the world, including running networks of agents inside the Soviet Republic and on its borders. More importantly, they still had an army. General Wrangel commanded nearly 100,000 armed men interned in Serbia, Bulgaria and Turkey, who were being maintained by the French. He also had a fleet interned in a Tunisian port (only a few days' sailing from Kronstadt when the ice melted), which included a battleship, destroyers, several dozen other ships and 5,000 sailors.

#### Revolutionary Responsibility

While citing Trotsky's authorship of the 1919 decree on the taking of hostages, Avrich seeks to relieve him of responsibility for the decision to take hostages at Kronstadt, pointing out that even before Trotsky had arrived in the city the Petrograd Defense Committee had not only taken hostages but had sent the mutineers a message demanding the immediate release of three Communist officials who had been imprisoned, threatening:

"If but a hair falls from the head of a detained comrade, it will be answered by the heads of the hostages."

But although Trotsky did not personally command the forces which suppressed the Kronstadt uprising (contrary to a number of accounts), he *refuses* to be relieved of responsibility for it:

"I am ready to recognize that civil war is no school of humanism. Idealists and pacifists always accused the revolution of 'excesses.' But the main point is that 'excesses' flow from the very nature of revolution which in itself is but an 'excess' of history. Whoever so desires may on this basis reject (in little articles) revolution in general. I do not reject it. In this sense I carry full and complete responsibility for the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion."

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

Trotsky points out that when the October Revolution was defending itself against imperialism on a 5,000-mile front, the workers of the world followed the struggle with such sympathy that it was a risky business to raise the charge of the "disgusting barbarism" of the institution of hostages. It was only much later, with the degeneration of the Soviet state and the triumph of Stalinist reaction, that the anti-Bolshevik moralists crawled out of their crevices to proclaim that while Stalinism was atrocious, it flowed, after all, from Leninism—for hadn't Trotsky also used "Stalinist" methods to crush the Kronstadt insurrection?

But the "disgusting barbarism" of taking hostages, like the "disgusting barbarism" of the Civil War itself, from which it is inseparable, is justified by the *historical content* of the struggle. As Trotsky later wrote of Victor Serge, who broke with the Trotskyist movement largely over this question:

"Victor Serge himself cannot tell exactly what he wants: whether to purge the civil war of the practise of hostages, or to purge human history of civil war? The petty-bourgeois moralist thinks episodically, in fragments, in clumps, being incapable of approaching phenomena in their internal connection. Artificially set apart, the question of hostages is for him a particular moral problem, independent of those general considerations which engender armed conflicts between classes. Civil war is the supreme expression of the class struggle. To attempt to subordinate it to abstract 'norms' means in fact to disarm the workers in the face of an enemy armed to the teeth. The petty-bourgeois moralist is the younger brother of the bourgeois pacifist who wants to 'humanize' warfare by prohibiting the use of poison gases, the bombardment of unfortified cities, etc. Politically, such programs serve only to deflect the thoughts of the people from revolution as the only method of putting an end to war."

L.D. Trotsky, "Moralists and Sycophants against Marxism," *The New International*, August 1939

# Mensheviks and SR's...

(continued from page 5)

three splits from the Socialist-Revolutionaries: the Populist Communists in November of 1918, the SR Maximalists in April 1920 and the Revolutionary Communists in September of the same year. The majority of the Jewish Bund went over to the Bolsheviks also in November 1918.

## The Left SR's

The most significant of the non-Bolshevik groups was the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which had split from the SR party as a whole because of the latter's support for the war and the landlords under Kerensky. The Left SR's were part of a coalition Soviet government with the Bolsheviks in which they played an active role, including participation in the Cheka (the body charged with combatting the counter-revolution), until the peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed with Germany.

This draconian peace, which gave the German imperialists control of large areas of Russia, was forced on the Soviet government, which had no army with which to resist. The masses "voted with their feet" against war by simply deserting. Having lost the vote on the treaty at the Fourth All-Russian Soviet Congress, in March of 1918, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries left the government and set about organizing, in the words of their Central Committee, "a series of terrorist acts against the leading representatives of German imperialism." They hoped thereby to provoke a renewal of war between Germany and the defenseless Soviet republic.

Of course, such a course meant an armed confrontation with the Bolsheviks. The Left SR's noted that since "it is possible that the Bolsheviks may take aggressive counter-action against our party, we are determined in such an event to defend the position we have taken up by force of arms." On 6 July, using their positions within the Cheka, the Left SR's assassinated the German ambassador in Moscow and undertook a poorly prepared putsch in Moscow and Petrograd. Their leaders later claimed they did not "really" intend to make a rising. Perhaps they didn't, for this heterogeneous petty-bourgeois grouping seemed incapable of presenting a coherent program.

However, it did have a mass of undisciplined members, some of whom began to renew the party's tradition of terrorism—this time directed against the Bolsheviks. On 30 August 1918 Lenin was wounded in an assassination attempt by an SR, and Bolshevik leaders Volodarsky and Uritsky were killed. (An attempt was also made on Trotsky's life in this period.) What is surprising, on the surface, is the relative leniency with which the Bolsheviks treated the Left SR's: their organization was not declared illegal, although their press was closed down and their delegates to the Congress of Soviets were expelled. However, SR's who categorically renounced solidarity with the assassination and the ensuing revolt were permitted to rejoin the soviets. The Bolsheviks were relatively successful, moreover, in winning the ranks of the Left SR's, most of whom did not support or take part in the criminal actions of their leadership.

## The Right SR's

As for the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, they supported the counter-revolution from the very start, negotiating with the tsarist army commanders immediately after the October Revolution and participating thereafter, in the words of anti-Communist academic Leonard Schapiro, "in many of the plots, conspiracies, or other anti-

communist activities within or outside Russia." As early as the spring of 1918 they entered into direct collaboration with the imperialist invaders. As Serge wrote:

"The leaders of the counter-revolutionary parties (SR's, Mensheviks and Kadets) had recently, in March, set up a common organization, the 'League for Renewal' (*Soyuz Vozrozhdeniya*). 'The League,' one of the SR leaders has written, 'entered into regular relations with the representatives of the Allied missions at Moscow and Vologda, mainly through the agency of M. Noulens [the French ambassador].... The League for Renewal was the main clandestine organization of the 'Socialist' petty-bourgeoisie and of the liberals who were determined to overthrow the Soviet government by force. In Moscow the Odrobists, representing the big bourgeoisie, joined the organization and linked it with the 'Right Centre', a united front of reactionary tendencies inspired by the generals Alexeyev and Kornilov.... There was thus a chain of counter-revolutionary organizations running uninterruptedly from the most 'advanced' Socialists to the blackest reactionaries.... In June, M. Noulens sent the League a semi-official Note from the Allies approving of its political programme and promising it military assistance against the German-Bolshevik enemy."

*Year One of the Russian Revolution*

The SR policy was to support a kind of "popular front" of all anti-Bolsheviks, including the openly monarchist officers. In September of 1918 a conference of these forces met at Ufa and formed an "All-Russian Provisional Government." Of the 150 delegates attending, half were SR's; also represented were the Mensheviks (although this group was not carrying out official party policy), the *Edinstvo* group of Plekhanov, the Kadets and various anti-Communist governments from the border regions.

The Kadet, SR government formed here did not last long, being overthrown by their ally Admiral Kolchak a few weeks later. (In general, during the early stages of the Civil War, the tsarist generals were intolerant of all "socialists," not yet realizing the value of a "left cover" for their anti-Bolshevik campaign.)

## The Mensheviks

Avrich goes to considerable lengths to absolve the Mensheviks of participation in the anti-Bolshevik front. He claims, "In contrast to the Kadets and SR's, the Mensheviks in exile held aloof from anti-Bolshevik conspiracies and made no attempt to aid the rebels." The reality was rather different.

Those Mensheviks who could not stomach uniting with the tsarists were in a bad position. Menshevik theory called for the bourgeoisie to rule after the tsar had been overthrown, and now the bourgeoisie was fighting a civil war to implement, so to speak, the Menshevik program. The official Menshevik position was not to try to overthrow the Soviet government by force of arms, yet prominent Mensheviks joined virtually every counterrevolutionary coalition engineered by the Right SR's. Moreover, the government formed in Georgia under Menshevik leader N. Zhordania revealed their treacherous course.

The Menshevik republic in Georgia initially collaborated with the German forces which occupied the Caucasus in 1918. After the withdrawal of the Germans and their Turkish allies the Mensheviks formed a new government in February 1919. These "democrats" and "socialists" proceeded to ban the Communist Party and to carry out oppressive policies against national minority peoples in the region. In May of that year the White general Denikin occupied the area. The Mensheviks rejected Soviet proposals for a joint struggle against the Whites, with Zhordania declaring, "I prefer the imperialists of the West to the fanatics of the East." Finally, when the troops of White general Wrangel were trapped in the Crimea, the Mensheviks assisted him in transporting personnel and supplied

him with vital war materiel.

The Mensheviks suffered a precarious existence during the Civil War—half-suppressed, half-tolerated. This corresponded not to some preconceived Leninist doctrine in favor of a single-party state (there never was such a doctrine) but rather to the reality of a "bourgeois workers party" in the middle of a civil war between the bourgeoisie and the workers. The Mensheviks were active in fomenting the anti-government strikes in Petrograd on the eve of the Kronstadt mutiny, and in the course of the first three months of 1921 some 5,000 Mensheviks were arrested, including the entire party central committee. On 17 March, as the refugees from Kronstadt were crossing the ice to refuge with the Whites in Finland, the deposed Menshevik government in Georgia set sail to West European exile. They had chosen sides in the Civil War and their side lost.

## The Anarchists

The anarchists ranged from harmless utopians, active terrorists and pro-Soviet revolutionists through to outright criminals. Considering Avrich's political sympathies we can do no better than to quote his description of Russian anarchism and its relation to the new workers state:

"During the spring of 1918, local anarchist groups began to form armed detachments of Black Guards which sometimes carried out 'expropriations', that is, held up banks, shops and private homes. Most of their comrades—especially the 'Soviet anarchists'—condemned such acts as parodies of the libertarian ideal, which wasted precious lives, demoralized the movement's true adherents and discredited anarchism in the eyes of the general public....

"After the bitter opposition of the anarchists to the treaty of Brest-Litovsk their formation of armed guards and occasional underworld excursions led the Bolsheviks to act against them. On the night of 11-12 April 1918 the Cheka raided twenty-six anarchist centres in Moscow, killing or wounding some forty anarchists and taking more than five hundred prisoners [most of whom were subsequently released]....

"The breathing space that Lenin won at Brest-Litovsk was of short duration. By the summer of 1918 the Bolshevik regime was plunged in a life-and-death struggle with its enemies, both foreign and domestic. While most anarchists continued to support the government, a growing number called for a mass rising against Reds and Whites alike.... Fiery manifestoes... encouraged the people to revolt against their new masters. In the south, a spawning ground for anarchist 'battle detachments,' the Bakunin Partisans of Ekaterinoslav sang of a new 'era of dynamite' that would eliminate the oppressors of every political hue.... And in Moscow, the new capital, anarchist Black Guards who had survived the Cheka raids of April 1918 went so far as to plan an armed seizure of the city, but were talked out of it by their more moderate comrades. The campaign of terrorism continued for many months, reaching a climax in September 1919, when a group of 'underground anarchists,' in league with Left SR's, bombed the Moscow headquarters of the Communist party, killing or wounding sixty-seven people. This, however, only led to greater repression."

Paul Avrich, ed. *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*

Despite this, as even Leonard Schapiro acknowledges, "the Anarchists were never at any time officially outlawed by decree.... Although individual publications were frequently suppressed... it is apparently true to say that until the spring of 1921 there was no time during which at least some of their groups did not enjoy some vehicle of self-expression" (*The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*). It is certainly true, of course, that the Bolsheviks were rather less tolerant of such "vehicles of self-expression" as were thrown into their Moscow headquarters. And yet they did try to meet the "sincere anarchists" halfway. To no avail. As Schapiro describes it:

"When Kameney in 1920 offered the Moscow Anarchists freedom to issue their papers and to run their clubs and bookshops in exchange for their adop-

tion of party discipline and a purge of the criminal and irresponsible elements which had infiltrated into their membership, they indignantly rejected the offer"

*Ibid*

## Dictatorship of the Party?

It would be foolish to maintain that every single arrest of a Left SR, Menshevik or anarchist was a correct action. Despite the documented attempts of the Bolsheviks to differentiate and foster differentiation—between "defeatist" and "defensist" currents among their social-democratic, populist and anarchist opponents, a desperate civil war does not create an ideal climate for judicial impartiality. Nor was it easy to distinguish among the variegated wavering currents in all these petty-bourgeois groupings.

The Bolsheviks were the only force in the revolutionary crisis of 1917 to fight for a regime based on soviet power. They led the insurrection which established the Soviet republic. Throughout the Civil War and until the Stalinist victory clamped on the straitjacket of bureaucratic rule, the party of Lenin and Trotsky sought to maintain its leadership of the proletarian dictatorship through the support of the majority of the workers, expressed through the soviets. The events surrounding the Kronstadt mutiny, however, threatened the very existence of the Soviet regime under extremely unfavorable circumstances.

In a stable workers state Leninists favor full democratic rights for all political tendencies which do not seek the forcible overthrow of the proletarian dictatorship. That includes recognizing the possibility of the Communists losing a vote in soviet bodies. But the embattled Russian workers republic of 1918-22 was anything but stable, and had the Bolsheviks stepped down to be replaced by social-democratic, populist or anarchist elements, then very soon both the Leninists and their petty-bourgeois opponents would have found themselves facing the White firing squads. No doubt we would today be reading the theses, monographs and books by "left" academics about the admirable, but after all impractical and utopian Russian Marxists.

As one Russian socialist expressed it in 1920:

"In a class struggle which has entered the phase of civil war, there are bound to be times when the advance guard of the revolutionary class, representing the interests of the broad masses but ahead of them in political consciousness, is obliged to exercise state power by means of a dictatorship of the revolutionary minority."

We agree entirely with this concise summary of Bolshevik policy during the Civil War and the Kronstadt crisis. And who authored this concise defense of Leninism? None other than the Menshevik Julius Martov. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

# This Man Is a Nazi... Protected by the SWP!



WV Photo

CHICAGO, April 21—The emptiness of recent efforts by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to cover up its treachery in calling for "free speech for fascists" was exposed here tonight at its forum on how to respond to well publicized Nazi threats to march into the predominantly Jewish suburb of Skokie. Throughout the discussion period a man kept his hand raised high, but he was not called upon to speak. When he was finally approached and asked to identify himself he said he was from the "National Socialist White People's Party."

No doubt this Hitler-loving racist thug knew he could expect polite treatment from the SWP whose insistence on the Nazis' "right" to free speech is well known. But how did the chair know to avoid calling on him and being embarrassed? Questioned by a Spartacist League (SL) supporter, the chairman said that she suspected all along that he was a fascist and purposely did not call on him for that reason. Instead, immediately after the forum he was quickly escorted out of the room to avoid a "provocation." By whom—the Nazi? If they were worried about him, they would have thrown him out during the meeting. No, the SWP was worried about action from those who like the SL do not offer a platform for these race-hating terrorists to spew their genocidal filth.

By withholding the information that a Nazi was present at its forum,

by refusing to get the goods on him, shut him up, throw him out and teach him a lesson, the SWP endangered those who were in attendance. Just two months ago a fascist pulled a razor and slashed a woman trade unionist at an anti-Nazi meeting in Detroit called by a committee set up by United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 600. First the Nazis came to earlier meetings to test the Local 600 bureaucracy. Then they pulled out their razors.

Thus the SWP is passing the Nazis' test. While Malik Miah spouts textbook phrases about defense against the fascist menace, the Nazi sits in the audience protected by the SWP's commitment to his "free speech." He hears from the speaker that the SWP will "debate" Nazis and he raises his hand. The SWP policy only emboldens the fascist provocateurs. The SWP does not want to recognize that the Nazis must be smashed here and now, while they are still a tiny force. In its slavish worship of liberal opinion, its "free speech for fascists" policy courts the most severe danger. Having been so politely received the first time, the Nazis will return and the SWP must bear part of the political responsibility for the next razor-wielding attack.

Revolutionaries, in contrast, would do all in their power to protect the participants in left meetings and to "discourage" the Nazi scum from showing their faces again. No Platform for Fascists!

## CWA...

(continued from page 2)

expropriated. That's the way to stop monopolies like AT&T who hold the public up for ransom and exploit the workers with a vengeance. A workers government administering a planned economy is our alternative to profit-hungry Ma Bell.

WV: Will CWA support for the American Institute for Free Labor Development come up at this convention?

Margolis: It always does. Every convention there are speakers from the AIFLD and resolutions supporting that reactionary anti-labor organization. The AIFLD has always been a pet project of the CWA. In fact, our former president, Joe Beirne, donated the union's headquarters in Ford Royal, Virginia to the AIFLD.

This outfit is a lash-up of unions, corporations and the U.S. government which is in the business of indoctrinating union leaders from other countries

in the school of anti-communism and strikebreaking. It acts as a conduit for CIA money to corrupt and split the labor movements in Latin America, Africa and Asia. AIFLD-trained leaders were among the collaborators of the junta which overthrew the Allende regime in Chile and killed tens of thousands of Chilean workers. This is an organization with the blood of workers on its hands. Every year that the MAC has gone to conventions we have put out literature exposing the AIFLD and demanding that the CWA and all unions get out of it.

WV: What's been the response of the membership to your campaign?

Margolis: First, you have to understand that besides us there is absolutely no opposition in our local to the CWA's sellout policies. There are 35 candidates running for the nine convention slots and 34 of them have got no program to take the membership forward or fight for jobs. In fact I just learned tonight that Bob Tobner, a candidate from Traffic and member of the Traffic executive board, has just

accepted a management position, which gives you a good idea where he's at! Many of these same people have been on and off the executive board for years without doing anything. So we really stand out as the only group that will fight for the membership's needs. Many of the local members who do not agree with our full program know that we will get up there and fight for them at the convention.

I supposed our best response has come from the Traffic department. And there's a reason why. Operators have the most degrading job at the phone company and every new management scheme is tried out on them first. Then, when the union doesn't object, management imposes these policies on the rest of us. That's how this "absence control" came in. Operators have always been neglected by the union.

We have been very well received because the Militant Action Caucus has an eight-year record of fighting to get the union to defend the operators. Last January we put forward a motion at a union meeting for a strike vote to win back the jobs of twelve operators who had been arbitrarily fired and to stop the firing spree that was going on. *Not one* of the current candidates from Traffic supported that motion, which shows just where they stand.

I was an operator for four and a half years, an executive board rep and a steward. We had to fight day by day against company attacks. Operators remember our struggles to get elected rather than appointed union stewards, to stop the petty harassment and firings. And a lot of operators supported me when I was fired in 1975. When I was rehired, after over a year-long battle, they saw that victory as their own as well as mine. There was the same shared spirit of victory when we got Margaret Martinson's job back. So in terms of our caucus, the membership sees us as a determined group; they know we're not going to let the phone company or the union leadership run us out.

WV: How have the company and union officers responded to your candidacy?

Margolis: In this campaign as in our previous campaigns, the company has singled us out for harassment. Management is preventing us from going into buildings to distribute our literature. In the past they cited a clause in our contract that says that no material which is deemed "derogatory" to the company can be distributed. In one election they prevented us from posting copies of our program on the union bulletin boards, because we called for the nationalization of the phone company.

Now, interestingly enough, we are the only group whose literature is being banned; all the other candidates have free access to the buildings, to the membership, to the union bulletin boards, all with management's blessing. But we have been kicked out and had security guards called on us, because we're the only ones that the company sees as a threat. And in that sense, their perception is correct.

The union leadership has, by and large, defended the contract clause against material "derogatory" to the company. That really reflects what our union officials are all about. What they want is good harmony with the company; they say that we should not put any statements in our literature that are anti-company. In fact in one building a union officer kept taking our literature down off the bulletin board until the members demanded that he leave it up and kept putting it back up on the board.

The whole orientation of the union leadership is to oppose militants, oppose the membership and to defend the profits of the company. We will never build a union movement that will fight for our needs, we will never get this union off its knees, until we kick out these pro-company leaders and their no-win policies. ■

## Letter

Department of History  
Tufts University  
Medford, MA 02155  
4 April 1978

Editor, *Workers Vanguard*  
Comrade:

Two corrections from recent issues:

No. 198 (24 March 1978) in the article "Zionists Grab Southern Lebanon," you refer to "the long Syrian siege of the Palestinian refugee camp Tel al Zaatar" and "The Syrian forces, the butchers of Tel al Zaatar". While it is true that the Syrian intervention saved the Maronite-led forces from defeat by the Palestinian-Muslim forces and provided them with some of the arms with which they carried out the siege of Tel al Zaatar, that siege was carried out by the "rightist" militias, led by the Phalange. The massacre which followed its surrender would not have been carried out by Syrian regular troops or their Palestinian front-group al-Sa'iq.

No. 199 (31 March 1978) in the article on the RCP, you state that the RCP "has been all over the map on the black question ... and sometimes (as in the RCP *Programme*) avoiding the question altogether." The last part of this quote is incorrect; the *Programme* (p. 122) states "the Black people remain an oppressed nation, but under new conditions" and advocates their right to return to the Black Belt while advising against such a course (p. 123). One suspects that avoidance of the question could be found in RCP literature, but this is not the case in the *Programme*.

Phil Pritchard

## More Anti-Union Blues...

(continued from page 3)

owners. If I had those assholes working for me, I'd have them whipped and chained.

"Seven Days: The end of Blue Collar seems much like *Taxi Driver*. Corruption is everywhere and all the characters have lost."

"Schrader. I really don't think that's a problem, because the moment a black audience in Detroit or Chicago sees the film, they'll realize, 'That's right. The big organizations and companies use racism to see that nobody improves their lot.'"

"Seven Days: Blue Collar ends with a voice-over speech: 'Everything they do... is meant to keep us in our place.' Who are 'they'?"

"Schrader: All big organizations. In my mind, the government, the company, and the unions are all the same. They are the Captains of Industry who rule the world."

The reason the Maoist and social-democratic workerists get pulled in on this kind of bourgeois diatribe is political: their anti-Marxist blinders prevent them from recognizing the class line. The social democrats of the I.S., who think democracy is classless, join in pro-imperialist attacks on the Soviet Union over the dissidents issue and haul the unions into the bosses' courts over questions of internal union democracy. The Maoists, like all Stalinists, identify themselves with the interests of the ruling bureaucracies of the deformed workers states. When it isn't their gang in power, then they deny that there is anything progressive left in these states to defend against counterrevolution. So they call the USSR "fascist" and call for "jamming the unions." And they are both easy prey for anti-labor propaganda when it is given even the skimpiest "popular" disguise. ■

# Panama...

(continued from page 1)

bourgeoisie, the junior partners of the imperialists, including and particularly from populist demagogues like Torrijos. At the same time it is the internationalist obligation of the American labor movement to demand that the U.S. get out of Panama now!

## Yahoos Run Amok in the Senate

The April 18 Panama Canal Treaty and its adjunct, the Permanent Neutrality Treaty approved by the U.S. Senate March 16, were a major test of the Carter administration's foreign policy. Had the pacts failed to pass, or been amended to the point that Torrijos could not accept them, the U.S. government's credibility in SALT talks with the Soviet Union would have been eliminated. Moreover, the predictable mass actions against U.S. imperialism in Panama and throughout Latin America would have subjected an already weak administration to tremendous pressures. Ford's defeat over Angola would pale in comparison. Thus the White House had a lot riding on the backscratching, horse-trading and double-dealing in the Senate corridors.

Opponents of the treaty often seemed to be dreaming of the era of Manifest Destiny, the Rough Riders and the Great White Fleet. While campaigning against Gerald Ford for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976 Ronald Reagan told audiences that the Canal Zone was "a sovereign United States territory just the same as Alaska is and the part of Texas that came out of the Gadsden Purchase and the states that were carved out of the Louisiana Purchase." His fellow California reactionary, Senator S.I. Hayakawa, was blunter: "We stole it, fair and square." Ex-Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond called the treaties the "big giveaway of the century."

A giveaway it isn't. Until noon on 31 December 1999 the canal will be operated by a commission consisting of five Americans and four Panamanians picked by the U.S. government. Under the treaties there will be a 30-month transition period before Panamanian jurisdiction goes into force, and even thereafter the U.S. will have "primary responsibility" for "defense" of the canal until expiration of the treaty (with a combined board of officers including the Panamanian National Guard for "consultation" in the meantime). Additionally, in order to secure passage of the "neutrality" treaty, an amendment was tacked on providing that U.S. warships can "go to the head of the line" to pass through the canal.

What really set off the fireworks, however, was a Senate "reservation" submitted by Arizona Senator DeConcini providing for a U.S. invasion of Panama itself (not just the "former" Canal Zone) if the canal were closed or its operations hindered in any way:

"...notwithstanding the provisions of Article V or any other provision of the treaty, if the canal is closed, or its operations are interfered with, the United States of America... shall... have the right to take such steps as it deems necessary... including the use of military force in Panama..."

quoted in *New York Times*, 17 March 1978

To make utterly clear what he had in mind by "interference," DeConcini specified this during the Senate debate as "labor unrest or strikes, the action of an unfriendly government, political riots or upheavals." The London *Economist* (15 April) called this provocation "perhaps the most foolish and unnecessary interference by the Senate in the treaty-making process since this august body mangled the Treaty of Versailles in 1920."

Unnecessary because this is already permitted under the terms of the treaty, which grant the U.S. the right to "meet the danger resulting from an armed attack or other actions which threaten

the security of the Panama Canal," and the right to "station, train and move military forces within the Republic of Panama" (*New York Times*, 7 September 1977). A subsequent (October 14) Statement of Understanding signed by Carter and Torrijos stated that the U.S. has an indefinite right "to act against any aggression or threat directed against the Canal." But it is hardly surprising that the Panamanian strongman should howl when this assertion of an American prerogative to occupy Panama is spelled out in black and white.

While Torrijos fumed and threatened to take the canal by force (!), Carter, Byrd and Church tried to come up with a formulation that would allow the Panamanian government to accept it while still satisfying Senate right-wingers. This presented some difficulty, as the "nuke-em" neanderthals were literally sitting up nights thinking up any and all possibilities when American troops could be sent in. The *Wall Street Journal* (7 April) noted:

"Senator Hayakawa was the biggest challenge. He said he woke up one morning at four o'clock and began to worry about eroding American strength and willpower around the globe."

Hayakawa was eventually bought off with a White House promise that he "would have more influence on foreign affairs by voting 'yes'." Senator Abourezk got an agreement from Byrd that House-Senate conference committee decisions on energy legislation would be made more openly. And to seduce DeConcini, whose state is the leading copper producer, blocked copper stocks worth \$250 million were put on the market.

That left the Panamanians...and a big problem, since the DeConcini reservation is absolutely unambiguous. Finally an eleventh-hour formulation was worked out which reaffirms U.S. "adherence to the principle of non-intervention" (!) and states that any American intervention in Panama "shall be only for the purpose of assuring that the canal shall remain open, neutral, secure, and accessible, and shall not have as its purpose nor be interpreted as a right of intervention in the internal affairs of the Republic of Panama..." (*New York Times*, 19 April). This, of course, in no way restricts U.S. action, except that the president will make a pious statement upon occupying Panama that such a move is not for the purpose of interfering in its internal affairs, but only to defend the canal!

## An Old "New" Era

The whole exercise is doubly ludicrous, for if the United States government decided it was in its interest to send in the navy or marines, it would do so with or without a treaty, as it has done frequently in the past (Guatemala 1954, Santo Domingo 1965, etc.). Reaffirming U.S. dedication to "the principle of non-intervention" is about the most threatening statement the Senate could have made considering the scores of times American troops have occupied Latin American countries in this century alone (in the name of non-intervention, of course!).

The only "non-intervention" the U.S. has ever been interested in is that of its imperialist rivals. In the wake of the 1810-20 Latin American revolts against Spain, many of them financed and armed by Great Britain, U.S. president James Monroe warned the British not to again try their luck at empire-building in the Western Hemisphere. Ever since then, while advocating an "open door" in the Far East and other colonial regions, the United States has kept the door closed on European powers fooling around in its back yard.

The American interest in building a canal across the Central American isthmus was largely dormant until the eve of the Spanish-American War. It intensified greatly during the 1898 war when the battleship *Oregon* spent 68 days sailing from the West Coast to its

battle station in Cuba via the straits of Magellan, a trip that would have taken one-third the time if a canal had existed. The 1898 war introduced the U.S. as a great power on a world scale and established its domination of the Caribbean. The country emerged from "the splendid little war," as Secretary of State John Hay called it, with Cuba, Puerto Rico and a real navy. So it wanted a canal.

At the time Panama had been annexed to Colombia since independence in 1821. Revolts occurred sporadically until 1884-85 when rebels seized control of the isthmus and made the mistake of attacking the Panama Railroad and U.S. shipping. President Grover Cleveland sent in eight warships to put down the revolt and protect American interests, setting the precedent for numerous subsequent instances of "non-intervention." In 1902 Congress instructed Teddy Roosevelt to build a canal in Panama if a treaty could be obtained from Colombia. In January 1903 Secretary of State Hay convinced the Colombian ambassador to sign a treaty for a 99-year lease on a six-mile wide canal zone. When the Colombian senate unanimously rejected the pact Roosevelt denounced them as "inefficient bandits" and "a corrupt pithecooid community."

The swashbuckling conqueror of San Juan Hill then wrote a friend he would be "delighted" if Panama became independent and started drafting a message to Congress suggesting that the simplest solution would be to send the navy to seize the territory. But he didn't need to. Simultaneously a group of Panamanian nationalists were preparing a revolt, with the counsel of a French engineer/businessman and adventurer, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, who in turn obtained the aid of the U.S. State Department. On the day of the Panamanian revolt, 3 November 1903, the *USS Nashville* sailed into the Atlantic coast port of Colón and landed sailors.

Bunau-Varilla went on to negotiate the treaty under which Panama became a virtual protectorate of the U.S., giving Washington "all the rights, power and authority within the [Canal] Zone...which the United States would possess and exercise if it were the sovereign of the territory within which said lands and waters are located to the entire exclusion of the exercise by the Republic of Panama of any such sovereign rights, power and authority" (quoted in Walter LeFeber, *The Panama Canal* [New York, 1978]). Under the treaty the zone was widened to ten miles and Hay's earlier 99-year lease extended to "in perpetuity." The treaty was signed by Hay and Bunau-Varilla on 18 November 1903. The Panamanian government insisted that Bunau-Varilla had no authority to negotiate it, and it subsequently became known as the treaty no Panamanian ever signed.

While U.S. interests thereafter focused on the Canal Zone, Washington was not indifferent to political developments in the country it bisected. In 1918 Woodrow Wilson wanted Liberal president Porras to be re-elected. The United States moved troops into Panama City and Colón to "supervise" the balloting. It was decided the government candidates won. In 1921 at Porras' request U.S. soldiers protected him from mobs besieging the presidential palace. In 1925 Marines came into Panama City to stop an uprising growing out of rent riots. The next year the Marines were again sent in to "supervise" elections.

In the 1930's due to growing unrest in Panama over the imposed treaty Franklin Roosevelt moved to renegotiate some of the more obnoxious clauses: the right of the U.S. to intervene to maintain order in Colón and Panama City was eliminated, as well as the perpetuity clause and the right to seize additional territory, and the annuity to Panama was increased. But FDR also made clear there would be no fundamental change in the relations between the two countries. On a visit to Panama

in July 1934 he proclaimed that the U.S. would continue to hold the canal "as a trustee for all the world."

As in Jimmy Carter's "new era" of "human rights," Franklin Roosevelt dressed up his shift away from military intervention to more veiled methods of control by labeling it the "Good Neighbor" policy. As the last U.S. troops left Central America, Secretary of State Cordell Hull moved in with his reciprocal trade agreements.

That is where matters remained until 9 January 1964 as a succession of corrupt Panamanian governments dutifully served the dictates of Washington while keeping the poverty-stricken population of the republic quiet. But when student demonstrators sought to raise the Panamanian flag in the Canal Zone on that date they were brutally repressed by U.S. troops who killed 24 and wounded 200. After this, 'virtually the entire American ruling class was won to see that recognition of Panamanian sovereignty and conceding nominal jurisdiction over the Canal Zone was a small price to pay to improve the U.S. image in Latin America and avoid the prospect of a messy guerrilla war.

## Big Business Backs the Treaty

Since then four different U.S. administrations, two Republican and two Democratic, have negotiated with Panamanian rulers over the future status of the canal. However, as there would evidently be opposition to "giving up" the Zone from domestic right-wingers, progress was slow until Jimmy Carter decided this would be a dramatic (and cheap) first step in his "human rights" foreign policy toward Latin America. Thus by September of last year a treaty was quickly put together, and every junta president in the hemisphere was invited to come from the torture chambers and prison camps to witness the signing of the "historic" document.

In the U.S., too, there has been a strange line-up in favor of this treaty which is hailed by the Stalinists as a blow against American imperialism. Supporters include the First National City Bank, Chase Manhattan, Bank of America, Marine Midland, Braniff, Pan American Airways, Gulf Oil, the Council of the Americas, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Barry Goldwater, William Buckley—even John Wayne. What accounts for this unusual outpouring of conservative, corporate and military support? It is one thing to buy off a first-term senator from Arizona, but Carter couldn't come close to mobilizing the resources to put the squeeze on these powerful interests.

The *New York Times* (18 April), in an editorial published the morning of the Senate vote, put the ruling-class case for the treaties succinctly—it protects the interests of U.S. capitalism:

"At the risk of sounding monotonous, let us repeat what we have said since the outlines of the canal treaties became known last August. The United States would yield nothing of consequence by turning the canal over to Panama. As the Joint Chiefs of Staff have testified, it would be impossible for this country to keep the canal open in the face of determined Panamanian opposition, or even to protect it against a well-executed act of sabotage. And there is no need for military bases in the Canal Zone to deter an attack by outside powers. Even in the worst contingency—even if the canal were closed for one reason or another—United States commercial and naval traffic would be inconvenienced, but would by no means be crippled."

"The treaties give away nothing of substance. Instead, they would eliminate a growing irritant in United States' relations with Panama, and show the entire hemisphere that this country will deal with even the smallest of powers on a basis of sovereign equality. It is against logic to suppose that once the Panamanians 'own' the canal they will cease to maintain or to assure free access to it. Panama is fast becoming the commercial and financial center of Central America."

Certainly it is true that the U.S. has nothing to lose and much to gain by

WORKERS VANGUARD

formally transferring the canal to Panamanian jurisdiction, just as Torrijos—who is deeply in the U.S.' political and economic debt—has a vital interest in keeping the canal open.

But there is more to it than that. In an essay in the 23 March *New York Review of Books*, liberal Ronald Steel demonstrates that the treaties really amount to a bail-out of the leading *Wall Street* banks! Far from being some kind of Panamanian *fidelist*, Torrijos is a proud graduate of the Pentagon's Canal Zone "School of the Americas," a staff college for counterinsurgency techniques which has trained most of Latin America's present generation of dictators. While he has exiled leading right-wing politicians (as well as prominent left-wing opponents), Torrijos has shown not the slightest inclination toward expropriating capitalist interests. On the contrary, his main interest has been in turning Panama into a banker's paradise, a Caribbean Switzerland with numbered accounts, strict bank secrecy and low taxes.

By 1976 foreign banking had become key to the Panamanian economy, with international financiers well understanding that their privileges rest on Torrijos' continued durability (and ability to contain the masses). Thus, writes Steel, when a 1973 recession and resulting social unrest over jobs and wages raised doubts about the regime's staying power, the First National City Bank organized a consortium to lend Torrijos \$115 million. The Panamanian ruler returned the favor by rescinding a decree restricting mortgage lending.

## Spartacists Win Court Battle Against Ford Canada

On April 20, the attempt of the Ford Motor Company to violate freedom of the press and the democratic rights of workers at its Oakville, Ontario plant was stymied. Justice Murray Allen, presiding in Halton regional provincial court, dismissed charges of "petty trespass" against three distributors of the labor-socialist publications *Workers Vanguard* and *Spartacist Canada*. The Ford witness, a plant security guard, was unable to prove Ford ownership of the property where the alleged "petty trespass" occurred.

In his court testimony, the Ford witness claimed that the municipal road allowance which provides for public thoroughfare between property boundaries and roadways does not apply to the Ford Motor Company. Thus, according to Ford, there is no accessible public place from which to distribute literature to the workforce at the Ford Oakville plant. Responding to questions from Toronto lawyer Paul Copeland, the security guard stated that even the union at the workplace (UAW Local 707) must apply to the company for approval of material to be distributed to its membership!

While the case against the *Workers Vanguard* and *Spartacist Canada* distributors has been dismissed, the right to distribute material at the plant and the right of the workforce to read what it chooses has not been established. Ford management is intent on stopping the distribution of socialist newspapers to workers at the plant, just as it is intent on censoring the literature of the UAW. Ford's control of all material distributed at the plant must not go unchallenged. It is essential that the fight continue until Ford workers have access to labor-socialist literature and their own union's publications without harassment and censorship.

Presently Panama owes U.S. banks an estimated \$1.8 billion—more than ten times its debt when Torrijos seized power in 1968—with 39 percent of the nation's budget siphoned off to service the debt, to the tune of \$42 million a year.

Steel writes about the situation since the fall of 1976 when student and working-class demonstrations broke out against Torrijos:

"By this time it became obvious that the U.S. could work with Torrijos and that a mutually beneficial treaty could be negotiated. The General needed to gain control of the Canal and more importantly its revenues, not only to satisfy nationalistic sentiment, but to pay off the banks and redeem some of his pledges to a nation foundering in unemployment and economic stagnation. The US wanted a settlement in order to improve its relations with Latin America and to avoid the prospect of nasty guerrilla war in the Zone...."

For the \$70-odd million annually the U.S. has now pledged to Panama will go a long way toward paying the interest and amortizing the principal on loans outstanding to the Torrijos regime. As Steel sums up, paraphrasing one treaty opponent, the Reaganite Congressman Crane, "The promise of Canal revenues and an additional \$345 million in U.S. aid... is... simply a 'bailout' of the banks by U.S. taxpayers."

### The Left and Torrijos

Torrijos, who almost always appears in field uniform with a large pistol on his hip, looks more than anything like a small-town southern sheriff. He comes from the petty bourgeoisie and rose through the ranks of the National Guard, the U.S.-created, trained and equipped "army." He distinguished himself in the early 1960's when he fought guerrilla movements in Panama's interior provinces. Upon coming to power in a 1968 coup he transformed the oligarchy's posh Union Club into a recreation center for Guard members and their families.

Torrijos is a true bonapartist, balancing off the left and right. First he exiled the graft-ridden capitalist politicians of the previous period, who are now gathered in Miami around former president and Panamanian Party leader Arnulfo Arias. He put great emphasis on land redistribution, rural development and the elimination of corruption. However, by 1975 National Guard officers became integrated into the contraband and smuggling networks in this freewheeling financial and transportation crossroads of Latin America.

Accusations of nepotism have reached Torrijos himself. His brother Moises (accused during the Senate treaty hearings of involvement in drug trafficking) was appointed ambassador to Spain where he allegedly invested the general's money in real estate, including a castle once owned by Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. More than 30 members of Torrijos' family have prospered in high governmental positions, including head of the national lottery and director of the government-owned casinos.

Although since the 1930's the nationalistic students and the National Guard had been enemies, Torrijos tried to win over the schools. The Federation of Panamanian Students was soon caught up in the wake of the *lider máximo*, but by 1976 with the rising discontent among the unemployed they lost ground to other left-wing groups independent of the regime. The same was true of the Partido del Pueblo (People's Party), the local Stalinist party, which following the Cuban line has unconditionally supported Torrijos. Among the leading anti-Torrijos groups has been the Liga Socialista Revolucionaria (LSR), a sympathizing organization of the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel.

Last September 7, while the treaties were being signed in Washington, dozens were injured and 30 arrested as students clashed with Torrijos' riot police at the Panamanian foreign ministry. The protesters demanded immediate U.S.

withdrawal from the Canal Zone. Again on October 19 (during the Torrijos plebiscite on the canal treaties) some 10,000 demonstrators demanded U.S. out and opposed the accords. The demonstrations were organized by a "united front" including the LSR. To prevent similar mobilizations during the critical days of the U.S. Senate hearings on the pacts this spring, Torrijos kept the schools closed after Easter.

With the "far left" groups awakening mass support with agitation against the imperialist treaties, the question of the attitude toward the Torrijos regime becomes a key issue. In various articles the LSR and its leaders (including Miguel Antonio Bernal, who has been exiled from Panama for the last two years as a prominent left opponent of the regime) have made clear that they oppose giving political support to Torrijos, although they are put in something of an embarrassing position because of their simultaneous sympathies for the Castro regime which praises the Panamanian dictator as an "anti-imperialist." However, another wing of the United Secretariat, grouped around Nahuel Moreno of the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST), holds that it is necessary to "support Torrijos in the current negotiations" (article in the Colombian Bloque Socialista's *Revolución Socialista* No. 66 of 10 March 1977, reprinted in the *Morenoites' Revista de América* of May 1977).

The *Morenoites'* support for Torrijos is explicitly political and far reaching. Elsewhere in the article they call for "support to the nationalist policies of Torrijos," state that he is "the representative of the struggle for the recuperation of the canal." This is backed up by the following analysis:

"Although we are aware of the bourgeois character of the Torrijos government, we must keep in mind the progressive character of its confrontation with imperialism...."

"Thus the fundamental enemy of the Panamanian masses in this moment is imperialism and not Torrijos."

This is a Stalinist theory of "revolution by stages" in its fullest flower. The article has so many references to the "principal enemy" that one would think it to be written by a Maoist.

In a follow-up article (*Revista de América*, June-July 1977) the *Morenoites* characterize Torrijos as a "bonapartist *sui generis* [of a unique kind]" and go on to say that his regime "confronts imperialism in a partial and limited manner.... The ultimate proof of this is that *Torrijos is the first ruler in the entire history of Panama who denounces the treaty which handed over the canal and the canal zone to Yankee imperialism in perpetuity*." This affirmation is particularly ludicrous because the "in perpetuity" clause was eliminated from the canal treaty in 1936—in response to nationalist agitation among the Panamanian masses—by none other than U.S. imperialist commander-in-chief Franklin D. Roosevelt. Evidently this indicates that he is a bonapartist *really sui generis*.

It is virtually impossible to talk even of pseudo-Trotskyism in the case of this

tendency, which holds that in "Bolivia under Torres, Chile under Allende, Peru under Velasco Alvarado" it was similarly necessary to give "critical" political support to the "bonapartists *sui generis*" against the imperialists. The whole lesson of Chile was that the Allende popular front paved the way to the victory of the bloody junta by tying the workers to the "anti-imperialist" sectors of the bourgeoisie. Moreno & Co. do exactly the same toward Torrijos as the MIR did toward Allende's UP in Chile.

While the Panamanian LSR does not follow this capitulationist line toward Torrijos, it nonetheless is also far from presenting an authentically Trotskyist opposition to this bourgeois nationalist demagogue. Many of the demands it raises are correct, such as for a constituent assembly, open diplomacy and full democratic liberties. However, the axis of its anti-canal treaty agitation has been for the formation of a united front of all supporters of the traditional Panamanian nationalist demand "Sovereignty now!" But this demand is necessarily bourgeois nationalist in content. By 1980 the formal Panamanian sovereignty over the "ex-" Canal Zone will be recognized, and by the year 2000 even the U.S. treaty right to maintain bases and operate the canal will have lapsed under the present pact.

(The absurdity of limiting the aims of the struggle to the bourgeois nationalist demands is seen by what it will mean to impose another of the key attributes of sovereignty on the Canal Zone: the national currency. When the "Zonians" are forced to henceforth use the *balboa* for purposes of exchange, they may not notice the difference, for the *balboa* is nothing but a dollar bill. In this, however, the pimp bourgeoisie of Panama can be congratulated for its honesty and straightforwardness. The more "independent" Nicaragua, headed by towering dictator Anastasio Somoza, has an equivalent of a \$3 bill bearing the picture of a former U.S. ambassador.)

Revolutionaries do not want simply to plant the Panamanian flag on the Canal Zone soil *sooner* than the bourgeois nationalists. The aim of communist internationalists is to break all ties to imperialism—to force the U.S. out of Panama and fight for the program of permanent revolution by achieving a workers and peasants government which will spread the struggle internationally in the struggle for a united socialist states of Latin America.

As far as sovereignty is concerned, we might quote the No. 1 U.S. imperialist Jimmy Carter, who said in March 1977 concerning the Canal Zone: "As far as sovereignty is concerned, I don't have any hangup about that." When the imperialists say they don't have any hang-up about it, it's time to watch out.

U.S. out of Panama NOW! Kill the Wall Street debt! No political support to Torrijos—For a workers and peasants government in a socialist united states of Latin America! For the construction of an authentic Trotskyist party in Central America, built in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International! ■

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# WORKERS VANGUARD

Pay the Teachers, Bus the Kids, Cancel the Debt!

## Cleveland School Board Whips Up Racist Reaction

CLEVELAND—The Cleveland school system has become the focal point for a massive social backlash fueled by years of social decay, increasing unemployment, inflation and lowered living standards, unredressed by any significant struggle against the capitalist bosses.

For almost a full year the Cleveland schools have been virtually bankrupt. Teachers have been forced to endure dozens of "payless paydays," only to be belatedly reimbursed through emergency transfusions of funds generated by bank loans and state subsidies. But early this spring the bucks ran out. In late March the major Cleveland banks, to whom the school district is already in debt to the tune of over \$15 million, arrogantly turned thumbs down on a request for an additional loan of \$33 million to provide operating expenses for the balance of the school year. As a result, the already financially battered teachers were forced to go another four weeks without pay, and a referendum was scheduled for April 6 to vote on a special property tax levy.

But the issue that became paramount in the April 6 referendum was Cleveland's court-ordered integration plan, scheduled to be implemented next fall through cross-town busing of both black and white schoolchildren. Not a single one of the city's overwhelmingly white West Side wards voted in favor of the levy. The large turnout on the West Side, galvanized by the slogan "no money for busing," provided the margin by which the levy was defeated by a vote of 68,500 to 40,000. A large sign that appeared in a storefront shortly thereafter, "We Beat the Levy! Stop Busing" clearly caught a considerable portion of the "no" voters' sentiment. On the other hand, the city's predominantly black wards all voted in favor of the levy.

The city's school board, which has consistently opposed any integration of Cleveland's schools, kowtowed to the racist backlash and made virtually no effort to promote the levy on the West Side. All but gloating over the large "no" vote by whites, school board vice president John Gallagher blamed the impoverishment of the school system on the court-ordered busing plan: "I think it is clear how people feel about federal intervention in the school system" (*Cleveland Press*, 7 April).

Although an emergency advance of \$30 million by the state will enable the city to complete the school year, all the enormous financial deficits remain. City and state officials have now rescheduled a referendum on another tax levy for June 6. By seeking to impose a heavier tax burden on the already hard-pressed Cleveland working people and doing nothing to counter anti-busing sentiment, the reactionary Ohio politicians seek to join other cities and states which

have effectively killed busing for school desegregation.

The busing plan itself originated out of a court decision issued by federal judge Frank Battisti in August 1976 in response to a suit initiated by the NAACP. The NAACP suit documented that the city's students were segregated not only by Cleveland's rigidly racist housing pattern, in which whites live on one side of the Cuyahoga River and blacks are forced to live on the other; but that, in addition, the school board utilized dozens of blatantly racist devices to separate white and black children who lived in neighboring areas. The board set up portable classrooms, devised "relay" classes to house black students to keep them away from white schools and gave special privileges to white students to allow them to transfer out of schools with a growing black population. The result—while 60 percent of Cleveland's 125,000 students are black, 92 percent attend schools that are 90 percent black or more; only 24 schools out of 175 have a racial balance less than either 90 percent black or white.

In the face of the school board's efforts to derail the implementation of the desegregation plan by whipping up opposition among white city taxpayers, Judge Battisti insisted that the schools remain open—by slashing school expenditures and tearing up the union contract! Despite all the recriminations that have passed between the judge and the Board of Education on the desegregation issue, they have been firm allies in their anti-union rampage. Last August, Battisti dismissed a complaint by the union against teacher transfers carried out by the school board in violation of the contract, stating: "The board cannot be required to adhere to the terms of its collective contracts if this would make compliance with desegregation orders impossible" (quoted in the *Plain Dealer*, 10 March).

The board eagerly seized on this decision as an excuse for making further wholesale attacks on the union. Its newly announced budget provides for the closing of 30 Cleveland schools and a total layoff of 1,550 employees, including 500 teachers, over the course of the year. And well aware of Battisti's proclivities, the board has consistently appealed to him to intervene in disputes with the teachers' union. Last month, for example, the board successfully appealed that Battisti be given jurisdiction over a suit brought by the union protesting the elimination of jobs for 59 school nurses, cutting the pay rate for some teachers and discontinuing payment to elementary school teachers for certain tasks.

The Cleveland Teachers Union, headed by Eugene Kolach, has totally



Anti-busing rally in Cleveland earlier this month.

Barry Perlus/New York Times

knuckled under to the courts and the school board. Passively adapting to the racial backlash against busing, the union has done nothing to further the struggle for school integration. At the same time, it has not lifted a finger to defend teachers from going weeks without pay, from layoffs and countless contract violations. Despite numerous blustering threats to strike last fall—never carried out, of course—by this spring the union leaders had been reduced to begging state officials to *shut down* the Cleveland schools so teachers could collect measly unemployment compensation! And this month the union joined the school board and the NAACP in pushing the tax levy.

Revolutionaries denounced the tax referendum as a provocation and refused to support either side. To vote for the higher taxes meant to shift even more the burden of the city's financial squeeze onto the backs of the city's working class and petty bourgeoisie, both black and white, and let off scot-free the bankers who hold the city by the throat. On the other hand, a vote against the levy would be a vote of solidarity with the racist, anti-busing sentiment that largely underlay the "no" vote.

In the present economic conjuncture of stagnation and decline, taxpayer revolts have increasingly become a rallying point for racist demagogues intent on scapegoating blacks and other minorities for the decay of the capitalist system. White workers are falsely told that cutting taxes and slashing social expenditures on such items as welfare and school busing will benefit their own economic position. The reformist left groups, whose program for the capitalist crisis boils down to more liberal government spending policies, were clearly embarrassed by the Cleveland situation. For example, the Communist Party (CP) of Ohio issued a statement hailing the vote against the levy as an

"eloquent expression of overwhelming protest against ever-increasing taxes and for tax relief." But in order to reconcile this position with its support to busing, the CP was forced to lie, denying any racist undercurrent in the "no" vote. It even had the gall to assert baldly that the rejection of the levy was a "defeat for racism" (!) (*Daily World*, 12 April).

The reformist CP strategy of begging capitalist legislators for token tax relief and to implement desegregation is a dead end. The turmoil in Cleveland demonstrates graphically that the leadership of the fight against racism cannot be entrusted to liberals like Judge Battisti, whose endorsement of school cutbacks, tax increases and union-busting only fuels the anti-busing backlash. The democratic rights of blacks and other minorities can be effectively championed only by a militant labor movement determined to confront the real source of social rot—the capitalist system.

In Cleveland today there is an urgent need for a real labor counteroffensive against the bankers and their lackeys in the school board and city government. Instead of higher taxes, preparations should be made for a city-wide strike, demanding that all layoffs and social cutbacks be rescinded, that the debt to the parasitic banks be canceled, that increased financing for schools be provided by the federal government and that busing be implemented now and extended to the suburbs.

But the primary obstacle to such a struggle is the trade union bureaucracy, which consistently knuckles under to the bosses and capitulates to chauvinist sentiments in the working class. Unless these labor fakers are replaced by class-struggle militants, the future can bring only more immiseration of the working masses and greater outbreaks of social reaction. ■