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Fourth ICL International Conference, Autumn 2003

The Fight for Revolutionary Continuity in the Post-Soviet World

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) held its Fourth International Conference in Europe in late autumn. As the highest body of our democratic-centralist international organization, the ICL conference was charged with charting our course in the coming period. That in turn requires a candid and critical assessment of where we have been in the past period, in the spirit of V.I. Lenin's words:

"A political party's attitude towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest ways of judging how earnest the party is and how it fulfills *in practice* its obligations towards its *class* and the *working people*. Frankly acknowledging a mistake, ascertaining the reasons for it, analysing the conditions that have led up to it, and thrashing out the means of its rectification—that is the hallmark of a serious party; that is how it should perform its duties, and how it should educate and train its *class*, and then the *masses*."

—"Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder (1920)

Even more so than usually, pre-conference debate and the conference deliberations were marked by an intense re-examination of our public interventions and internal functioning in the recent period, casting a harsh light on problems and revisiting contentious or unresolved questions.

We remain in a period conditioned by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. The final undoing of the world's first workers state has ushered in a global offensive against the working class and oppressed, and an ideological climate, dominated by widespread belief in the "death of communism," in which proletarian consciousness has been thrown back. At the crucial hour, in sharp contrast to much of the left, the ICL stood at our post in defense of

the gains of the October Revolution of 1917. Nonetheless, the weight of this world-historic defeat has affected us as well, serving to erode the understanding of our revolutionary purpose in the fight for new October Revolutions.

Organized internal discussion was formally launched with a call issued on behalf of the International Executive Committee (IEC) some three months before the conference. This was followed by the drafting of a main conference document by the International Secretariat (I.S.), the IEC's resident subcommittee in our center. The IEC approved the draft document for submission to the conference following consultation and amendment, and conference delegates were elected in all of our sections.

In fact, however, intense internal discussion was already well underway by the time the conference call was released. What provoked it was the decision by some members of the *Workers Vanguard* Editorial Board, along with comrades in the resident Spartacist League/U.S. and I.S. leaderships, to excise from the published version of a 12 June 2003 letter from the International Bolshevik Tendency (BT) a postscript grotesquely accusing SL/U.S. National Chairman James Robertson of "vulgar chauvinism" (see WV No. 806, 4 July 2003). The vile smear by the BT—a tiny group founded by renegades who left our organization at the onset of Cold War II (the Carter/Reagan years) and whose purpose appears to be our destruction—was intended to invalidate several decades of our history, as well as to imply that the ICL membership are not revolutionary socialists but merely slavishly obedient tools, fools and perhaps racists themselves.

In a flat violation of our democratic-centralist practice, the existence of the "P.S." and the decision to excise it were concealed from the bulk of the IEC and from comrade Robertson himself. An Editorial Statement in the next issue of *Workers Vanguard* (No. 807, 1 August 2003) noted that this excision implied guilt through evasive silence and stated that these actions "could be borrowed from the practices of centrism, i.e., a divergence between what we stand for and what we do."

The failure of the WV Editorial Board and elements in the I.S. to defend our party and its integrity provoked an outpouring of outrage from cadre around the ICL. Comrades emphasized that this was a blow at the programmatic continuity which links us to the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of James P. Cannon through the fight of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) in the early 1960s against the SWP's revisionist degeneration. The pre-conference discussion was dominated by an attempt to grapple with the political drift from our revolutionary purpose that took graphic expression in the WV Editorial Board's actions. Our main conference document soberly noted, "An inability to deal with the world created by the fall of the USSR, and the consequent retrogression in consciousness, lies at the root of the ICL's current crisis."

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The document added: "Failure to recognize the period we are in and the necessary relationship of our small revolutionary vanguard to the proletariat, and the absence of the Soviet Union as an active and defining factor in politics, have led to disorientation. Frustration and impatience over the disparity between our small size and slender roots in the working class and our proletarian internationalist purpose have led both to opportunist lunges and sectarian moralism." Accompanying this was an increasingly abstract and sterile approach to politics, and a pattern of breaches of our Leninist organizational norms by central cadre in the I.S.

By the eve of the conference, a sharp internal polarization had developed. However, it became clear that the frustrations and antagonisms which had developed toward those responsible for such organizational breaches and for the broader political drift that had led to the excision of the P.S. had been deflected into a *false* fight: an attempt to find a fundamental deviation in the party on the nature of Stalinism. It took considerable effort to establish that there were no fundamental programmatic differences on this score, and to put the conference back on track to deal with the real problems the ICL faces. The false fight served to deflect a full exploration of actual departures from our program and purpose, together with their causes and the means for rectification.

The conference was able to take some steps to clarify and rectify these problems through wide-ranging debate and discussion, and elected a new, significantly broadened international leadership. The main document, adopted unanimously by the delegates following substantial discussion and amendment, insisted:

"What is posed today is whether we will fight to maintain our revolutionary continuity or buy into and ultimately surrender to the worldview of our opponents. To these opponents, the issue of revolution, the Russian question, is an 'old' question that does not fit into their 'new world reality.' But as James P. Cannon stated powerfully in 1939, 'We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution. We have been the people, and the only people, who have had the Russian revolution in their program and in their blood!'"

Historical Antecedents of the ICL

In an early conference session, James Robertson gave a presentation on programmatic and other antecedents of the ICL, dealing with an earlier period where enormous changes in the world engendered political disorientation. Robertson stressed the importance of the Russian question in the political evolution of the youth who were the core of the Revolutionary Tendency inside the SWP. The fall of Stalinism in East Europe and the USSR has massively validated Trotsky's view of the bureaucracy as an *unstable* caste, an excrescence on the collectivized property forms which were the basis for the USSR and the deformed workers states of East Europe. But in the post-WWII period, many ostensible Trotskyists reacted impressionistically to the expansion of Stalinism into East Europe, coming to view Stalinism as a



Workers Vanguard

San Francisco, January 2003: Spartacist-initiated Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent at protest against impending war on Iraq.

stable alternative to capitalism and the wave of the future.

Robertson noted that the anti-Stalinist left of the time was dominated by two symmetrical revisionisms. Michel Pablo and his supporters insisted that the degenerated workers state in the Soviet Union and deformed workers states in East Europe would last "several centuries" and that Trotskyists must give up on the fight to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy by political revolution. They argued that the only choice for revolutionaries was to enter Communist and/or other reformist parties around the world and push them in a revolutionary direction. With their liquidationism, the Pabloites destroyed the Fourth International in 1951-53.

The leader of the other revisionist trend was Max Shachtman, who broke with the Fourth International in 1940 when he abandoned the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defense of the USSR. The Shachtmanites came to view Stalinist "bureaucratic collectivism"—which they defined as a new form of class society—as a wave of horror competing with imperialist capitalism for world domination. Under the impact of the Cold War, the Shachtmanites evolved into social-democratic reformists—and some into imperialist apologists—as they came to see "democratic" imperialism as a preferable alternative to "Stalinist totalitarianism."

With ostensible Trotskyism dominated by liquidationism and demoralization born of impressionism, Robertson spoke of how difficult it was to reacquire the lessons of the early Communist International and of the fight of Trotsky's Left Opposition against the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian Revolution. Robertson was part of a developing left wing inside Shachtman's youth organization in the 1950s. This left wing was propelled into the SWP by the proletarian political revolution which unfolded in Hungary in 1956. During this revolution (ultimately crushed by Soviet troops), the Hungarian bureaucracy split, with many going over to the side of the insurgent workers councils—vivid evidence that this was a brittle, contradictory caste, not a new social class.

The SWP had fought to uphold the historic program of Trotskyism, first against Shachtman and then against Pablo.

But the Cold War had an impact on its cadre as well. Only a few years after the leftward-moving Shachtmanite youth joined the party, the majority of the SWP cadre embraced the liquidationist methodology of Pabloism under the impact of the Cuban Revolution. Hailing Fidel Castro as an “unconscious” Trotskyist, the SWP gave up on the struggle to forge revolutionary proletarian parties to lead workers revolutions around the world. At the 1961 SWP convention longtime party cadre Morris Stein exclaimed that the Cuban Revolution was the only revolution he was likely to see in his lifetime. This was emblematic of the demoralization that led to the SWP’s descent into centrism and then reformism. Thus it was left to the younger cadre who formed the RT to take up the fight for revolutionary continuity (see “Forty Years of *Spartacist*,” page 14).

Robertson noted that it is an unfortunate fact of life that individual life spans do not necessarily correspond to the rhythms of political developments. In his autobiography, *My Life*, Trotsky noted that the German Reformation and the French Revolution, representing two different stages in the evolution of bourgeois society, were separated by almost three centuries. The rhythm of political developments has certainly accelerated over the last century, an epoch of capitalist decline where proletarian revolution has been on the historic agenda. Nonetheless, as Trotsky commented in *My Life*, one cannot “measure the historical process by the yardstick of one’s personal fate.”

Impatience and impressionism, epitomized by the likes of Michel Pablo, are the characteristic weaknesses of cadre who have been schooled in only one historical period. From our origins as a small group of revolutionary Marxists in the United States, the ICL has struggled to cohere a historically evolved, collective international cadre as the only evident road toward a reformed Fourth International. Individual

Marxists will not necessarily live to see revolutionary proletarian opportunities in their lifetime. Nonetheless, many ICL cadre have lived through one such opportunity—the nascent political revolution in East Germany (German Democratic Republic—DDR) in 1989-90.

The Fight for Trotskyism in the DDR, 1989-90

The main agenda point at the conference began with three presentations. The first report reviewed the work of the ICL and our International Secretariat in particular since our last conference in 1998; a second was devoted to China; and the third, given by a leading member of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD), specifically addressed recent internal discussions comparing our experience in the DDR and Soviet Union with developments in China today.

We threw all our resources into the struggle to effect a proletarian political revolution in East Germany as part of the fight for the revolutionary reunification of Germany under the rule of the working class. This defining struggle of our party, and our fight to mobilize the Soviet working people against imperialist-backed counterrevolution in 1991-92, heavily informed the conference deliberations.

The October Revolution was the signal event of the 20th century, opening a new epoch for humanity. In ripping power from the hands of the capitalists and landlords, the working class rose up to become the liberator of all the oppressed of Russia and a beacon for the proletariat internationally. For much of the 20th century, Marxism-Leninism—even when only in name—was the dominant influence in the left wing of the workers movement in much of the world. But by the late 1970s, the “Eurocommunist” parties of West Europe were repudiating even lip service to the dictatorship of the proletariat, while the bulk of the pseudo-Trotskyist



Spartacist



Y. Shteinberg

1918 monument in Moscow honors previous generations of revolutionary fighters. Trotsky and Lenin amid other delegates to First Congress of Communist International in Moscow, March 1919, under banner reading: “Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!”



Political revolution vs. capitalist counterrevolution in East Germany, 1989-90: ICL speaker Renate Dahlhaus (at microphone) addresses 250,000-strong protest in East Berlin's Treptow Park, 3 January 1990. ICL banner reads: "Down With NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!" Spartakist campaign poster in pivotal March 1990 election: "No to Capitalist Reunification! For a Germany of Workers Councils!"

left joined in tailing behind imperialist "human rights" anti-Sovietism. Little more than a decade later, the vast majority of the left, from the West European Communist parties to most ostensible Trotskyists, either collapsed or stood openly with the forces of "democratic" counterrevolution.

Where much of the left caved in to imperialism and counterrevolution, we can be proud of what we fought for and stood for. We said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" as Soviet forces fought to defeat a CIA-backed insurgency of anti-woman Islamic fundamentalists in the 1980s. We denounced the Soviet withdrawal in 1988-89, offering to organize an international brigade to fight in Afghanistan and raising funds in solidarity with the civilian victims in the besieged city of Jalalabad. Against the counterrevolutionary onslaught led by Boris Yeltsin in league with the Bush Sr. White House in August 1991, we distributed over 100,000 leaflets in the Soviet Union raising the call: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!"

Our intervention in East Germany in 1989-90 was the most sustained in the history of our international. We initiated a call, taken up by the ruling Stalinist party, for a united-front protest demonstration—against the fascist desecration of a Soviet war memorial and in defense of the DDR workers state—that brought out some 250,000 people to East Berlin's Treptow Park on 3 January 1990. As Treptow showed, the impact of our program was far greater than our numbers alone would indicate. Our revolutionary propaganda was getting a hearing in the factories of East Berlin and among DDR army units, some of which picked up our call for workers and soldiers councils. For the first time in more than six decades, Trotskyists addressed a mass audience in a deformed workers state: our speaker called for the forging of an egalitarian communist party and for the rule of workers and soldiers councils. The Treptow mobilization posed the possibility of organized working-class resistance to the imperialists' drive for capitalist annexation of the DDR. Ten years later, justifying his decision to pull the plug on the East German deformed workers state in the face of a

frenzied imperialist anti-Communist barrage after Treptow, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged as much in a TV panel discussion on the events of 1989-90:

"We changed our point of view on the process of unification of Germany under the impact of events that unfolded in the DDR. And an especially critical situation came about in January [1990]. In essence, a breakdown of structures took place. A threat arose—a threat of disorganization, of a big destabilization. This began on January 3 and [went] further almost every day."

As we wrote in the document of our Second International Conference in 1992, "*The workers of the world, and we among them, suffered a grave defeat with the victory of the Fourth Reich. But we fought*" (Spartacist No. 47-48, Winter 1992-93).

In the last decade there has been a wealth of new documents and histories published about the fall of Stalinism in the Soviet bloc. The ICL needs to review the fight against capitalist counterrevolution in the DDR and the Soviet Union in light of this new information, as part of our political rearming. The conference voted to mandate an international educational project and discussion on this topic.

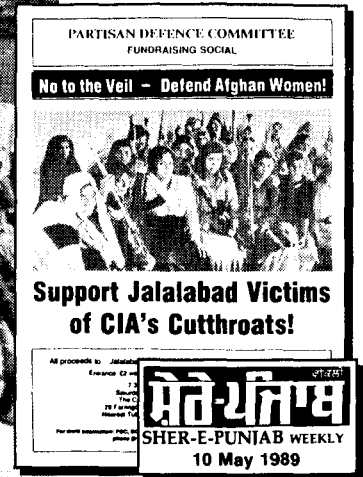
Conference delegates also reviewed some wrong or one-sided formulations that have occurred in internal debates and articles about our intervention in the DDR. Prior to his defection from our ranks in 1996, Internationalist Group (IG) leader Jan Norden had proposed a bogus "regroupment" initiative toward the putative left wing of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the remnants of the East German SED (Socialist Unity Party) Stalinists who sold out the DDR. At a public talk at Berlin's Humboldt University in January 1995, Norden amnestied these class traitors by claiming they had been "paralyzed" at the time of the counterrevolution and could not "conceive" of a political revolution—which would have been aimed at their overthrow. Norden denigrated and denied the ICL's role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard, repeatedly intoning that "the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership." In reply to Norden, one leading comrade countered that "we were the revolutionary

Spartakist



Workers Vanguard/Le Bolchévik

Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 1989: Thousands celebrate breaking of Islamic fundamentalists' siege of city. International Partisan Defense Committee fund-raising campaign was featured in London immigrant press.



leadership" and that the SED-PDS, far from being paralyzed, "led the counterrevolution" by doing all within its power to prevent a proletarian political revolution.

These assertions of our revolutionary purpose contained an important kernel of truth against Norden's rush to abandon Trotskyism and the ICL. At the same time, they were polemical excesses in the heat of battle. As one comrade noted at the time, a more dialectical way to express our intervention was that "we were the revolutionary leadership in the struggle to become." Nonetheless, formulations such as "the PDS led the counterrevolution" and "we were the revolutionary leadership" were wrongly reasserted in our polemics against the IG and in subsequent internal disputes. A dogmatic insistence by the I.S. on these formulations in debates in and with our German section damaged our work, and served to foreclose critical evaluation of our 1989-90 intervention.

An understanding of the capitalist counterrevolution in East Germany does not lend itself to a pithy slogan, nor can it be separated from the role of the West German imperialists and the Kremlin Stalinists. It was Gorbachev who called the shots in East Germany. By the time the SED regime collapsed in the fall of 1989, the Kremlin was no longer committed to maintaining Soviet military and therefore political dominance in the DDR. When Treptow raised the spectre of organized working-class resistance to counterrevolution, Gorbachev moved rapidly to give a green light to capitalist annexation of the DDR. Treptow was a turning point; afterward the SED-PDS as well embraced counterrevolutionary reunification.

After considerable discussion, the following amendment to the conference document was introduced and unanimously accepted:

"It is not correct to say 'the PDS led the counterrevolution in the DDR' and 'we were the revolutionary leadership' in the incipient political revolution in the DDR in 1989-90. These formulations are better: 'We were the only contender for revolutionary leadership of the working class in the revolutionary situation in the DDR in 1989-90. We can be proud of our fight for revolutionary leadership.' And 'When the Kremlin sold out the DDR to West German capitalism, the SED-PDS tops adapted to the betrayal and became the PDS'."

The conference also reaffirmed the statement in our 1992

conference document summarizing our role in the DDR in 1989-90: "Although shaped by the disproportion of forces, there was in fact a contest between the ICL program of political revolution and the Stalinist program of capitulation and counterrevolution."

The counterrevolution in the USSR and each of the East European deformed workers states must be analyzed in the concrete, as must the growing threat of counterrevolution in the remaining deformed workers states, notably China. In Germany, there was a powerful imperialist capitalist class in the West, but in the USSR there was no capitalist class at all. There the indigenous forces of counterrevolution issued out of the bureaucracy (and elements of the intelligentsia and the criminal layer) as it underwent terminal collapse. In several East European countries, notably Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, capitalist restoration was effected under the leadership of the various Communist parties in the absence of "market reforms" and of any immediate imperialist military threat. And in the case of China, there is an extant bourgeoisie overseas and in the region (Hong Kong, Taiwan), as well as a capitalist class being nurtured on the mainland that in alliance with foreign imperialism aspires to topple the deformed workers state.

China: The "Russian Question" Today

In addressing China, of major concern to the delegates was the dearth of ICL propaganda on that question from May 2002 until the period just before the conference—almost a year and a half. Comrades noted that there had been felt incapacity to address the historically new situation in China, and that the failure to grapple with this expressed a tacit agnosticism toward the fate of the deformed workers state. China is the "Russian question" today. But it is posed in a new and unprecedented way. In calling for unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union, we had to argue against various forms of bourgeois and "left" anti-Communism. In defending China, we confront the view now common in both bourgeois and leftist circles that China has already become or is irreversibly becoming capitalist. And underlying that impressionistic view is the reality of the massive inroads that capi-

talism has made at the socio-economic level there. As the reporter on China remarked:

"In 1992, when it was clear that the Soviet Union was gone and was not coming back, who in our tendency would have predicted that over a decade later the People's Republic of China would continue to be a bureaucratically deformed workers state with the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] exercising a monopoly of political power and even less open dissent and fractiousness than we had seen before? Well, if somebody in our tendency was that prescient, he or she should be giving this report, not me."

The ICL had been caught unaware by the incipient political revolution that occurred in China in June 1989. From our inception as a tendency we focused on the deformed workers states under direct military threat from U.S. imperialism: Cuba and Vietnam. In the 1970s and '80s our justified disgust at the Beijing bureaucracy's criminal alliance with U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union led us to pay qualitatively too little attention to developments within China. This was compounded by the fact that our attention was focused in the late 1980s on the unraveling of Stalinist rule in East Europe and the USSR. Against the Maoists, social democrats and pseudo-Trotskyists of various stripes who were at best indifferent to the fate of the USSR, we warned that should this military and industrial powerhouse go under, the Chinese deformed workers state could not long survive in isolation. As a general historical statement this warning was and remains correct. But translating this into a short-term projection following the collapse of the USSR led to an implicit understanding that China and the other deformed workers states (Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba) would in short order follow suit. The 1994 SI/U.S. conference document asserted: "The Chinese Stalinists, with the support of Japanese and significant sections of American imperialism, are moving to attempt a cold restoration of capitalism from above" (*Spartacist* No. 51, Autumn 1994).

What were the main factors underlying this analysis and projection? With the destruction of the Soviet Union, American imperialism was increasing its direct military pressure



Peter Turnley

Workers' contingent arrives in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, May 1989. Tiananmen protests posed incipient proletarian political revolution against Stalinist bureaucracy.

on China. The Pentagon began shifting the bulk of its forces from Europe to the Far East and actively pursuing plans to develop effective first-strike capacity against China's small nuclear arsenal. The Beijing regime was increasingly opening China's economy to the pressures of the world capitalist market, thereby strengthening those social forces that will give rise to imperialist-backed, openly counterrevolutionary factions and parties when the bonapartist Stalinist regime enters into a political crisis. Added to this was the ideological pressure of imperialist triumphalism ("death of communism") to which the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy and intelligentsia were certainly not immune.

Looking at China in part through the prism of the last period of the Soviet Union, we projected the disintegration of the Stalinist bureaucracy in a comparable time frame. However, the Chinese Stalinists also looked at what had happened in the Soviet Union, drew their own lessons and have acted accordingly. Unlike the Gorbachev regime, the Chinese Stalinists did not accompany the introduction of their variant of *perestroika* (market reforms) with *glasnost* (political liberalization). By maintaining its monopoly of political power and organization, the CCP regime has been able to carry out its economic policies, more or less, and enforce the laws and regulations governing the Chinese economy.

More fundamentally, the Beijing regime is still constrained in implementing "market reforms" by the fear that it could be toppled by social—especially working-class—unrest. This came close to happening in 1989 when student-centered protests for political liberalization and against corruption triggered a spontaneous workers revolt. Its suppression by regime-loyal army units was a close thing, as more than a dozen senior commanders of the People's Liberation Army initially refused to carry out orders to suppress the Tiananmen protest. Again unlike the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, the Chinese workers have already experienced a measure of capitalist exploitation—and they don't like it.

For the past several years, there have been large-scale and widespread popular protests and labor struggles, especially over the massive layoffs in state-owned industrial



Reuters

Chinese officials join Pratt & Whitney execs in ground-breaking for capitalist enterprise in Chengdu.

enterprises. To date, through a combination of repression and concessions, the regime has managed to contain these at the level of localized economic actions. Nonetheless, at its base China is a *profoundly unstable society*. Sooner or later, the explosive social tensions will shatter the political structure of the ruling bureaucratic caste. And when that happens, the fate of the most populous country on earth will be starkly posed: capitalist enslavement and imperialist subjugation or proletarian political revolution to open the road to socialism.

In this regard, our 1994 formulation was wrong in implying that a restoration of capitalism could take place while the Stalinist regime remained intact. Correcting this, the current conference document noted:

“The Stalinist bureaucracy is incapable of a cold, gradual restoration of capitalism from above. A capitalist counterrevolution in China would be accompanied by the collapse of Stalinist bonapartism and the political fracturing of the ruling Communist Party. What would emerge from the collapse of a Stalinist bonapartist regime, i.e., capitalist restoration or proletarian political revolution, would depend on the outcome of the struggle of counterposed forces.”

While stating that “mistakes in predicting the tempo at which events unfold are in themselves not fatal,” the document warned against a proclivity to accept the regime’s juridical pronouncements regarding privatization of state-owned industry, entry into the World Trade Organization or admission of capitalists into the CCP as “end game.” This proclivity had been sharply criticized in an I.S. motion in June 2000, which stated that to premise our conclusions exclusively on the actions and intentions of the bureaucracy “relegates the proletariat in China to the role of being merely the passive object of either the Stalinist bureaucracy or the imperialist bourgeoisie, not a force capable of its own independent action” against the continued erosion of the gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution. The decisive arena in which capitalist counterrevolution would have to triumph in China (as it did in East Europe and the former USSR) is the political arena, not simply through a quantitative economic expansion of the private sector.

Comrades noted earlier difficulties in writing propaganda about China. One example was a polemic against the IG’s opportunist search for a wing of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy that was putatively committed to defense of the workers state and the struggle against capitalist restoration (“IG on China: Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats,” *WV* No. 715, 11 June 1999). We recalled Trotsky’s statement that the bureaucracy defends the collectivized economy only to the extent it fears the proletariat. But we bent the stick too far and argued that “the CCP bureaucracy is intent on restoring capitalism” and “the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today is the Stalinist regime itself,” implying that the Beijing bureaucracy was no longer subject to the constraints of its parasitic position atop the collectivized property forms and had taken on attributes of a ruling class. In a subsequent polemic with the IG, we effectively corrected our earlier article, stating:

“In China today, insofar as it is pushing market-oriented ‘reforms,’ conciliation of imperialism and repression of workers’ struggles, the bureaucracy is leading the drive for capitalist restoration. Top elements of the bureaucracy and their offspring have entered into partnerships with American, Japanese and European capital, or with the Chinese bourgeoisie which was not destroyed as a class by the 1949 Revolution but was able to keep its cohesion by fleeing the mainland. At the same time, there is a crucial difference between the act of counterrevolution itself and the lead-up to it. In that sense, the Beijing

regime is not committed to capitalist restoration and sectors of it might balk at the consequences, particularly in fear of the kind of devastation wreaked on the industrial and military power of the former Soviet Union and, in some cases, because of genuine concern for the current and future plight of the workers and peasants.”

—“IG: Still Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats,” *WV* No. 746, 17 November 2000

However, *WV* never made clear, as it should have, that we were correcting the earlier polemic. And it would have been better to have stated that the Beijing bureaucracy is “promoting and greatly strengthening the forces of capitalist restoration,” rather than “leading the drive for capitalist restoration.”

The reporter on China observed that the problems we face today are rooted “in the objective complexity of the situation and the historically unprecedented post-Soviet international context.” But, he warned, “We have to be much more scrupulous than we have been about testing our prognoses against the actual course of events.... There should be no subjectivity here, because otherwise we will invariably distort reality so as to conform to our prognoses, which is the exact opposite of historical materialism.”

Youthful Activism and the “Death of Communism”

While this is a reactionary period, it is also a very contradictory one. The U.S. imperialist war against Iraq engendered the biggest demonstrations in years in North America, Europe, the Near East and many Asian countries—impelling millions of young people into political struggle—and even political strikes and labor actions against the war. The U.S. military victories in Afghanistan and Iraq were relatively easy but the occupation, particularly of Iraq, is another matter. Much of the semicolonial world is marked by significant instability. In Latin America, discontent with neoliberal regimes has generated a wave of nationalist populism. Throughout Europe, North America and elsewhere there has been a significant rise in youthful activism, much of it associated with the “anti-globalization” movement. The sections of the ICL are recruiting, albeit unevenly. Yet the political worldview of the generation that has been politicized by hatred of “global capitalism” and opposition to the war against Iraq is for the most part far removed from historical materialism and a proletarian perspective, and these youth confront a world in which Marxism is widely portrayed as a relic of the past.

Marx and Engels noted in the *Communist Manifesto* that capitalism produces its own gravediggers in the proletariat. The workings of capitalist imperialism propel millions of proletarians into struggle against war, unemployment and racism. But to forge a “class for itself” that can vie successfully for state power requires the intervention of a Leninist vanguard to advance the acquisition of revolutionary proletarian consciousness and root out forces of national, racial and religious division. The destruction of the USSR has made this task more difficult, as the “Call for the Fourth Conference” pointed out:

“We no longer have even a nominally Marxist proletariat. The European revolutions of 1848, the Paris Commune of 1871 and most importantly the October Revolution of 1917 took place a long time ago and seem remote from present experience and consciousness of most working people. The weight of the defeats and the ensuing social catastrophes of capitalist counterrevolution flatten the understanding of our cadre that the ICL was, and is, the party of the Jalalabad campaign, of

Treptow, the party of the Russian Revolution, and of new Octobers, leading the way to the coming transformation of the world.”

One comrade noted that we could project our organization becoming a revolutionary leadership in Germany in 1989-90 because this conformed to the objective situation. In the 1960s and '70s, when many of the leading cadre of the ICL joined our tendency, the Vietnamese made a successful social revolution against U.S. imperialism, while the French imperialists were defeated in Algeria. The more advanced sections of the proletariat were motivated by revolutionary strivings; the French bourgeois order survived the May 1968 general strike only because of the treacherous betrayal of the Communist Party. Today there are certainly militant defensive labor struggles, but the workers in the main do not connect them with the goal of a new October Revolution. Our nominally Marxist opponents are largely left social democrats. For example, while 30 years ago the members of the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) were adulating the leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party with chants of “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh,” in 2002 the LCR gave electoral support to right-wing French president Jacques Chirac.

The failure to take into account the changes in the terrain on the left in the post-Soviet period, which includes the proliferation of anarchoid groups, contributed to a sectarian decision to boycott on principle the November 1999 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization. A motion of the SL/U.S. Political Bureau motivated this on the grounds that the protests would be “dominated by national chauvinism, racist protectionism and counterrevolutionary attacks on the Chinese deformed workers state” (WV No. 725, 10 December 1999). It was correct to draw a sharp line politically against the reformist left that enthused over the “battle of Seattle” and tailed after the anti-Communist, pro-Democratic Party labor bureaucracy. However, the way to do this was to intervene with our communist propaganda addressed to the left-liberal and radical activists who were drawn to Seattle out of a desire to protest the worst excesses of capitalism—not to equate them with the anti-Communist AFL-CIO tops.

This abstentionist policy was reversed in practice through internal debate on the eve of another “anti-globalization” protest in Washington, D.C. the following April. We have stood out as the revolutionary Marxists who take on anarchist and syndicalist prejudices polemically while forthrightly defending militant anarchist youth against bourgeois state repression and the violence-baiting of the “left” tails of the bourgeoisie. But the failure to publicly correct our abstention on principle from the Seattle protests was damaging and disorienting both for our cadre and for those who follow our work.

Our Second International Conference document of 1992 foresaw the re-emergence of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies; subsequently we published a historical pamphlet, *Marxism vs. Anarchism*, directed at such youth. However, we did not gauge the extent to which communism has been equated with failed Stalinism in the post-Soviet period. With the aim of arming our comrades to better address this sort of consciousness, the recent ICL conference featured a stimulating educational presentation on the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s and the role of the “Friends of Durruti”—left anarchists who were critical of the treachery of the Spanish anarchist leadership. The talk was given by a young



Der Spiegel

Vietnamese Revolution inspired generation of radical youth. Berlin, 1968: Protesters carry portraits of Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh. Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), April 1975: NLF tank rolls into U.S. puppet regime’s presidential palace.

Vietnam News Agency



comrade from the Trotskyist League of Canada who had himself been won from an anarchist background.

The conference took note of opportunist departures that accompanied the pattern of sectarianism. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the intervention of leading cadre outside our center was crucial to our continued capacity to function under extraordinarily difficult conditions. This entailed an ongoing struggle to combat opportunist flinches as well as empty bombast in our propaganda. The most pronounced example of the former was our failure for a full month to publicly state that Marxists draw a distinction between attacks on institutions like the Pentagon—which directly represents the military might of U.S. imperialism—and random terror against innocent civilians, as in the case of the World Trade Center. Our position on this question had been codified at an SL/U.S. West Coast Central Committee group meeting on the night of September 11, where one comrade noted, “If it were just the White House or Pentagon, that’s life (although it is also stupid as one of the problems with terrorism is that it *always* gets innocent people—here there were the people on the commercial plane as well as the Pentagon cleaning staff).” The failure to state publicly that we viewed the Pentagon attack differently from that on the World Trade Center

was all the more notable given that this line was endorsed at an SL/U.S. Political Bureau meeting four days later. As the Fourth ICL Conference document noted, "This was a political flinch in the face of the wave of American patriotism following the September 11 attacks."

Impatience and disregard for objective reality is frequently the handmaiden to opportunist lunges and get-rich-quick schemes. In this regard, it is useful to keep in mind the advice of comrade Trotsky: "After all, opportunism expresses itself not only in moods of gradualism but also in political impatience: it frequently seeks to reap where it has not sown, to realize successes which do not correspond to its influence" (1924 introduction to *The First Five Years of the Communist International*). Where we have had successes, it has been through intelligent criticism and intervention against our opponents—not through inventing a false reality in order to avoid political obstacles.

The sharply changed terrain on the left and among young activists, and its implications for our work, was summarized in a letter written by long-time ICL cadre Joseph Seymour shortly after the conference:

"Predictably, the post-Soviet period has given rise to significant leftist groups, tendencies and milieus which do not speak and do not want to learn the language of 'Marxism-Leninism.' Such groups and tendencies are characterized by theoretical *eclecticism* and/or a reversion to *pre-Marxist* concepts and modes of thinking. The latter is true of the more orthodox anarchists while the broader 'anti-globalization' movement is characterized by eclecticism...."

"It is very difficult to effectively address leftist groups, tendencies and milieus whose worldview, whose very methodology, is so different and distant from ours. Because it is difficult, I think there has been a tendency to avoid this task and to underestimate its importance for the ICL in the current period."

The political consciousness of members of those groups which continue to claim the Trotskyist tradition as well as the remaining Stalinoid groups has also changed. This is especially so for their younger members, whose consciousness was formed during the post-Soviet period. Seymour noted that a source of disorientation in the past period "has been a search for the same kind of leftist activists which we recruited in the U.S. in the early 1970s and in West Europe in the mid-late 1970s and early '80s," i.e., individuals who had studied and accepted, at least formally, the doctrinal principles of Leninism, and could be recruited and assimilated to our tendency fairly easily. He added:

"In approaching Trotskyoid groups in Europe we should operate from the premise that we are targeting serious and thoughtful left social democrats with rational humanist values. More than that we should not expect. With one important difference the same approach should operate with regard to Trotskyoid groups in Third World countries (e.g., Brazil, South Africa). The difference is that many members of these groups are closer to being left populist nationalists rather than left social democrats."

Reformism and the Post-Soviet World

As part of the pre-conference discussion, comrades reviewed earlier documents guiding our international work. A critical assessment of past work is a necessary task for a



Derek Chung

1999 Seattle protest against World Trade Organization attracted thousands of youth who wanted to fight worst excesses of capitalism.

Marxist organization; only popes are infallible. One symptom of our political problems was that much unfinished business remained in that regard.

Citing Trotsky, a 1996 IEC Memorandum stated that reactionary periods like this one disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard, lowering the general ideological level of the movement and throwing political thinking back to stages long since passed through (see "Norden's Group: Shamefaced Defectors from Trotskyism," *International Bulletin* No. 38, June 1996). It correctly stressed that the ICL must swim against the stream and retain its programmatic positions. However, the memorandum underestimated the strength of reformist tendencies. Referring to Trotsky's writings on centrism in the 1930s, it stated "that the political exposure and destruction of our *centrist* opponents is the key task in opponents work." At the same time the document wrongly projected that the bourgeoisies "are also dumping the intermediaries and brokers (parliamentarist and trade union) they previously maintained and cultivated, the better to contain and control the working class."

The assertion that our key battles right now are with the centrists (like Norden's IG) is misleading and understates the extent to which political consciousness has been thrown back. There is little that exists today that is classically centrist, i.e., organizations in political motion, breaking to the left from reformism, or to the right from revolutionism toward reformism. Trotsky was writing during the Great Depression, when the bankruptcy of the Stalinized Comintern in the face of Hitler's rise to power generated significant left-centrist currents in the social-democratic parties. The centrist formations of the 1970s have moved sharply to the right, particularly in the context of Cold War II when they bowed to the drive of their own bourgeoisies to reconquer the Soviet Union for capitalist exploitation. As an index of this rightward motion it is notable that several putatively revolutionary organizations—including the French LCR and the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Workers Power—signed an appeal to the European heads of state in 2002 to take a public stand against the impending war on Iraq, falsely treating the European bourgeoisies as a progressive counterweight to U.S. imperialism.

The tendency to see social democracy/reformism disappearing as a force in West Europe was in part an impressionistic response to the very real efforts of the West European bourgeoisies to dismantle what remains of the “welfare states” erected as a means of diverting proletarian unrest in the period following WWII. But as one comrade noted in a March 2002 letter to the I.S.:

“The particular reason for the ‘welfare state’ was taken away with the demise of the Soviet Union. But that does not mean that there are no limits to the bourgeoisie’s immiseration of the working class. As long as there is capitalism, the question of reform or amelioration is not permanently or even in the middle run off the agenda. The ruling classes of the advanced world are not predisposed to spend money to ameliorate the conditions of the masses but reform is not an on-off switch where before you couldn’t lose and now you can’t win.”

The letter noted that the view that the material basis for social democracy had been removed with the destruction of the USSR was ultimately sectarian: “Either there’s the Soviet Union and concomitant ‘welfare states’ or there’s no Soviet Union, no possibility of reform/adjustment, no role for Social Democracy, i.e., nothing other than us.”

The 1996 IEC Memorandum was drafted at a time when most of the major West European countries were being administered by right-wing bourgeois parties. After social democrats started being elected somewhat later, the I.S. projected that discontent with these governments and the mass reformist workers parties would directly benefit the ICL in an organizational sense. It was held that our opponents on the left would be easily discredited by virtue of their having supported the election of the social democrats and that we could make substantial organizational gains. An I.S. Memorandum of January 2000 exaggerated what were defensive labor struggles and posited:

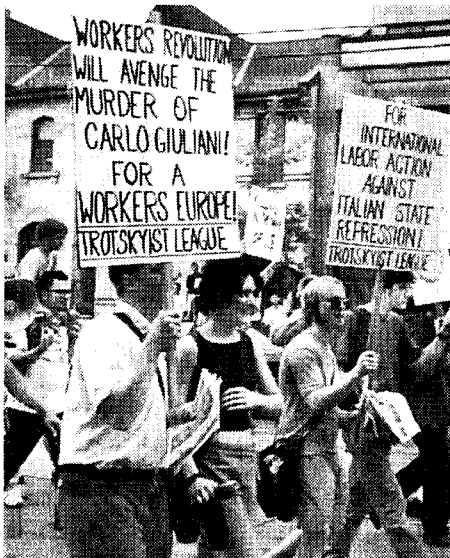
“In Europe and elsewhere, the conditions which have given rise to the growth of the fascists can also lead to proletarian explosions which will go outside and beyond the framework of bourgeois parliamentarism provided by the existing reformist misleaders in the workers movement and their centrist tails. This could provide opportunities for exponential growth for even small Trotskyist propaganda groups, provided we actively seek these opportunities and intervene effectively.”

This projection substantially overstated the existing consciousness of the working class and, conversely, underestimated the real political obstacles that must be overcome in order to win workers and youth to a Marxist perspective. Similar mistaken projections disoriented our work in the U.S. as well. After having initiated a hugely successful united-front labor/black mobilization that drove the Klan out of New York City in October 1999, we extrapolated from this powerful *defensive* struggle to project a qualitative leap in proletarian class consciousness and wrongly posited a unique opportunity for mass recruitment of young black workers.

When working people in Europe began expressing discontent toward Jospin’s French popular front or the Blair government in Britain, our larger left opponents like Lutte Ouvrière and the British SWP adapted to this by becoming more critical of the governments in power without in any way altering the fundamental reformist content of their programs. Recruiting individuals requires winning them politically away from a reformist or left-liberal worldview to genuine Marxism, a process much more difficult than exposing a right-wing social-democratic party.

The projection of “historic breakthroughs” and exponential growth was disorienting, particularly to the European sections, and led as well to cadre being falsely criticized when they were unable to achieve these unrealistic expectations of recruitment. It was in this context that the statement “we were the revolutionary leadership”—which had been raised appropriately, albeit in exaggerated form, in the struggle against Norden’s liquidationism over 1989-90—was reasserted at a 1999 SpAD conference by representatives of the I.S. and imposed on our German comrades as a sectarian formula ripped out of any context. At the same time, the I.S. wrongly insisted on asserting as a slogan of intervention in Germany (but not in other ICL sections) the one-sided and incorrect formulation, “the PDS led the counterrevolution,” which could only serve to sterilize polemical combat against the reformist PDS.

Thoughtful Marxist intervention requires attention to developments in a given society, not empty bombast. Britain,



Spartacist Canada

Toronto, July 2001: ICL internationally joined in protesting Italian police killing of “anti-globalization” demonstrator.

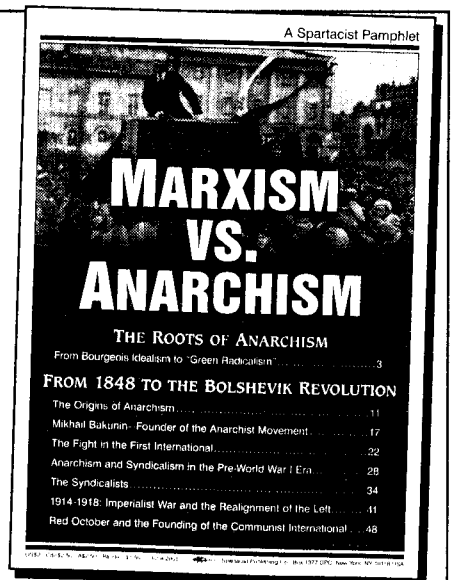
This pamphlet presents a comprehensive historical analysis of the origins of anarchism and the views of its leading figures through the 1871 Paris Commune and the split in the First International and discusses the impact of the 1917 October Revolution.

The first article addresses radical youth today who, in an ideological climate conditioned by the so-called “death of communism,” are drawn to all variants of anarchism, Green radicalism and left liberalism. The pamphlet is dedicated to the fight to win a new generation to revolutionary Marxism.

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for example, has seen a growing schism between the Labour Party leadership under Tony Blair and the party's historic trade-union base. This split is not being propelled as Leninists expected, through a proletarian revolt against the right-wing Labour leaders. Instead, Blair & Co. are moving to break from Labour's working-class base and even from the union bureaucracy that surmounts that base, with the aim of transforming the party into a bourgeois formation analogous to the U.S. Democrats. In this context, we paid close attention to Arthur Scargill's establishment of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). In the 2001 general elections, the Spartacist League/Britain extended critical electoral support to the SLP, giving us an active vehicle to demonstrate opposition to Blair's New Labour while counterposing the Bolshevik program to Scargill's "Old Labourism."

Conference Decisions

A panel discussion on specific characteristics of the imperialist system in this period included reports by comrades from our American, British, Japanese and South African sections. One reporter commented on the loss of American hegemony in the imperialist world in the early '70s as the U.S. got bogged down in its losing counterrevolutionary war in Vietnam. This opened up a period of resurgent inter-imperialist competition. However, he continued, "things do not stand still in the world, and the American capitalists fought back against their West German and Japanese economic rivals, mainly by going after the unions in the U.S. and jacking up the rate of exploitation. Enter the Carter/Reagan/Bush years. Coming at the end of this period, the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union gave enormous impetus to a second round of global capitalist investment."

Our 1996 IEC Memorandum projected too rapid an escalation in diplomatic and military tensions among the imperialist powers, stating that the partitioning and occupation of Yugoslavia in the wake of the nationalist civil wars of the early '90s "lays the basis for future conflicts and wars, including possible use of nuclear weapons." Such telescoping of the pace of developments can only lead to political disorientation. In fact, it took more than a decade for there to be a major rift at the diplomatic level between Washington and the main European powers, over the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The relationship among the various imperialist powers is different than in the period before WWI and the October Revolution inasmuch as no power can as yet compete with the U.S. on the military level. However, U.S. imperialism's over-

whelming military hegemony does not reflect a similar qualitative economic superiority, and inevitably its rivals will seek to redress the military balance. Growing inter-imperialist tensions put different pressures on our various national sections, which must be addressed through ongoing examination and discussion.

A number of comrades spoke to a discussion in the ICL about the character of advanced capitalist countries that play little to no *independent* role on the world scene. An amendment to the main conference document was adopted, affirming, "Neither export of capital nor military strength are in themselves sufficient to make a country imperialist. The question is historically derived and concrete. Britain, Canada, Australia, Switzerland are part of the imperialist division of labor—variously senile, jackal, junior partner imperialists." Further discussion was mandated on these and related questions, notably the unique character of South Africa.

The conference also discussed the issue of standing for executive offices in bourgeois elections. Communists do not accept positions that make them responsible for administration of the bourgeois state, which necessarily means class collaboration. The German Communist Party's decision to enter the regional governments of Saxony and Thuringia in 1923 was part of the political disorientation of the party that led to the derailing of a promising revolutionary situation (see "A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001). However, Cannon's SWP ran candidates for president of the U.S. and other executive offices, while the Spartacist League/U.S. has run for local offices like mayor. The conference document asserted:

"It is principled to run for such offices, as long as our candidates explain beforehand that they have no intention of assuming such offices if elected and make clear why it is necessary to forge a workers government to expropriate the capitalists and sweep away their machinery of class oppression. An article in the January 1932 *Young Spartacus*, the newspaper of the youth group of the Communist League of America, spelled out the attitude of the Trotskyists to assuming executive office: 'Can, then, a Communist participate in a bourgeois government in the capacity of a director? The answer is: No. Participating in the work of the government, i.e., taking a seat in the ministry or cabinet, means only one thing—to aid in the suppression of the working class. This the Communist cannot do'."

A number of smaller working commissions were convened in the course of the conference. There was a lively discussion in the Women's Commission on our assessment of prostitution in Europe in the wake of the destruction of the Soviet Union, taking up our historic position of opposition to laws against prostitution, which—like gambling, pornography, drugs and drinking—is a "crime without a victim" (see "Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against 'Sex Trafficking'," page 60). Most ICL sections publish periodic *Women and Revolution* pages in their sectional presses. Comrades noted that, in articulating our vision of the future, of social emancipation premised on the proletarian conquest of power, articles on the woman question and broader social issues are a particularly apt vehicle. As the conference document stated, "We have fought to be a Leninist tribune of the people, championing the most oppressed and vulnerable in society, whether it be the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) or Muslim immigrant women victimized for wearing the headscarf."

Noting that there is currently no politically defined milieu in leftward motion and that we do not know where struggles will break out, the document reasserted the importance of

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Spartakist



Young Spartacus

ICL fights to win young fighters to cause of revolutionary proletariat: support rally at Berlin's Technical University for 2002 German metal workers strike; Spartacus Youth Club members and Pasadena City College students join supermarket strikers' picket line in Southern California.

having a geographic spread, as wide as our resources permit, and of sinking roots in the proletariat where we are, in order to be able to better pre-position the ICL to influence future struggles. The document outlined elements of our current and future tasks as including the centrality of the fight for China and the need to address this through more thoughtful propaganda; relevant propaganda to intersect the anarchist milieu where many of the more radical youth are; continuing to champion the cause of oppressed immigrants and minorities who are the first victims of the worldwide economic recession and the "war on terror." The conference reaffirmed that given our present size, circumstances and structure the main task of the I.S. is the production of appropriate, necessary and urgent literary propaganda, mainly in the quadrilingual *Spartacists*. We envision a more regular and frequent production of *Spartacist*, which should enable it to serve as a guidepost for the sectional presses.

More generally, in a period when one cannot presume that leftist-minded activists accept Marxism, we need articles that give a more thoroughgoing exposition of our worldview to our membership and readers. The "death of communism" ideological climate has imposed on us the important task of defending not only the basic principles of Marxism but also the rational humanism of the Enlightenment. We have to defend the latter against a large fraction of the self-professed left. Our South African and Mexican sections, among others, had to debunk Third World nationalists who cheered on the criminal bombing of the World Trade Center as an "anti-imperialist" act.

In determining our tasks in the coming period, we are guided by the understanding laid out in the ICL "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program," which was adopted at our Third International Conference in 1998:

"*Marxism is not a dogma, but a guide to action.*" The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is in the forefront of the struggle for a socialist future. The ICL is the only international organization which presently has a correct general conception of the world situation and of the tasks facing the world proletariat. The disparity between our small numbers and the power of our program is huge. Currently the sections of the ICL are or aim to be *fighting propaganda groups*. Our immediate task is the education and formation of cadres, recruiting the most advanced layers of workers and

youth by winning them over to our full program through explanation of our views in sharp counterposition to those of our centrist opponents. Revolutionary regroupments on the program of Leninist internationalism are the means to resolve the disproportion between our small forces and our task."

— *Spartacist* No. 54, Spring 1998

Numerous comrades throughout the ICL came forward in the course of our recent internal struggles, demonstrating that we do have a real international cadre. The conference delegates elected a new IEC to serve as the highest political body of the ICL until another conference is convened. The reporter for the nominating commission, which was charged with proposing and presenting a slate for the incoming IEC, noted Cannon's admonition that the leading cadre should be "an *inclusive* and not an *exclusive* selection" ("Factional Struggle and Party Leadership," November 1953, *Speeches to the Party*). The new IEC contains elements from the old leadership—including comrades who made serious errors but whose talents should be used as part of a broader collective—as well as comrades elected to our leading body for the first time, particularly from our European sections. It is both younger and has a broader geographical spread than the outgoing IEC. The conference expressed its strong view that the IEC must play a more central role in the political direction of the ICL in the future; the job of the I.S., its executive arm in our center, is to orchestrate necessary political discussion throughout the IEC. Recognizing the need for our international leadership to pay more attention to our American section, two IEC members were appointed as representatives to the SL/U.S. Central Committee, just as there are IEC representatives on some of the other sectional leadership bodies.

Strongly reasserting our determination to maintain our revolutionary continuity and go forward to reforging the Fourth International, the document of the Fourth International Conference stated:

"What is critical is that future workers revolutions must have a Bolshevik political arsenal; their cadres must be educated in the experiences of the Bolshevik Revolution, the early Communist International, Trotsky's Fourth International and our own ICL. New gains will be won only by those who prove able to fight to defend past gains. The ICL tenaciously fights to uphold the banner of new Octobers." ■

Forty Years of Spartacist

The first issue of *Spartacist*, dated February-March 1964, appeared 40 years ago. At the time, *Spartacist* was the organ of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), which in December 1963 had been expelled from the rapidly degenerating Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the United States. Our name and purpose were explained in the initial editorial statement:

"We chose the title, *Spartacist*, after the name, Spartakusbund, taken by the German revolutionary left wing led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht during the First World War. The German Spartacists waged a brave struggle against their imperialist rulers in wartime and, moreover, had to fight every step of the way in opposition to the degenerate, patriotic Majority social democrats of their time.

"In the United States the Trotskyist youth in the early 1930's called their paper *Young Spartacus*. It was an outstanding journalistic fusion of an advocate of revolutionary ideas with a guide to action. We aspire to do no more today than serve as well in honor of the name we have chosen for our endeavor to express the viewpoint of consistent *Trotskyism*, the authentic revolutionary Marxism of our epoch."

Initially *Spartacist* supporters worked as an expelled public faction of the centrist SWP, seeking readmission to the party. The SWP's definitive leap from centrism to reformism occurred in late 1965, when it jettisoned any remnants of a proletarian class fight against the Vietnam War in favor of seeking a bloc with pacifists and Democratic Party liberals in a classless "peace" movement. The Spartacist League/U.S. was founded in 1966, with *Spartacist* as its journal. After we won some international cothinkers, breaking out of our keenly felt (and necessarily deforming) national isolation in the early 1970s, *Spartacist* became, with issue No. 23 (Spring 1977), the organ of the international Spartacist tendency, which changed its name to the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) in 1989. *Spartacist* is now published in four separate language editions (English, French, German and Spanish) by the International Executive Committee of the ICL.

To mark our fortieth anniversary, we reprint below "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International," which appeared in *Spartacist* No. 1. This document was written by the RT and submitted to the 1963 SWP convention. As a statement of revolutionary Marxist principles and purpose against the Pabloite revisionism that had destroyed Trotsky's Fourth International in 1951-53, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International" has more than stood the test of time, despite enormous political changes in the world.

The post-World War II order was marked by the emergence of bureaucratically deformed workers states in most of the areas of East Europe under Soviet occupation and (as a result of Stalinist-led peasant-guerrilla insurgencies) in Yugoslavia, China, North Korea and North Vietnam. Independence struggles erupted in much of the colonial world. In January 1959, Fidel Castro and his petty-bourgeois guerrillaist July 26 Movement overthrew the U.S.-supported Batista dictatorship. In the face of mounting U.S. imperialist hostility, the Castro government allied itself with the Soviet Union and, beginning in August 1960, nationalized large sections of the Cuban economy, driving out the bourgeoisie

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SPARTACIST

NUMBER 1

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1964

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WITCH HUNT IN THE SWP

The National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party expelled five members of the party's left wing minority at a plenum in New York City at the end of December. The five expelled supporters of the SWP's Revolutionary Tendency are Shonie Mage, James Robinson, Geoffrey White, Laurence Ireland, and Lynn Harper. The Party Political Committee had suspended them two months earlier on the grounds that a Control Commission investigation had revealed that Robinson, Ireland, and Harper had expressed "disloyal" written opinions privately within their own tendency. The accused had written that the SWP had ceased to be that an irreconcilable struggle within the framework of party discipline was therefore required against the Majority line and leadership. Mage and White were held or permitted such views. Upon refusing to recant or disassociate themselves from one another, all five were summarily expelled.

Disciplined Acceptance

These expulsions mark a new phase in the thirty-five year history of Trotskyism in the United States. The degeneration of the party in recent years has reached such a point that for the first time in the entire history of the SWP the leadership has used expulsion to rid the party of an internal opposition which disciplined acceptance of the police imposed by the Majority.

Wide Support

Within the party all oppositional tendencies, dissidents, and critics, totaling more than a quarter of the membership, rallied to the defense of the expelled comrades following the preliminary suspensions. Among

those opposing and protesting the PC action were: Myra Tanner Weiss, several times the party's vice-presidential candidate; Arna Switach, a founding leader of American Trotskyism, together with many other party members such as Jack Wright of Seattle and Wendell Phillips from Southern California; the Wolf-Fort Phillips groupings; several party branches including New Haven and Seattle.

Control Commission

Two strong reactions felt in the party are responsible for this outpouring of support from the most diverse and politically antagonistic sections of the party. One response was indignation at the accusation of party comrades accused of having "disloyal attitudes." Intensifying this feeling was widespread disgust with the means which were, and must be, used in such political witch hunting. The party leaders refused to grant even the formality of a trial. The expulsive trial Commission member Anna Chastain, wife of a PC her fanatical belief in the party leadership. The investigation first demanded access to private minority draft documents and correspondence. Under extreme protest only succeeded with the results, the Control Commission proceeded to call in young and new comrades for tape-recorded interrogation sessions in the rooms of their own and their tendency's indiscretion, dishonesty, and Menabevum. Failing to win such admissions, the investigators then turned to questioning which was climactically designed to entrap the young comrades into involuntary confessions of guilt.

(Continued on Page 2)

and creating a deformed workers state. That a small country only 90 miles off the coast of Florida had succeeded in shaking its fist at the Yankee colossus and realizing a social transformation served as inspiration for a generation of radicalizing youth around the world.

Reacting impressionistically to the onset of the Cold War in 1947-48 and the expansion of Stalinism, Michel Pablo, then leader of the Fourth International, had given up on the struggle to build Trotskyist parties to lead the proletariat in the fight for socialist revolution internationally (see "Genesis of Pabloism," *Spartacist* No. 21, Fall 1972). Pablo abandoned the program of political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies in the USSR and East Europe, insisting that a process of "self reform" would eventually eliminate the bureaucratic deformities in those states. Asserting that "the relation of forces" internationally was turning against imperialism, he claimed that "the objective process is in the final analysis the sole determining fact, overriding all obstacles of a subjective order"—i.e., overriding the need for a conscious, programmatic Leninist vanguard ("Where Are We Going?," January 1951). Pablo concluded that Stalinist and other reformist parties could approximate a revolutionary perspective and that the job of Trotskyists was to enter such parties and push them in a revolutionary direction. Pablo's perspective of "deep entry" effectively destroyed the Fourth International.

By 1960, Pablo's chief lieutenant, Ernest Mandel, was serving as a braintruster and apologist for a left-reformist union bureaucrat, André Renard, in Belgium. Pablo himself went on to become an adviser to the bourgeois-nationalist National Liberation Front (FLN) government

in Algeria after it won independence from France in 1962. In that capacity, he helped write the “self-management” decrees that integrated the Algerian workers movement into the bourgeois state apparatus, defusing the mass occupations of factories and landed estates that swept post-independence Algeria.

The SWP leadership under James P. Cannon had opposed—if only partially and belatedly—Pablo’s liquidationism. The SWP and the other Trotskyist forces that opposed Pablo—centrally Gerry Healy’s group in Britain and the majority of the French Trotskyists, who formed the Organization Communiste Internationaliste (OCI)—regrouped into the “International Committee” (IC) based on the principles of “orthodox Trotskyism.” From its inception the IC was only a paper international.

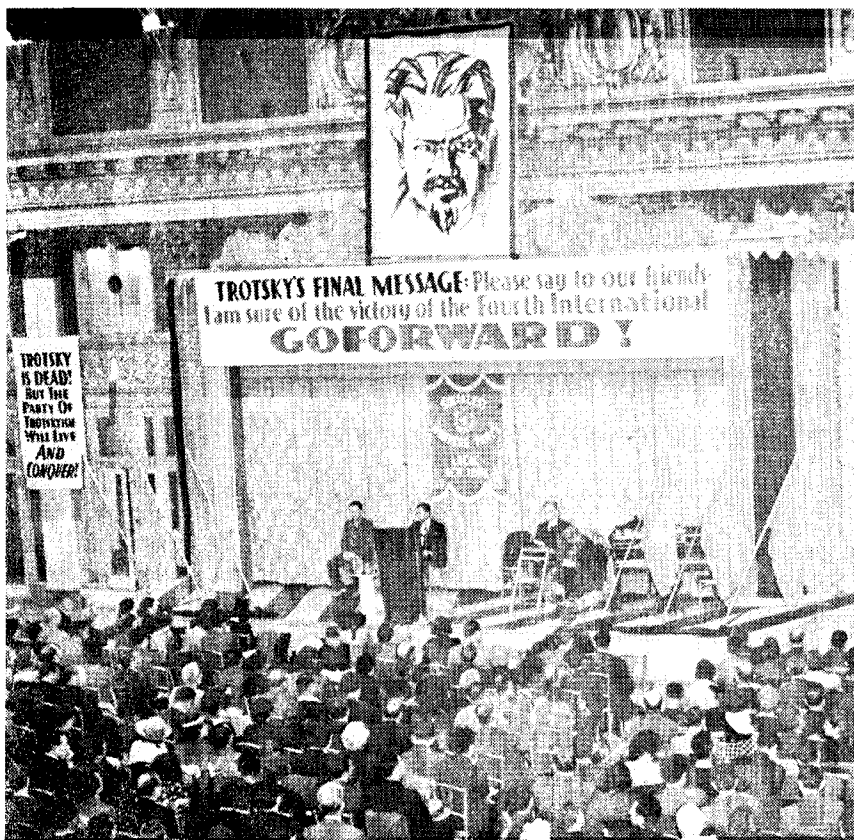
In 1960 the SWP embraced the same liquidationist methodology as Pablo in response to the Cuban Revolution. The SWP declared the Castro leadership to be the virtual equivalent of the revolutionary Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. In fact, the July 26 Movement had merged with the Cuban Stalinist party and established a bureaucratic regime of the same kind as those in the USSR, China and East Europe. Having earlier destroyed the type for a Cuban edition of Trotsky’s *Permanent Revolution*, in 1963 the Castro regime arrested five Cuban Trotskyists associated with the Latin American-centered tendency of Juan Posadas (see “Freedom for Cuban Trotskyists!”, *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965). The SWP majority dropped the qualitative distinction between a deformed workers state and a proletarian state based on workers democracy as embodied in elected workers councils, declaring in a Political Committee (PC) resolution, “For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement,” submitted to the 1963 convention:

“The appearance of a workers state in Cuba—the exact form of which is yet to be settled—is of special interest since the revolution there was carried out under a leadership completely independent from the school of Stalinism. In its evolution toward revolutionary Marxism, the July 26 Movement set a pattern that now stands as an example for a number of other countries....

“(13) Along the road of a revolution beginning with simple democratic demands and ending in the rupture of capitalist property relations, guerrilla warfare conducted by landless peasant and semiproletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial or semicolonial power. This is one of the main lessons to be drawn from experience since the second world war. It must be consciously incorporated into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.”

—SWP PC. “For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Movement,” *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 24, No. 9 (April 1963)

Section 15 of our “Toward the Rebirth of the Fourth International” was written in explicit counterposition to section 13 of the Political Committee document.



AP

James P. Cannon’s SWP holds memorial meeting in New York following Trotsky’s assassination, 1940. ICL fights to reforge a Fourth International that Trotsky would recognize as his own.

Formed in opposition to the SWP’s abandonment of the fight for a Trotskyist party in Cuba, the RT opposed the reunification with Pablo/Mandel’s International Secretariat that was to result in the United Secretariat (USec). So did the British section of the IC, Gerry Healy’s Socialist Labour League (SLL). Initially the RT stood in political solidarity with the SLL on the basis of its 1961 document, “World Prospect for Socialism,” a powerful statement of the proletarian and internationalist Marxist purpose.

What the RT did not yet know was that Healy was an unprincipled political bandit. In 1962 Healy, thinking he still had a chance to keep the SWP in the IC, attempted to get the RT cadres to recant their view that the SWP had become centrist. The majority refused, but a minority under Tim Wohlforth split to found a pro-Healy “Reorganized Minority Tendency.” This unprincipled split in the RT severely damaged the fight for authentic Trotskyism in the SWP. Unlike Healy, the RT made it clear that if reunification was supported by a majority of the SWP, it would function as a disciplined tendency within the new, unified international formation. But the SWP leadership moved to expel the RT as reunification was consummated in late 1963. Healy and the French OCI chose to maintain the paper International Committee instead of fighting revisionism from within the new USec.

The world movement paid dearly for the IC’s failure to carry out a thoroughgoing and principled struggle against Pabloism. As the SWP spiraled into outright reformism, the centrist Mandelites pursued one after another substitute for

a conscious Trotskyist vanguard. When the May 1968 general strike in France dramatically refuted the notion that the revolutionary capacity of the Western proletariat had been neutralized by an allegedly unprecedented postwar economic boom, the Mandelites shifted their affections from Third World Stalinism to a sequential and overlapping series of "new mass vanguards." At all times, the USec catered to rather than combatted prevailing petty-bourgeois consciousness, frittering away a generation of would-be Marxist revolutionaries and eventually embracing "human rights" anti-Sovietism. It was through swimming against the stream that we were able to cohere the cadre for the international extension of the Spartacist tendency in the 1970s.

The primary theorist of the SWP's revisionist course, Joseph Hansen, labeled both the Cuban deformed workers state of Fidel Castro, and the neocolonial capitalist government of Ben Bella in Algeria, as "workers and farmers governments." As historical justification, Hansen cited the confused discussion on the workers government slogan at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922 (see "Rearming Bolshevism: A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern," *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001). Hansen's theoretical construct of a government of indeterminate class content, which would supposedly transform itself gradually into the dictatorship of the proletariat, obliterated the very purpose of a revolutionary Marxist party: the fight

to make the working class conscious that it must fight to smash the capitalist state and create its own state.

In a prescient document written in 1961, James Robertson, one of the founding leaders of the RT and the Spartacist League, had asked the SWP majority:

"What do you *want*, comrades? Take the use of the transitional demand "the workers and peasants government." It is transitional right enough, that is it is a bridge, but bridges go *two* ways. *Either* the workers and peasants government is the central demand of the Trotskyists in urging the workers and peasants to take power into their own hands through their mass organizations—i.e., the struggle for soviet power (this is the use the Cuban Trotskyists put it to); *or* it is a label to apply from afar to the existing government and thus serve, not for the first time, as an orthodox sounding formula to side-step the consummation of proletarian revolution and to justify revolution 'from above' by leaders 'one of whose principal difficulties is imbuing the working people with a sense of revolutionary social responsibility.'

"In short, is the Cuban revolution to pass forward over that bridge to soviet power or is an American SWP majority to go backwards?"

—James Robertson, "A Note on the Current Discussion—Labels and Purposes," *SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 22, No. 16 (June 1961)

For the SWP, the "workers and farmers government" construct was the bridge to reconciliation with the capitalist order. But out of the SWP's ranks came the forces for the regeneration of revolutionary Marxism. *Spartacist* continues to stand on the RT's heritage today.

Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International

*DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE WORLD MOVEMENT
submitted to the 1963 SWP Convention by the Revolutionary Tendency.*

INTRODUCTION

1. For the past fifteen years the movement founded by Leon Trotsky has been rent by a profound theoretical, political, and organizational crisis. The surface manifestation of this crisis has been the disappearance of the Fourth International as a meaningful structure. The movement has consequently been reduced to a large number of grouplets, nominally arrayed into three tendencies: the "International Committee," "International Secretariat (Pablo)," and "International Secretariat (Posadas)." Superficial politicians hope to conjure the crisis away through an organizational formula—"unity" of all those grouplets willing to unite around a common-denominator program. This proposal obscures, and indeed aggravates, the fundamental political and theoretical causes of the crisis.

2. The emergence of Pabloite revisionism pointed to the underlying root of the crisis of our movement: abandonment of a working-class revolutionary perspective. Under the influence of the relative stabilization of capitalism in the industrial states of the West and of the partial success of petit-bourgeois movements in overthrowing imperialist rule in some of the backward countries, the revisionist tendency

within the Trotskyist movement developed an orientation away from the proletariat and toward the petit-bourgeois leaderships. The conversion of Trotskyism into a left satellite of the existing labor and colonial-revolutionary leaderships, combined with a classically centrist verbal orthodoxy, was typified by Pablo—but by no means was confined to him or his organizational faction. On the contrary, the Cuban and Algerian revolutions have constituted acid tests proving that the centrist tendency is also prevalent among certain groups which originally opposed the Pablo faction.

3. There is an obvious and forceful logic in the proposals for early reunification of the centrist groups within the Trotskyist movement. But "reunification" on the basis of centrist politics cannot signify reestablishment of the Fourth International. The struggle for the Fourth International is the struggle for a program embodying the working-class revolutionary perspective of Marxism. It is true that the basic doctrines of the movement, as *abstractly* formulated, have not been formally denied. But by their abandonment of a revolutionary perspective the revisionists concretely challenge the programmatic bases of our movement.

4. The essence of the debate within the Trotskyist movement is the question of the perspective of the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard elements toward the existing petit-bourgeois leaderships of the labor movement, the deformed workers states, and the colonial revolution. The heart of the revolutionary perspective of Marxism is *in the*

struggle for the independence of the workers as a class from all non-proletarian forces; the guiding political issue and theoretical criterion is *workers' democracy*, of which the supreme expression is workers' power. This applies to all countries where the proletariat has become capable of carrying on independent politics—only the forms in which the issue is posed vary from country to country. These forms, of course, determine the practical intervention of the Marxists.

EUROPE

5. The recovery and prolonged prosperity of European capitalism has not, as revisionists of all stripes contend, produced a conservatized workers' movement. In reality, the strength, cohesion, cultural level, and potential combativity of the European proletariat are higher today than ever before. The defeat of DeGaulle by the French miners and the persistent, currently accelerating, electoral swing to the Left in the bourgeois-democratic countries of Europe (most notably Italy, Great Britain, Germany) illustrate this fact.

6. The European workers' attempts to go beyond partial economic struggles to the socialist transformation of society have been frustrated by the resistance and treason of the labor bureaucracy. The four years of reaction in France following the seizure of power by DeGaulle show the terrible price still exacted for tolerance of these misleaders. The Belgian general strike showed once again that "leftist" bureaucrats like Renard would also do all in their power to block or divert a movement capable of threatening capitalist rule. But the experiences of both France and Belgium prove a spontaneous desire of the workers to engage in struggle against the capitalist class—rising on occasion to an open confrontation with the system.

7. The task of the Trotskyists in the European workers' movement is the construction within the existing mass organizations (unions and, in certain instances, parties) of an alternative leadership. Marxists must at all times retain and exercise political and programmatic independence within the context of the organizational form involved. Support to tendencies within the labor bureaucracy, to the extent that they defend essential interests of the working class or reflect class-struggle desires within the labor movement, is correct and even obligatory; but this support is always only conditional and critical. When, as is inevitable, the class struggle reaches the stage at which the "leftist" bureaucrats play a reactionary role, the Marxists must oppose them immediately and openly. The behavior of the centrist tendency around the Belgian journal *La Gauche* in withdrawing during the general strike the correct slogan of a march on Brussels, in order to avoid a break with Renard, is the opposite of a Marxist attitude toward the labor bureaucracy.

8. The *objective* prospects for development of the Trotskyist movement in Europe are extremely bright. Large numbers of the best young militants in all countries, rejecting the cynical and careerist routinism of the Stalinist and Social-Democratic bureaucrats, are earnestly searching for a *socialist* perspective. They can be won to a movement capable of convincing them, practically and theoretically, that it offers such a perspective. The structural changes stemming from European integration pose the issues of workers' democracy and of the independence of the political and eco-

omic organs of the working class as the alternative to state control of the labor movement—and impel the working class into increasingly significant class battles. If, under these objective conditions, the West European Trotskyists fail to grow at a rapid rate it will be because they themselves have adopted the revisionist stance of a satellite of the labor leadership as opposed to a perspective of struggle around the program of workers' democracy.

SOVIET BLOC

9. Since the Second World War, the countries of Eastern Europe have been developing into modern industrial states. As the proletariat of the deformed workers' states increases in numbers and raises its living standards and cultural level, so grows the irrepressible conflict between the working class and the totalitarian Stalinist bureaucracy. Despite the defeat of the Hungarian workers' revolution, the Soviet-bloc proletariat has won significant reforms, substantially widening its latitude of thought and action. These reforms, however, do not signify a "*process* of reform" or "destalinization process": they were yielded only grudgingly by the unreformable bureaucracy, are under perpetual attack by the faction of "Stalin's heirs," and remain in jeopardy as long as Stalinist bureaucratic rule prevails. These concessions are historically significant only to the extent that they help the proletariat to prepare for the overthrow of the bureaucracy. Real destalinization can be accomplished only by the political revolution.

10. A new revolutionary leadership is emerging among the proletarian youth of the Soviet bloc. Inspired by twin sources—the inextinguishable Leninist tradition and the direct and tangible needs of their class—the new generation is formulating and implementing in struggle the program of workers' democracy. Notable in this regard is the point made recently by a long-time participant in Soviet student life. Regarding the fundamental character to much of the widespread opposition among Russian youth, it was stated, "Because he is a Marxist-Leninist, the Soviet student is much more radically dissatisfied than if he were an Anglo-Saxon pragmatist" (David Burg to *The New York Times*). The Trotskyists, lineal continuers of the earlier stage, have an indispensable contribution to make to this struggle: the concept of the international party and of a transitional program required to carry through the political revolution. Assistance to the development of a revolutionary leadership in the Soviet bloc through personal and ideological contact is a primary practical activity for any international leadership worthy of the name.

COLONIAL REVOLUTION

11. The programmatic significance of workers' democracy is greatest in the backward, formerly colonial, areas of the world: it is precisely in this sector that the program of workers' democracy provides the clearest possible line of demarcation between revolutionary and revisionist tendencies. In all of these countries the struggle for bourgeois democratic rights (freedom of speech, right to organize and strike, free elections) is of great importance to the working class because it lays the basis for the advanced struggle for proletarian

democracy and workers' power (workers' control of production, state power based on workers' and peasants' *councils*).

12. The theory of the Permanent Revolution, which is basic to our movement, declares that in the modern world the bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be completed *except* through the victory and extension of the proletarian revolution—the consummation of workers' democracy. The experience of all the colonial countries has vindicated this theory and laid bare the manifest inner contradictions which continually unsettle the present state of the colonial revolution against imperialism. Precisely in those states where the *bourgeois* aims of national independence and land reform have been most fully achieved, the *democratic* political rights of the workers and peasants have not been realized, whatever the social gains. This is particularly true of those countries where the colonial revolution led to the establishment of deformed workers' states: China, North Vietnam...and Cuba. The balance, to date, has been a thwarted success, either essentially empty, as in the neo-colonies of the African model, or profoundly deformed and limited, as in the Chinese example. This present outcome is a consequence of the predominance of specific class forces within the colonial upheavals, and of the class-related forms employed in the struggles. These forms imposed upon the struggle have been, for all their variety, exclusively "from above," *i.e.*, parliamentary ranging through the bureaucratic-military. And the class forces involved have been, of course, bourgeois or petit-bourgeois. A class counterposition is developed out of the complex of antagonisms resulting from failure to fulfill the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The petit-bourgeois leaderships with their bureaucratic forms and empiricist methods are ranged against participation by the workers as a class in the struggle. The involvement of the working class is necessarily centered on winning workers' democracy and requires the leadership of the revolutionary proletarian vanguard with its programmatic consciousness of historic mission. As the working class gains ascendancy in the struggle and takes in tow the more oppressed strata of the petit-bourgeoisie, the Permanent Revolution will be driven forward.

13. The Cuban Revolution has exposed the vast inroads of revisionism upon our movement. On the pretext of defense of the Cuban Revolution, in itself an obligation for our movement, full unconditional and uncritical support has been given to the Castro government and leadership, despite its petit-bourgeois nature and bureaucratic behavior. Yet the record of the regime's opposition to the democratic rights of the Cuban workers and peasants is clear: bureaucratic ouster of the democratically-elected leaders of the labor movement and their replacement by Stalinist hacks; suppression of the Trotskyist press; proclamation of the single-party system; and much else. This record stands side by side with enormous initial social and economic accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution. Thus Trotskyists are at once the most militant and unconditional defenders against imperialism of both the Cuban Revolution and of the deformed workers' state which has issued therefrom. But Trotskyists cannot give confidence and political support, however critical, to a governing regime hostile to the most elementary principles and practices of workers' democracy, even if our tactical approach is not as toward a *hardened* bureaucratic caste.

14. What is true of the revisionists' approach toward the Castro regime is even more apparent in regard to the Ben

Bella regime now governing Algeria on the program of a "socialist" revolution in cooperation with French imperialism. The anti-working-class nature of this petit-bourgeois group has been made clear to all but the willfully blind by its forcible seizure of control over the labor movement and its suppression of all opposition parties. Even widespread nationalization and development of management committees seen in the context of the political expropriation of the working class and the economic orientation towards collaboration with France cannot give Algeria the character of a workers' state, but leaves it, on the contrary, a backward capitalist society with a high degree of statification. As revolutionaries our intervention in both revolutions, as in every existing state, must be in accordance with the position of Trotsky: "We are not a government party; we are the party of irreconcilable opposition" (*In Defense of Marxism*). This can cease to apply only in relation to a government genuinely based on workers' democracy.

15. Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the *proletarian* leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism no matter what pious wish may be concurrently expressed for "building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries." Marxists must resolutely oppose any adventurist acceptance of the peasant-guerilla road to socialism—historically akin to the Social Revolutionary program on tactics that Lenin fought. This alternative would be a suicidal course for the socialist goals of the movement, and perhaps physically for the adventurers.

16. In all backward countries where the proletariat exists as a class, the fundamental principle of Trotskyism is the independence of the working class, its unions, and its parties, in intransigent opposition to imperialism, to any national liberal bourgeoisie, and to petit-bourgeois governments and parties of all sorts, including those professing "socialism" and even "Marxism-Leninism." Only in this way can the ground be laid for working-class hegemony in the revolutionary alliance with the oppressed petit-bourgeois strata, particularly the peasantry. Similarly, for a working-class party in an advanced country to violate class solidarity with the workers of a backward country by politically endorsing a petit-bourgeois colonial-revolutionary government is a sure sign of centrist opportunism, just as refusal to defend a colonial revolution because of the non-proletarian character of its leadership is a sign of sectarianism or worse.

17. The inter-relationship between bourgeois-democratic and proletarian-democratic struggles in the colonial revolution remains as formulated in the founding program of the Fourth International, a formulation which today retains complete validity:

"It is impossible merely to reject the democratic program; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it. The slogan for a National (or Constituent) Assembly preserves its full force for such countries as China or India. This slogan

must be indissolubly tied up with the problem of national liberation and agrarian reform. As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic program. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic program, it is necessary to oppose the workers to the 'national' bourgeoisie. Then, at a certain stage in the mobilization of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise. Their historical role in each given period, particularly their relation to the National Assembly, will be determined by the political level of the proletariat, the bond between them and the peasantry, and the character of the proletarian party policies. Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.

"The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat's struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent by the *degree* of its backwardness. Nevertheless, the general trend of revolutionary development in all backward countries can be determined by the formula of the *permanent revolution* in the sense definitely imparted to it by the three revolutions in Russia (1905, February 1917, October 1917)." (*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International.*)

CONCLUSIONS:

18. The task of the international revolutionary-Marxist movement today is to re-establish its own real existence. To speak of the "conquest of the masses" as a general guideline internationally is a qualitative overstatement. The tasks before most Trotskyist sections and groups today flow from the need for political clarification in the struggle against revisionism, in the context of a level of work of a generally propagandistic and preparatory nature. An indispensable

part of our preparation is the development and strengthening of roots within the broader working-class movement without which the Trotskyists would be condemned to sterile isolation or to political degeneration in the periods of rising class struggle and in either case unable to go forward in our historic task of leading the working class to power. Above all what can and must be done is the building of a world party firmly based on strong national sections, the assembling of a cadre of working-class militants won and tested in the process of the class struggle and on the firm basis of the revolutionary perspective of the Fourth International, the program to realize workers' democracy—culminating in workers' power. A fundamental statement expanding on this perspective, its opposition to Pabloism, and its relevance in the United States is contained in the Minority's "*In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective*" (in SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 23, No. 4, July 1962).

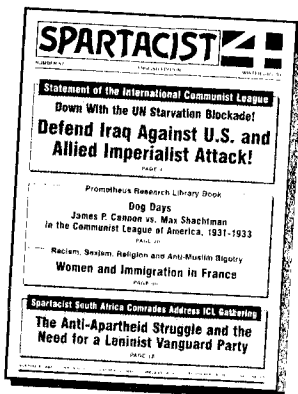
19. "Reunification" of the Trotskyist movement on the centrist basis of Pabloism in any of its variants would be a step away from, not toward, the genuine rebirth of the Fourth International. If, however, the majority of the presently existing Trotskyist groups insists on going through with such "reunification," the revolutionary tendency of the world movement should not turn its back on these cadres. On the contrary: it would be vitally necessary to go through this experience with them. The revolutionary tendency would enter a "reunified" movement as a minority faction, with a perspective of winning a majority to the program of workers' democracy. The Fourth International will not be reborn through adaptation to Pabloite revisionism: only by political and theoretical struggle against all forms of centrism can the world party of socialist revolution finally be established.

June 14, 1963

SPARTACIST

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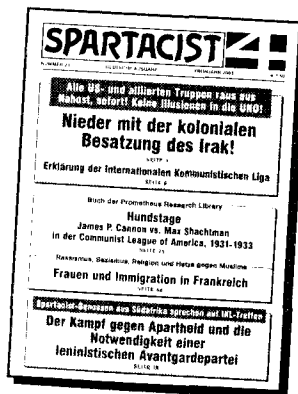
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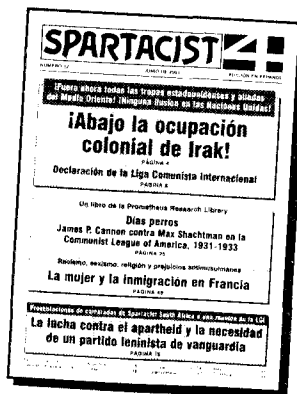
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Katayama Sen addresses First Congress of Toilers of the Far East, Moscow, January 1922. Top of front banner (in Chinese) reads, "Proletarians of the World Unite!" Rosspen

The Origins of Japanese Communism, Debate over "Two-Stage Revolution" and the American Occupation

The Meiji Restoration: A Bourgeois Non-Democratic Revolution

This article follows the standard Japanese practice of listing family names before given names. With the exception of the Japanese Communist Party, which is always given in English, the names of Japanese institutions and organizations are rendered in romaji transliterations. The first time a transliterated name appears, the English translation is given in parentheses.

Today, Germany and Japan are second only to the United States as the major capitalist-imperialist powers in the world. In the mid 19th century, both these countries underwent "revolutions from above" which removed the feudal (in Japan) and feudal-derived (in Germany) obstacles to their subsequent development as modern capitalist societies and states.

In Germany, Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck waged a series of wars from 1864-71, unifying the country under the Hohenzollern monarchy and modernizing the state structure. Bismarck's actions greatly strengthened an already economically ascendant industrial, financial and commercial bourgeoisie. In Japan, a section of the old warrior caste, wielding the image of the Emperor Meiji, ousted the feudal regime in 1867-68 to build up the Japanese military and enable it to stand up to the encroachments of the Western powers. In the following decades, they created a Japanese industrial bourgeoisie. By the beginning of the 20th century, Germany had become the strongest industrial capitalist state in Europe, Japan the only industrial capitalist state in Asia.

Both Western and Japanese academics have long recognized the substantial similarity of the course of development of Germany and Japan. However, when the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) was founded in 1922, Japan was much more backward in all major respects—social, economic and political—than Germany; not only the Germany of the interwar Weimar Republic but also the pre-1918 Germany of the Hohenzollern monarchy. The emperor ruled not merely “by the grace of god” but as the descendant of the sun goddess, the mythical founder of the Japanese nation. Half the Japanese labor force was still engaged in agriculture, for the most part utilizing pre-industrial technology.

While the leaders of the early Communist International (CI, or Comintern) sometimes referred to Japan as the “Prussia of the East,” there was no unanimity on the nature of Japan as an advanced, industrial society qualitatively similar to Germany. The main CI leader assigned to help the Japanese party, Nikolai Bukharin, insisted that Japan remained “semi-feudal.” Beginning in the fall of 1922, the CI sought to impose on the JCP cadre Bukharin’s analysis of Japan, and with it the two-stage schema of revolution which the CI was then imposing on all the young Communist parties of the East. The JCP was instructed to fight for a bourgeois-democratic revolution in which the Communist Party would join with the liberal bourgeoisie and the peasants in overthrowing the monarchy; it was only with the completion of the bourgeois-democratic stage that the Communist Party was to begin the fight for socialism. Moreover, those in the CI leadership responsible for the JCP failed to straightforwardly apply the lessons of Bolshevik organization under tsarist repression—the need for a stable émigré leadership center and network of couriers to maintain contact with and provide propaganda for underground party cells in Japan. Thus the JCP was set up to be destroyed by the severe state repression.

Under the impact of the burgeoning bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state and party, the Communist International in the fall of 1922 was showing the first signs of

abandoning its internationalist purpose (see “Rearming Bolshevism: A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern,” *Spartacist* No. 56, Spring 2001). The isolation of the Soviet Union and the extreme backwardness of the old tsarist empire—made worse by the destruction wrought by World War I and the Civil War of 1918-20—led to the development of a bureaucratic caste within the world’s first workers state. This bureaucracy usurped political power from the proletariat at the Thirteenth Party Conference in January 1924 and toward the end of that year Stalin propounded the dogma of building “socialism in one country,” the theoretical rationale for this conservative, nationalist layer.

Over the next decade the zigzags and increasing class collaborationism of the Comintern’s policies, first under Zinoviev and then under Bukharin and Stalin, led to disaster after disaster as the Communist parties were gradually transformed into border guards for the Soviet Union and instruments of its foreign policy. Trotsky fought the CI’s growing misleadership of revolutionary struggles. Standing on the political heritage of the Comintern’s first four congresses, he built the Left Opposition in battle against the CI’s abandonment of a revolutionary perspective, especially in China. There the program of “two-stage revolution” provided the cover for the subordination of the interests of the Chinese proletariat to those of Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang (with which the Soviet Union was seeking an alliance against British imperialism). The result was the strangling of a nascent proletarian revolution in 1925-27: the “first stage” was the Chinese Communists’ political liquidation into the bourgeois-nationalist forces, the “second stage” was the physical extermination of the Communists and advanced workers at the hands of these same bourgeois forces, most notably in the Shanghai massacre of April 1927.

Forcibly exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929, over the next decade Trotsky built a movement which resulted in the founding of a new communist international, the Fourth International, in 1938. The Comintern’s degeneration culminated in the adoption of an explicit program of class collaboration



Illustration of Emperor Meiji opening Japan's first railway.

(the “popular front”) at the Seventh CI Congress in 1935. In 1943, Stalin dissolved the Comintern in the interests of his World War II alliance with British, American and French imperialism.

Trotsky did not write specifically about Japan until the 1930s, and then only infrequently and mainly in articles about the military situation in the Pacific leading into WWII. By this time the JCP had been crushed by state repression. In a 1933 article Trotsky commented that the Meiji Restoration represented “not a ‘bourgeois revolution,’ as some historians say, but a bureaucratic attempt to buy off such a revolution” (“Japan Heads for Disaster,” 12 July 1933). However, Trotsky viewed Japan as a full-fledged imperialist power, standing on a qualitatively higher level of social and economic development than semicolonies like China. He defended China against Japanese imperialist invasion in the 1930s. A resolution adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International stated with regard to Japan: “Bourgeois property relations and the capitalist system of exploitation, extending over both the proletariat and the peasantry, decree revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only reed of salvation for both workers and peasants” (“The War in the Far East and the Revolutionary Perspectives,” September 1938, *Documents of the Fourth International*).

Taking off from Trotsky’s 1933 comment about the Meiji Restoration, the Spartacist Group Japan (SGJ), Japanese sec-

tion of the International Communist League, had the position that the Meiji Restoration represented an “incomplete” bourgeois-democratic revolution. For example, the SGJ wrote that “The Meiji Restoration was not a bourgeois revolution, but a defensive measure by the feudal bureaucracy for themselves” (*Spartacist [Japan]* No. 16, May 1994).

This present article is the result of some extensive research and discussion within the ICL on the development of Japanese capitalism and the history of the early JCP, in the course of which the Japanese comrades have come to change their understanding of the Meiji Restoration and its implications. However, we recognize that our article is limited because the research is based mainly on English-language sources, as well as some newly published material from the Comintern archives (see endnote).

Social Origins of the Meiji Restoration

Japan’s revolution from above in the late 1860s resulted from the intersection of two deeply rooted historical developments: the slow decay of Japanese feudalism caused by its own inner contradictions and the violent intrusion of Western imperialism in East Asia.

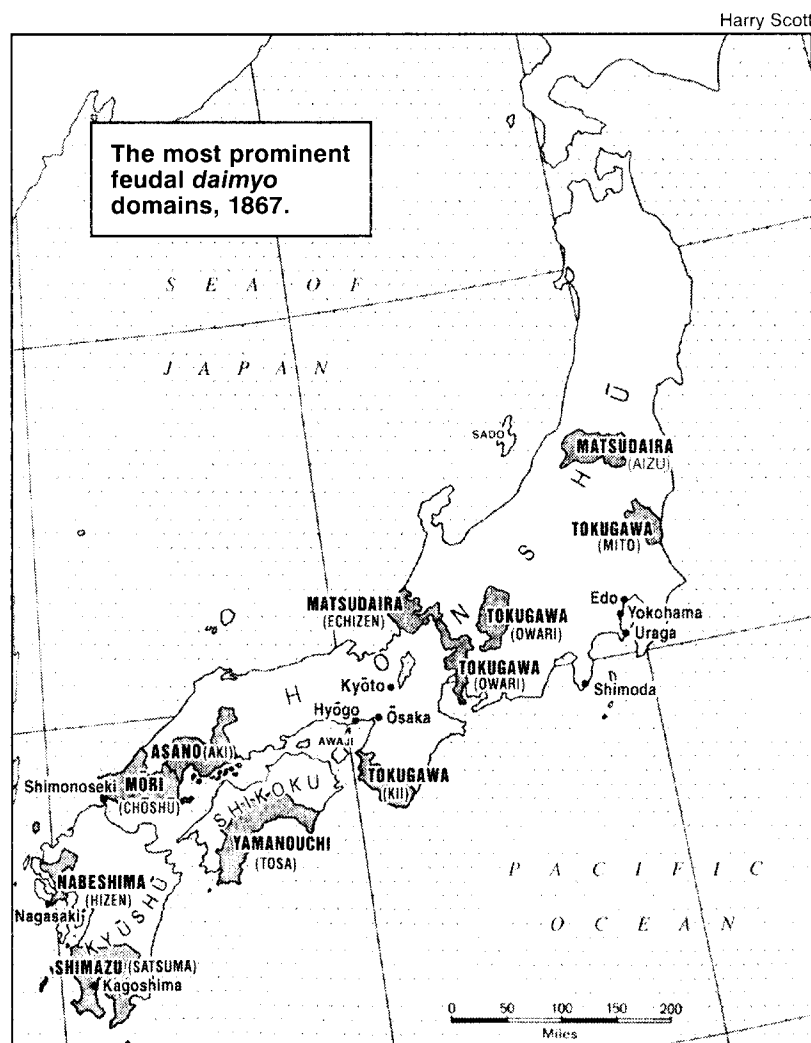
The Japanese feudal polity was marked by a curious dualism between the emperor and the *shogun* (generalissimo or commander). The emperor was universally recognized as the supreme authority of the Japanese nation. However, throughout the history of medieval Japan real power was wielded

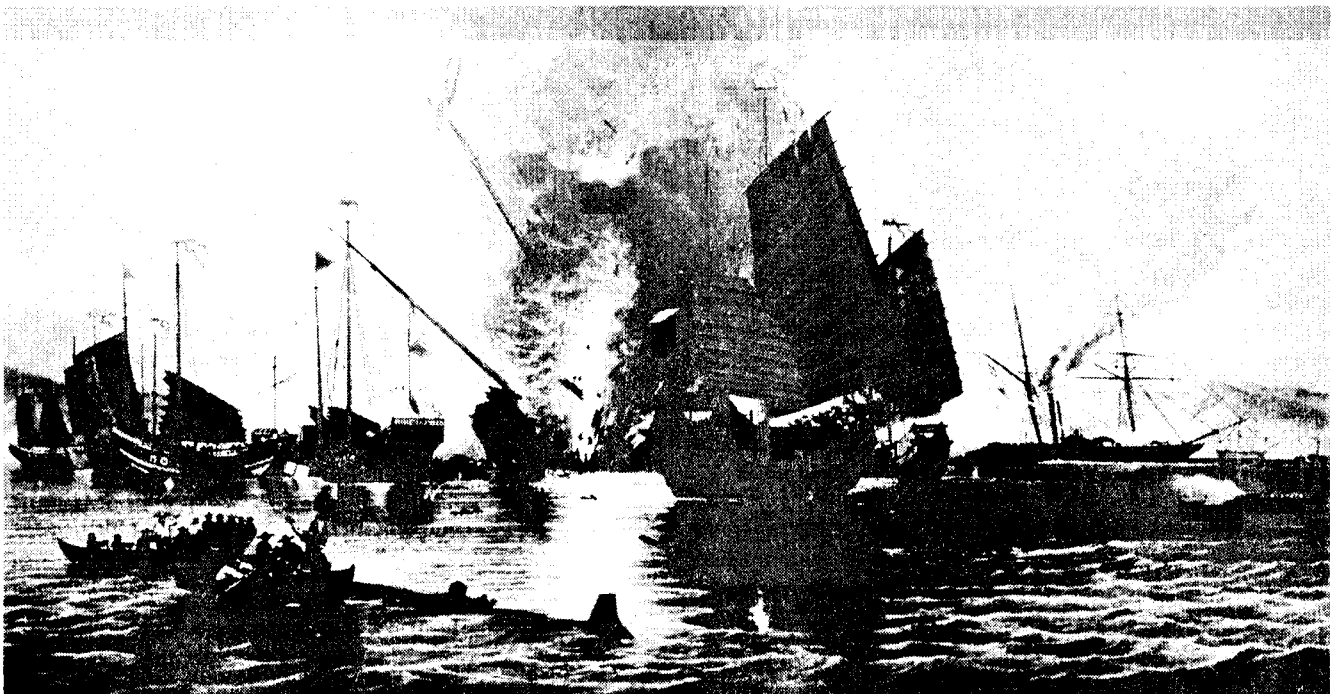
by the *shogun*, a member of one of the most powerful feudal clans. The emperor remained secluded, often forcibly, in Kyoto, a semi-mystical figure uninvolved in the actual course of political events.

In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated his rivals in the famous battle of Sekigahara and established the Tokugawa shogunate (or *Bakufu*), which ruled Japan for the next two and a half centuries. Through a policy of rigid national isolationism, Japan preserved its independence during the first phase of Western imperialist expansion in the era of mercantile capitalism. The *Bakufu* also effectively suppressed the warfare among the *daimyo* (feudal lords) which had been endemic to medieval Japan. However, the very successes and stability of the Tokugawa state set in motion social forces which eventually led to its overthrow.

With an end to the continual warfare, the hereditary warrior caste, the *samurai*, lost its traditional role in Japanese society. Barred from engaging in trade, many *samurai* became impoverished and deeply alienated from the existing order. Some became *ronin* (wandering men), or masterless *samurai*, owing fealty to no lord and professing no fixed occupation.

The long Tokugawa peace, the *Bakufu*’s construction of a network of roads connecting different parts of the country, and the development of coastal shipping all facilitated a substantial and steady increase in agricultural production and handicraft (pre-industrial) manufactures. The main beneficiary of this economic growth were the *shonin*





National Maritime Museum

Illustration of British destroying Chinese vessels during Opium War, 1839-42.

(merchants), especially the big rice dealers of Osaka like the Mitsui family. Many a *daimyo* and *samurai* found themselves deeply in debt to the powerful merchant families.

However, the further development of mercantile capital in Japan was blocked by the prohibitions on foreign trade, restrictions on the purchase and sale of land and the division of the country into hundreds of *han* (feudal domains), each with its own border guards and currency. By the first decades of the 19th century, the frustrated ambitions of the great merchant houses and their allies in the cities converged with the discontents of nationalistic, modernizing elements among the *samurai*. Historians have called this the union of “the yen with the sword.”

E. Herbert Norman wrote in 1940 a pioneering study on the origins of modern Japan, *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2000 [1940]), which drew heavily on the rich historical scholarship of Japanese Marxist intellectuals. Norman explained:

“The *chonin* [townspeople] felt that their own prosperity was closely tied to that of the warrior and noble classes, their customers and debtors. For this reason the *chonin* never dreamed of making a frontal assault on feudalism as a system, although they were prepared to finance a *political* movement against the *Bakufu* in concert with rival feudal elements.” (emphasis in original)

The son of Canadian Protestant missionaries, Norman spent his childhood in rural Japan in the 1910s and '20s. Under the impact of the rise of fascism in Germany in the early 1930s, he was attracted to the left and briefly joined the British Communist Party while a student at Cambridge University. For this, among other reasons, Norman's book was buried, particularly by American academics, during the Cold War. Then a member of the Canadian diplomatic corps, Norman was hounded to his death by the American McCarthyites, finally committing suicide in 1957.

According to the traditional feudal hierarchy, the peasants stood below the *samurai*, but above artisans and merchants. The growth of trade and a money economy undermined the

traditional structure and stability of the Japanese village, with a few peasants becoming richer and others falling into penury. A growing population of urbanized (propertyless) manual laborers came into being. Early 19th-century Japan saw a rising incidence of peasant revolts against feudal exactions and also rice riots in the cities directed against merchant speculators and the government officials who protected them.

The growing social tensions in late feudal Japan were brought to a critical point, resulting in civil war, by the direct threat of Western military conquest. In the 1840s, the Japanese ruling classes looked on with shock and trepidation as Britain defeated and humiliated China in the Opium War, annexed Hong Kong and reduced the “Celestial Kingdom”—the center of East Asian civilization since time immemorial—to semicolonial subjugation. In 1853, an American naval fleet under Commodore Perry forced its way into Tokyo Bay, demanding trade concessions. Unable to resist militarily, the Tokugawa shogunate agreed to unequal commercial treaties with the United States and the European powers and granted Western nationals extraterritorial legal rights in Japan.

These concessions led to an organized opposition to the *Bakufu* expressed in the slogan: “Revere the emperor! Expel the barbarian!” In other words, only a strong central government ruled directly by the emperor could preserve Japan's independence. The anti-*Bakufu* forces were concentrated in the domains of 86 *tozama* (“outside” lords), the historic enemies of the Tokugawa dynasty. These oppositional *han* now came under the de facto leadership of modernizing *samurai* who built up their military strength along Western lines.

The decade-long maneuvers and struggle for power between the *Bakufu* and the *tozama*—with four clans, Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa and Hizen, in the leadership—culminated in 1868 in a brief civil war which ended with the defeat of the *Bakufu*. Breaking sharply with Japanese feudal tradition, Choshu enrolled peasants and other commoners into its

army. The victors established a new government in the name of the supreme authority of the Emperor Meiji. Hence this historical event is called the Meiji Ishin (Restoration). However, the leaders of the new regime mostly governed independently of the emperor, who was seen to be above the political battles of the time.

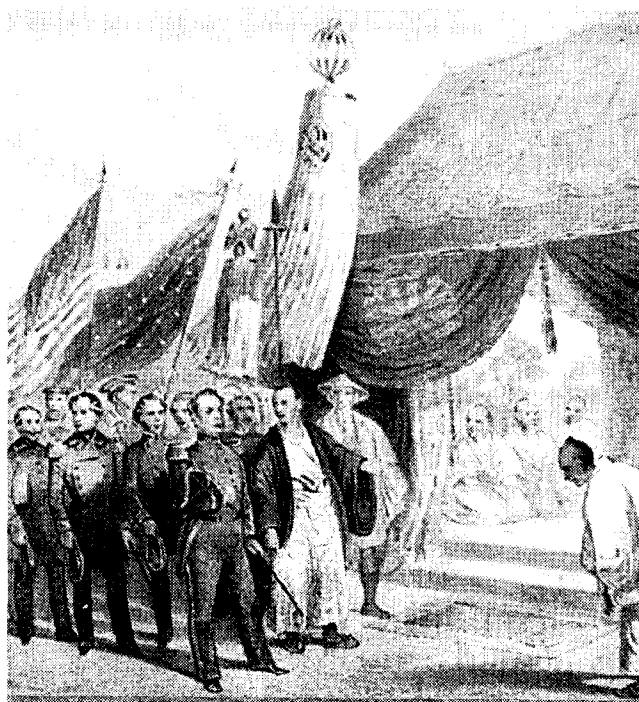
Over the next few years, this regime introduced a series of measures amounting to a revolutionary transformation of broad scope: recognition of the legal equality of all classes, abolition of feudal dress, establishment of state schools, reform of the calendar, formal emancipation of the forebears of the Burakumin (considered a pariah caste because they dealt with dead animals and leather tanning), removal of the feudal ban on alienation and partition of land, establishment of the freedom to choose one's occupation, etc. Japan imported the most modern industry and technology. In the 1870s, more than 2,000 experts—mathematicians, scientists, engineers—were recruited to teach the basic sciences that made modern industry possible. For training in engineering, government technical schools were established with foreign instructors, while the best Japanese students were sent abroad to master the most up-to-date techniques.

While the forces leading the Meiji Restoration were internal to Japan, their success was strongly conditioned by favorable international circumstances. The main rival Western powers were unable or unwilling to intervene decisively at this critical juncture in Japan's history. Tsarist Russia, which had ambitions toward the Kurile Islands on Japan's northern fringes, was still recovering from its defeat at the hands of Britain and France in the Crimean War of the 1850s. The United States was internally preoccupied with the deep political fissures and profound socio-economic dislocations of its own momentous Civil War a few years earlier. The interventions of Britain and France in Japan in a sense cancelled each other out, with the latter supporting the *Bakufu* and the former the anti-Tokugawa forces.

More generally, for all of these Western states China was the main target and great prize in East Asia, with Japan regarded as relatively poor pickings. As Norman put it, "It was the sprawling prostrate body of China which acted as a shield for Japan against the mercantile and colonial greed of the European Powers." Thus in the historical short run, the Japanese ruling classes had a wide latitude to radically restructure their state.

Toward a Dialectical Understanding of the Meiji Restoration

How can one characterize the Meiji Restoration as a bourgeois revolution if it was not led by the bourgeoisie? The bourgeoisie did not directly lead the French Revolution either—the Jacobins were led by lawyers like Robespierre and other petty-bourgeois professionals, supported by the urban artisan masses and land-hungry peasants. However, it was the commercial and financial bourgeoisie who were in a position to *benefit* from the overthrow of the monarchy and the abolition of feudal impediments to national economic development, laying the basis for a nascent industrial bourgeoisie within two generations. The lower *samurai*, who spearheaded the Meiji Restoration, could legitimately be described as a military-bureaucratic caste or stratum. In order to survive as a nationally independent ruling class, they had to transform Japan into a modern industrial capitalist country and therewith foster the development of an industrial bourgeoisie. Their policies and



National Archives

Contemporary depiction of Commodore Perry meeting Japanese officials in 1854.

actions led within two generations to the development of an industrial/financial bourgeoisie as the dominant social class in Japan.

Here it is instructive to look at the Bismarckian "revolution from above" in Germany. In doing so it is also necessary to recognize certain fundamental differences, as well as important parallelisms, between Germany and Japan in the late 19th century. Germany stood at a qualitatively higher level of economic development, with a substantial industry and an already economically dominant bourgeoisie which, however, confronted a rapidly growing, socially and politically conscious proletariat.

The extension of the socio-economic achievements of the French Revolution to western and southern Germany through military conquest under the Napoleonic empire gave a powerful impetus to the development of industrial as well as commercial capitalism. On the eve of the Revolution of 1848, Engels wrote of the German bourgeoisie:

"Although its advance during the last thirty years has not been nearly as great as that of the English and French bourgeoisie, it has nevertheless established most branches of modern industry, in a few districts supplanted peasant or petty-bourgeois patriarchy, concentrated capital to some extent, produced something of a proletariat, and built fairly long stretches of railroad. It has at least reached the point of having either to go further and make itself the ruling class or to renounce its previous conquests, the point where it is the only class that can at the moment bring about progress in Germany, can at the moment rule Germany."

— "The Constitutional Question in Germany"
(June 1847)

However, during the upheaval of 1848 the bourgeoisie's fear that a radical democratic revolution would be but a prelude to a "red revolution," centrally based on the urban working class, drove it into an alliance with the forces of monarchical reaction. Marx and Engels concluded that the European bourgeoisie had already turned reactionary. As a result, Marx ended his address of the Central Authority to the Communist

League in March 1850 with the famous cry for “The Revolution in Permanence.”

With the further rapid development of industrial capitalism, the main body of the German bourgeoisie formed an alliance with the Prussian landed nobility (the Junkers), which laid the basis for Bismarck’s “revolution from above” in the 1860s. Bismarck began as a political representative of the Junkers and had been an extreme reactionary in the Revolution of 1848-49. But he represented this feudal-derived class in the era of industrial capitalism, in which Prussia confronted more advanced bourgeois states: Britain and France. Bismarck came to understand that only the industrial/financial bourgeoisie could transform Germany into a comparably advanced state and thereby ensure the survival, and indeed prosperity, of the old landed classes as well.

In the late 1880s, Engels wrote in this regard:

“A person in Bismarck’s position and with Bismarck’s past, having a certain understanding of the state of affairs, could not but realise that the Junkers, such as they were, were not a viable class, and that of all the propertied classes only the bourgeoisie could lay claim to a future, and that therefore (disregarding the working class, an understanding of whose historical mission we cannot expect of him) his new empire promised to be all the stabler, the more he succeeded in laying the groundwork for its gradual transition to a modern bourgeois state.”

—Engels, *The Role of Force in History* (1887-88)

The Prussian Junkers became large-scale agrarian capitalists and the Hohenzollern monarchy operated effectively free of parliamentary control. While the Reichstag (parliament) had some influence over domestic policies, it had no effective control over foreign affairs and the military. As Engels wrote in 1891: “The German empire is a monarchy with semi-feudal institutions, but dominated ultimately by the economic interests of the bourgeoisie” (“Socialism in Germany”).

Considered dialectically, the Meiji Restoration was led by a bourgeoisie in the process of becoming. This understanding was expressed in one of the earliest Soviet studies of the subject, written in 1920:

“We may conclude that Japan, having changed its economical structure, still did not possess the class of bourgeoisie which could take over the rule of the country. It was the class of feudal lords that remained in power. They acknowledged the changes which had happened in Japan, rejected all outmoded feudal norms and started the rapid development of capitalism.... Hence, the term ‘revolution’ may be used in relation to the Meiji Ishin only conventionally. It may be called ‘bourgeois’ only from the viewpoint of its results, which does not mean at all that the bourgeoisie played the most important role at that time.”

—O. V. Pletner, *The History of the Meiji Era*,
quoted in Julia Mikhailova, “Soviet-Japanese
Studies on the Problem of the Meiji Ishin and
the Development of Capitalism in Japan,” in *War,
Revolution and Japan* (1993)

A Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution Was Precluded by History

For Marxists, a bourgeois-democratic revolution is centrally defined by its socio-economic (i.e., class) content, *not* by a change in the form of government. The classic bourgeois-democratic revolutions in England in the 1640s and France in 1789-93 overthrew absolutist monarchies that were the political organs of the landed nobility. Mobilizing the peasantry and urban lower classes, the mercantile (i.e., pre-industrial) bourgeoisie achieved political power through the Cromwellian Commonwealth in England and the Jacobin

regime and later Napoleonic empire in France.

To view the classic bourgeois-democratic revolutions as a template for all subsequent capitalist development—as did the Mensheviks in their stagist schema for tsarist Russia, and subsequently Stalin/Bukharin in the case of the semicolonial countries—is *ahistorical and undialectical*. When in July 1789 artisans, shopkeepers and day laborers in Paris stormed the Bastille, France was the strongest absolutist (i.e., late feudal) state in Europe. The revolution greatly enhanced the economic and military resources of the French state, enabling Napoleon Bonaparte—a onetime protégé of Robespierre—to conquer and transform much of Europe. The masses had to be mobilized to break a path for capitalist development in France (and earlier in England). This was also partially true in a somewhat later period in the United States and Italy. But it is not true for Germany or Japan. There is no necessary connection between democracy and the development of capitalism.

The “bourgeois revolutions from above” in late 19th-century Germany and Japan were not exceptions to some historic “norm” set by the French Revolution. They were instead the outcome of the intervening history since the French Revolution. The only way for the ruling classes in Germany and Japan to avoid invasion and subjugation by Britain, France or the United States was rapid industrialization. They were able to propel their nations into the ranks of the imperialist powers by clearing out the feudal obstacles to capitalist development from above, in the process transforming themselves into capitalists. By 1900, with the world and its markets more or less divided between the five



Der Spiegel

Contemporary painting depicts Kaiser Wilhelm I and Chancellor Bismarck laying cornerstone for Reichstag, 1884.

existing imperialist powers, that road was closed to other late developing bourgeoisies.

Japan in the mid 19th century was a *pre*-industrial (though in many ways relatively advanced) feudal state confronting far more powerful industrializing capitalist states. It was the well-grounded fear of succumbing to China's fate that galvanized decisive sections of the Japanese feudal nobility, especially the lower echelons of the *samurai*, to overthrow the old order and restructure the Japanese economy and state along Western lines. Though he himself viewed the Meiji Restoration as an "incomplete" bourgeois revolution, E. Herbert Norman also understood that the conditions confronting the Meiji rulers immediately after the revolution ruled out a bourgeois-democratic road:

"The *speed* with which Japan had simultaneously to establish a modern state, to build an up-to-date defense force in order to ward off the dangers of invasion (which the favorable balance of world forces and the barrier of China could not forever postpone), to create an industry on which to base this armed force, to fashion an educational system suitable to an industrial modernized nation, dictated that these important changes be accomplished by a group of autocratic bureaucrats rather than by the mass of the people working through democratic organs of representation."

—*Op. cit.*

Could this social transformation have been accomplished by a revolutionary upheaval? Let us assume that the civil war between the *Bakufu* and the *tozama* had resulted in the mutual destruction or disorganization of any effective military force in the hands of the feudal nobility. A power vacuum formed, allowing a mass peasant rebellion, refusal to pay tribute to the *daimyo*, and also uprisings of the lower classes in the cities. In short, Japan was engulfed by revolutionary anarchy.

What would have been the historical outcome? The Japanese *daimyo* and *shonin* would have invited and facilitated the military intervention of the Western powers to suppress the peasant rebellion. In the aftermath Japan would have been reduced to colonial or semicolonial subjugation. A section of the *daimyo*, *samurai* and merchant class would have been transformed into a comprador bourgeoisie, such as then existed in China, totally subservient to the Western imperialists.



Mainichi Shinbunsha

Woman miner during Meiji era drags load of coal.

One need only look at the Taiping rebellion in China in the 1850s and early 1860s. This massive peasant revolt, which lasted over a decade, took over much of the Yangtze Valley and established a capital in the major city of Nanjing. Since the decadent Manchu rulers were incapable of suppressing the revolt, the Chinese gentry (landlord class) turned to the Western powers. An American adventurer, Frederick Townsend Ward, and a British officer, Charles "Chinese" Gordon, trained and commanded an elite Chinese force which finally defeated the Taipings:

A peasant rebellion in Japan at this time, even if initially successful, would have suffered a similar fate. This is not to say that following the Meiji Restoration the future course of Japanese history was predetermined for the next several decades. Some greater degree of social egalitarianism and political liberalization was certainly possible in late 19th- and early 20th-century Japan. But what was not possible was a radical bourgeois-democratic revolution on the French model.

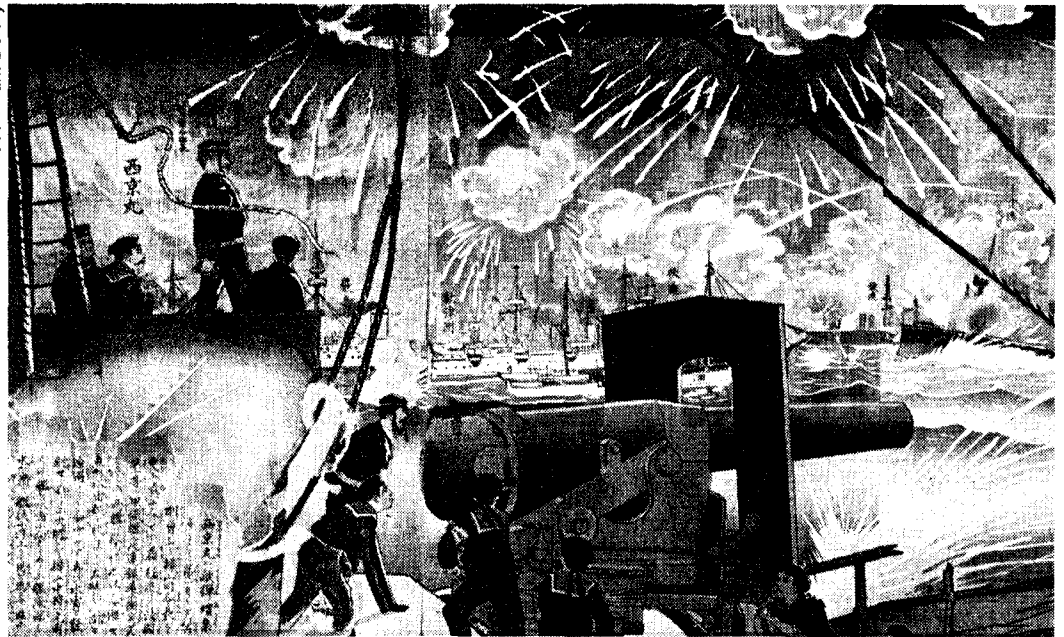
The 1873 Land Tax

The leaders of the Meiji Restoration expressed their intent to modernize Japan with such slogans as "Prosperous Nation, Strong Military" and "Increase Production, Promote Industry." But how were these slogans translated into reality, given that Japan at the time was far more economically backward than the Western capitalist states that threatened its independence? In brief, by maintaining an exceptionally high level of exploitation of the peasantry, but now channeling the resulting economic surplus into the rapid construction of an industrial-military complex. The 1873 Land Tax was the main mechanism in late 19th-century Japan for what Marx termed, in speaking of West Europe (centrally England) in the 17th and 18th centuries, the "primitive accumulation of capital."

In 1871, the new Meiji regime, through a combination of military threat and financial inducement, pressured the *daimyo* into "returning" their *han* to the authority of the central government. They were compensated with long-term government bonds. At the same time, the government took over the stipends, though at a diminishing rate, which the former *daimyo* had paid to their *samurai*. The Land Tax provided the bulk of the revenue for the interest and redeemed principal on the government bonds as well as the stipends to the former *samurai*.

In this way, the state treasury became a conduit between the economic surplus extracted from the peasantry and a developing industrial/financial bourgeoisie drawn from the former feudal nobility and the old merchant class. By 1880, 44 percent of the stock of Japan's national banks was owned by former *daimyo*, and almost a third by former *samurai*. These banks then went on to finance the rapid development of Japanese industry.

The central role played by the state treasury in the initial industrialization of Japan also resulted, paradoxically, from the restrictions imposed upon Japanese economic policy by the Western imperialist powers. Under the threat of American and British military action, in the late 1850s and '60s the Tokugawa shogunate signed unequal commercial treaties which prohibited Japan from charging tariffs of more than 5 percent of the value of Western imports. The Meiji government was therefore unable to protect its newly developing industries behind high tariff barriers, as Germany and the United States were able to do in the late 19th century.



Japan embarked on road of imperialist conquest with Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95. Illustration of Battle of Yalu River.

Instead the Japanese ruling class had recourse to direct government ownership and subsidies.

American economic historian G.C. Allen stated: "There was scarcely any important Japanese industry of the Western type during the latter decades of the nineteenth century which did not owe its establishment to state initiative" (*A Short Economic History of Modern Japan* [1981]). By the end of the century, almost all state-owned industrial enterprises and other assets had been sold off, usually at nominal prices, to politically favored entrepreneurs. The most successful of these formed the *zaibatsu*, the great industrial/financial empires like Mitsubishi and Mitsui which came to dominate and continue to dominate the Japanese economy.

Just as Meiji Japan saw the rise of a new class of industrial/financial capitalists, it also saw the rise of a new class of agrarian exploiters. As increasing numbers of peasants were unable to meet their tax payments and/or repay their debts at usurious interest rates, they were forced to sell all or part of their land, typically to rich peasants or village merchant/moneylenders. Many were forced to send their daughters to work for textile manufacturers in the city, thus providing workers for early Japanese industry. An advance on the daughters' wages would be loaned to the peasant families to meet their tax burden. Interest and principal on these loans, together with payments for the daughters' food and lodging, consumed most of, if not more than the wages, forcing rural families further into debt. By 1903, 44 percent of all agricultural land in Japan was worked by tenant farmers who paid over 50 percent of their crop, usually in kind, as rent to the landlords.

Here it should be emphasized that the landlord class in early 20th-century Japan was *not* in the main derived from the old feudal nobility. An American student of Japanese agrarian history explained:

"Although most former daimyo remained wealthy and as members of the House of Peers gained a direct voice in the political system after 1890, they were no longer a landed aristocracy with the power to control local affairs.... They invested in forest land, in new industrial enterprises, and perhaps most of all, in banking. Even if part of their income was derived from agriculture, it was generally a small part, overshadowed by their other interests. They no longer exercised

political control over the land they owned, and although they were represented in the House of Peers, that body was at no time the center of political power."

—Ann Waswo, *Japanese Landlords: The Decline of a Rural Elite* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977)

The lower house of the Diet, which approved the government budget, was elected by the wealthiest male property owners.

A new landlord class arose through the *economic differentiation* of the peasantry and other sectors of the rural petty bourgeoisie. In the 1930s, a visiting American academic contemptuously described typical Japanese landlords as "lately merchants, owners of inns and brothels, masters of road repair crews, and persons of similar status" (quoted in *ibid.*). Furthermore, wealthier landlords increasingly reinvested the rents collected from tenant farmers in bank deposits, government bonds and corporate securities. By the 1920s, the wealthiest families in rural Japan were getting as much, if not more, of their income from their financial assets as from their agricultural holdings.

Thus the landlord class in interwar Japan was in no sense feudal or semi-feudal, but was thoroughly integrated economically and in many cases socially into the dominant urban industrial economy.

The 1889 Meiji Constitution

While the Meiji Restoration was a revolution from above, it necessarily produced powerful reverberations from below, awakening among the peasants and urban laborers expectations of a better and freer life. The two decades following were a period of great social and political turbulence.

For the first time in Japanese history, women rebelled against their traditional subservience and demanded democratic rights. Several villages and municipalities set up local councils, and women were allowed to run for office (provided they had their husbands' permission). Women militants toured the country giving speeches calling for suffrage, birth control and the right of inheritance.

The forces of social radicalism found their main organized expression in the People's Rights Movement, which demanded a democratic, representative government. Rural

agitation centered around this movement climaxed in 1884, in a rebellion in the mountainous district of Chichibu in central Japan, northwest of Tokyo. Peasants sacked the homes of moneylenders, stormed government offices to destroy debt records, and intimidated the rich into making donations for poor relief. The uprising was crushed by the army and shortly thereafter the People's Rights Movement was broken through a combination of state repression and the government's success in buying off many of its leaders.

The consolidation of a strong repressive state apparatus laid the political basis for the 1889 Meiji Constitution, which was modeled on that of imperial Germany. Government ministers were appointed by the emperor (actually by the Meiji oligarchs acting in the emperor's name), not by the majority party in the Diet.

Taking the concept of *ie* (family household system) as the basis for the new hierarchical social structure, the 1898 Civil Code adopted the Confucian-based values of the *samurai* class as its foundation. The emperor stood at the apex as the head of the entire nation and, in turn, the husband was absolute ruler over his individual family. Primogeniture was mandated for all classes. Wives were treated as minors, and



Harp Shuppan

Contemporary drawing depicts police intimidation of People's Rights Movement. Suppression of movement laid basis for 1889 Meiji Constitution.

the code insisted that "cripples and disabled persons and wives cannot undertake any legal action." Women were banned from participating in political activities. Yet women workers were the backbone of the developing industrial economy—especially in the textile industry, which produced 60 percent of the foreign exchange in the latter part of the 19th century and in which women made up 60 to 90 percent of the workforce.

The emperor system enshrined in the constitution was *not* a surviving feudal institution representing the interests of a landed nobility (which no longer existed at all). Rather, the traditional authority and mystical aura surrounding the emperor were now used to legitimize a state apparatus which

first and foremost acted to protect and further the interests of the industrial and financial capitalists, represented at their apex by the *zaibatsu*.

World War I and Industrialization

The First World War changed the structure of the Japanese economy and working class, while the 1917 Russian Bolshevik Revolution changed the political character of the Japanese left. Prior to 1914 Japan's heavy industrial sector, closely tied to the military, remained dependent on government financial support. Japan exported light manufactures—mainly cotton textiles and silk—and imported industrial machinery and much of its steel from Europe and the United States.

The war totally disrupted the existing pattern of world trade, enabling Japan to move up into the first rank of industrial capitalist countries. A Japanese academic Marxist, Takahashi Masao, pointed out:

"With the European nations devoting themselves entirely to the war effort, the arteries of commodity exchange in the world economy were completely stopped...."

"Although there was a great difference in the scope and degree of industrialization, both America and Japan were able to rapidly and extensively develop their economies. They were in a similar position in that they were both able to develop those kinds of manufacturing for which they had previously been dependent on Europe. And thus they functioned as suppliers of industrial products for underdeveloped areas, as well as of goods of various kinds for the belligerent nations."

—*Modern Japanese Economy Since the Meiji Restoration* (1967)

Between 1914 and 1921, Japan's output of steel doubled; the production of electrical motors increased in value from 9 million to 34 million yen. Overall, industrial production multiplied almost *fivefold!*

This brought about a corresponding change in the social weight and character of the Japanese working class. The proportion of the manufacturing labor force engaged in heavy industry, characterized by large-scale factories, increased from 13.6 percent in 1910 to 24.2 percent by the end of the war. In the early 1920s there was a large permanently urbanized industrial proletariat in Japan, heavily male, employed in steel mills, shipyards, chemical factories, auto and truck plants, etc. Nonetheless, Japan was the only major industrial capitalist country in the interwar period in which peasant struggle against landlords was an important arena of social conflict.

The changes in workforce composition combined with the inflation that accompanied the World War I industrial expansion resulted in an upsurge in labor militancy and social unrest, capped by the 1918 "Rice Riots." The price of rice doubled from 1917 to 1918, and after the wives of fishermen in Toyama Prefecture raided rice shops in August 1918, rice riots spread throughout the country. The government called out troops to quell the riots, killing more than 100 protesters. The surge of unrest led to a mass movement for universal suffrage. The poll tax was decreased in 1919 (increasing the voter rolls from one to three million), but the government refused to grant universal suffrage. Strikes and labor unrest also spread, and Japanese socialists began to gain influence in some major Japanese unions.

Early Japanese Communists

Early Japanese Socialists were largely Christian and confined to small propaganda groups. After 1906 an anarcho-syndicalist current developed, but its membership periodically collaborated with the more reformist-minded Socialist movement. In 1910 the best-known anarchist, Kotoku Shusui, and

26 supporters were arrested and charged with plotting to assassinate the emperor and his family. Following the so-called Great Treason Trial, Kotoku was executed in 1911, along with eleven others, including his companion Kanno Suga. After this the organized left virtually ceased to exist.

Katayama Sen, a leader of the evolutionary, pacifist wing of Japanese socialism, had previously spent time in the United States and returned there in 1914. There he worked with the Socialist Party, took a special interest in the fight against black oppression, and eventually founded the League of Japanese Socialists. Won to the Bolshevik banner after the Russian Revolution, Katayama sent many League members back to Japan to help found a Japanese Communist Party. He himself went to Moscow in late 1921, playing a major role in the Comintern's dealings with Japan from 1922. However, the extent to which Katayama broke from his Christian, pacifist origins remains questionable. During the Stalinist degeneration he espoused the bureaucracy's various twists and turns with unflinching loyalty. In 1928 Trotsky wrote, "Katayama is by nature a complete mistake.... His conceptions form a progressivism very lightly colored by Marxism" ("Who Is Leading the Comintern Today?", September 1928). Nevertheless, the supporters he won in the United States played an important role in the early Japanese Communist movement.

The core leadership of the early JCP, however, came from the anarcho-syndicalists like Yamakawa Hitoshi, Sakai Toshihiko and Arahata Kanson, who began to propagate Bolshevism (as they understood it) as early as May 1919. They were joined not only by Katayama's supporters, but also by individual student recruits from a burgeoning post-World War I academic Marxist trend that was tolerated by the government for most of the decade. Despite the authority won by anarcho-syndicalists in the union movement after the war, the early Communists had very slim roots in the working class.

Japan was the first imperialist country to invade the territory of the world's first workers state in April 1918. Its troops were the last to leave in November 1922, and even



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Prominent anarchists Kotoku Shusui and Kanno Suga were charged with plot to kill the emperor and executed, 1911.

then Japan retained control of Sakhalin Island, agreeing to evacuate its troops from Northern Sakhalin only in 1925, when diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia were finally established. Japan continued to occupy Southern Sakhalin until its troops were driven out by the Red Army at the end of World War II.

While the Bolsheviks made efforts to establish contact with Japanese militants attracted to the Russian Revolution's banner, foreign military intervention and the Civil



Mainichi Shinbunsha

Woman activist leading striking textile workers, 1926.



Yamakawa Hitoshi

Rosspen



Sakai Toshihiko

Rosspen



Arahata Kanson

Rosspen

War, which raged in the Russian Far East, made such contact extremely difficult. Moreover, Yamakawa and Sakai were originally reticent to establish contact with the Comintern, fearing to draw the attention of the very efficient Japanese secret police. It was not until April 1921, when the Korean Communist Yi Chung-rim, who had been a student at Meiji University, was sent to Tokyo by the CI that Yamakawa agreed to establish a "Preparatory Committee" for a Japanese Communist Party. At this point the Japanese Communists constituted a loose circle that overlapped with the anarcho-syndicalists.

The opening of the Comintern Archives in Moscow has made available a wealth of new material on the Japanese Communist Party, which sheds light on the early years of the party. We publish three of the newly available JCP documents as appendices to this article, including the April 1921 Manifesto of the Preparatory Committee of the JCP, which was authored by Yamakawa, working with Katayama protégé Kondo Eizo. The 1921 Manifesto makes clear that the early Japanese Communists considered the Meiji Restoration to have laid the basis for a capitalist Japan and did not subscribe to a two-stage schema.

The first delegation from the Japanese Socialist/anarchist milieu did not arrive in Moscow until late 1921. They came to participate in the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East, which took place in January-February 1922. The Congress included not only Communists, but also bourgeois-nationalist forces (the Chinese Guomindang was present), journalists and other disparate forces. Bukharin, Zinoviev and Stalin were appointed by the Russian Political Bureau to be the Commission in charge of directing the Congress. Zinoviev convened the event and played a very public role there. Bukharin helped draft and present the resolution on Japan. Stalin met with the Japanese delegation and is credited in at least one account with being among those who won over some of the anarcho-syndicalists. Stalin retained his interest in the Far East for the rest of the decade, and it is clear that he worked closely with Bukharin in developing the "two-stage revolution" dogma and pushing it upon the Communist parties of the East.

The Congress was held on the eve of Lenin's first stroke and just as Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev were beginning to establish their alliance against Trotsky. The Zinovievist school of politics as bombast and maneuver was infecting the Comintern. However, it had not yet triumphed. The

"Tasks of the Japanese Communists" adopted at the Congress clearly states, "A proletarian dictatorship, the replacement of the military-plutocratic monarchy with the power of the Soviets—that is the goal of the Communist Party." At the same time, the resolution asserted that "the configuration of class forces in Japan allows us to expect the success of a radical democratic overturn" and argued that the JCP orient itself accordingly.

The resolutions and proceedings of the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East introduced certain ambiguities into the tasks of the Asian Communist parties, but this was by no means a full-blown schema of "two-stage revolution." The CI leadership did not recognize that the disruption of trade with Europe during WWI had led, not just to an expansion of Japan's industrial base, but also to the development of a burgeoning industrial proletariat in colonial and semicolonial countries like China and India. Thus, the main report on the national-colonial question, delivered by G. Safarov, was based on the premise that the proletariat in most Eastern countries did not have the social weight to play a leading role in a revolutionary upsurge. Japan was recognized as an exception to this pattern—a full-blown imperialist country with a proletariat which was the key to liberating the entire East. Safarov insisted that the Japanese proletariat must ally itself with the nations struggling to liberate themselves from Japanese imperialism. He called for the absolute political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois-nationalist forces with whom they might collaborate.

The JCP and "Two-Stage Revolution"

The Japanese Communist Party was formally founded in July 1922, some six months after the Congress of the Toilers of the Far East completed its work. One month later, in August 1922, the Comintern made the decision that the young Communist Party of China should enter the Guomindang. Three months later, in November, during the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, Bukharin authored a draft program of the Japanese party which did not mention the Meiji Restoration, let alone seek to evaluate its import. He wrote:

"Japanese capitalism still demonstrates characteristics of former feudal relationships. The greater part of the land is today in the hands of semifeudal big landlords...."

"Remnants of feudal relationships are manifested in the structure of the state, which is controlled by a bloc consisting of a

definite part of the commercial and industrial capitalists and of the big landlords. The semifeudal character of state power is clearly shown in the important and leading role of the peers and in the basic features of the constitution. Under such conditions the opposition to state power emanates not only from the working class, peasants, and petty bourgeoisie, but also from a great segment of the liberalistic bourgeoisie, who are opposed to the existing government."

—"Draft Platform of the Japanese Communist Party," November 1922, published in George M. Beckmann and Okubo Genji, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969)

The program went on to insist:

"The party of the working class cannot remain indifferent to a struggle against the imperial government, even though such a struggle may be conducted under democratic slogans. The task of the Communist Party is to constantly intensify the general movement, emphasize all slogans, and win the dominant position in the movement during the struggle against the existing government.

"Only after this first direct task has been fulfilled and some of the former allies have begun to move to the side of the defeated class and groups should the Japanese Communist Party strive to advance the revolution, deepen it, and make efforts toward the acquisition of power by soviets of workers and peasants."

—*Ibid.*

The standard histories of Japanese Communism do not mention, however, that there was another draft JCP program written two months prior to Bukharin's. This draft (published as an appendix here) was authored *in Japan* by Arahata and Sakai. Arahata and Sakai label Japan "the Germany of the East," and their program begins with the clear statement that "The Communist Party of Japan, a section of the Third Communist International, is an illegal, proletarian political party, whose aim is the overthrow of the Capitalist regime through the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat based

on the Soviet Power." There is not a hint of stagism here.

Bukharin's draft treats the democratic program it puts forward as a temporary agenda for the Communist Party during the struggle to overthrow the "existing government"—as if by draping itself in democratic clothing the JCP could fool a wing of the rabidly anti-Communist Japanese bourgeoisie into collaborating with it! The Arahata and Sakai draft, in contrast, correctly (if abstractly) calls for combining the struggle for bourgeois-democratic rights with the struggle for proletarian revolution to overthrow the capitalist system as a whole.

Bukharin's 1922 draft was greeted with significant opposition in the JCP and was never officially adopted by the party. We publish as our third appendix a May 1923 report by Arahata, written for the Third Enlarged Plenum of the Comintern Executive Committee (ECCI) held in June, which describes the dispute that developed in the JCP over Bukharin's draft. This report was published in Russian in *The VKP(b), the Comintern and Japan, 1917-1941* and to our knowledge has not previously been available to students of Japanese Communism.

As is apparent from Arahata's report, at least some of the opposition to Bukharin's draft was due to residual anarcho-syndicalist prejudices. Active in a series of increasingly violent strikes in 1921 and 1922, the JCP continued to collaborate with the anarcho-syndicalists in the Sodomei, the main trade-union federation. The cadre who went on to form the JCP had ignored the struggle for universal suffrage; the question of whether or not to even support the suffrage demand was under debate in the party as late as the end of 1923 (when Yamakawa finally abandoned his opposition to it). Reformist impulses were apparently also in play: Sakai at least did not want to raise the demand for the abolition of the emperor



Muravei-Guide

Group of delegates to Fourth Comintern Congress, 1922. Bukharin is lying against Zinoviev at lower right. Founding Chinese CP leader, Chen Duxiu, is seated above and to left of Zinoviev. Katayama Sen is seated fifth from right in third row, next to Karl Radek (with pipe). Delegate seated third from right in same row is probably Katayama protégé Kondo Eizo.

system, fearing that this would bring down further state repression on the young party.

It is clear from newly available Comintern documents that the disparate forces that came together to form the JCP never gelled into a real collective. The early debate between the pro-Bolshevik and anarcho-syndicalist elements was never fought out to a conclusion; nor was the dispute on universal suffrage ever resolved. The decisive lesson of the Russian Revolution—the need for a programmatically homogenous party of professional revolutionaries—was clearly not assimilated by the early JCP leaders. The party did not have a central organ which carried the party's line; the closest thing was *Zen'ei* (Vanguard) which carried only signed articles and was seen as Yamakawa's personal responsibility. Personal animosities often overlapped with political disputes and muddled the issues. The young JCP desperately needed education and help in fighting through its differences and forging a political line and cadre committed to implement it. But in 1922-23 the CI was already beginning its slide toward degeneration and did not provide the kind of political clarity that had been given to the young and fractious American Communist movement from 1919-1922 (see *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism: Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928* [New York: Prometheus Research Library, 1992]).

While Japan was not “semi-feudal,” the undemocratic nature of its transition from feudalism to capitalism continued to reverberate in a myriad of ways. The government promised to introduce universal male suffrage at the end of 1923; the law wasn't promulgated until 1925 and then the vote was only granted to males over the age of 25. At the same time, there was an *increase* in repressive measures. The 1925 Peace Preservation Law made it illegal to participate in



Archives of Ohara Institute for Social Research, Hosei University

1927 poster raises call, “For the Unity of All Special Burakumin! Let's Abolish All Discrimination!”



Independence Hall of Korea

Illustration of massive Korean protests against Japanese colonial rule, 1 March 1919.

any organization with the “objective of altering the national polity or the form of government, or denying the system of private ownership” (quoted in Beckmann and Okubo, *op. cit.*). A resolution of the Privy Council motivated the new law: “Since putting universal suffrage into effect will result in a worsening of dangerous ideas, the government must establish and put into effect laws and regulations for the rigid control [of dangerous ideas] and must exert itself to prevent evil abuses and practices” (quoted in Peter Duus, *Party Rivalry and Political Change in Taisho Japan* [1968]). The Peace Preservation Law was the legal basis for the vicious repression against the JCP through WWII.

With the feudal legacy shaping so many aspects of the Japanese bourgeois order, the weight of democratic demands is necessarily greater in the proletarian revolutionary program. From its inception in 1988 the Spartacist Group Japan has called for the abolition of the emperor system and the establishment of a workers republic in Japan (our British section also calls for the abolition of the monarchy and a federation of workers republics in the British Isles). Unfortunately, the idea of a workers republic, a slogan which had been raised by the Irish revolutionary James Connolly as early as 1898, seems to have been absent from the lexicon of the early Communist International.

The CI's “Workers and Peasants Party” Orientation and the JCP's Liquidation

The political lines were muddled further in 1923 by the CI leadership's insistence that the JCP form a legal “workers and peasants” party, which was to include representatives of the liberal bourgeoisie. This was part of a general orientation toward such parties, including in the U.S., pushed by the Comintern under Zinoviev's leadership. The model of such a workers and peasants party was Chiang Kai-shek's bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang (a version of which the CI leadership was proposing for Japan), which drowned the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27 in blood.

From the start, Trotsky fought the “two-class” party perspective. In 1928, he subjected the misleadership of the

world Communist movement to a scathing and comprehensive attack in his Critique of the Comintern draft program written by Bukharin. Trotsky's Critique, a defining document of world Trotskyism now known as *The Third International After Lenin*, contains an important section, "On the Reactionary Idea of 'Two-Class Workers and Peasants Parties' for the Orient":

"Marxism has always taught, and Bolshevism too, accepted and taught, that the peasantry and proletariat are two different classes, that it is false to identify their interests in capitalist society in any way, and that a peasant can join the Communist Party only if, from the property viewpoint, he adopts the views of the proletariat...."

"The younger the proletariat, the fresher and more direct its 'blood ties' with the peasantry, the greater the proportion of the peasantry to the population as a whole, the greater becomes the importance of the struggle against any form of 'two-class' political alchemy. In the West the idea of a workers and peasants party is simply ridiculous. In the East it is fatal. In China, India, and Japan this idea is mortally hostile not only to the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution but also to the most elementary independence of the proletarian vanguard."

Arahata spoke on the floor of the June 1923 ECCI Plenum against the perspective of forming a legal workers and peasants party in Japan. Zinoviev responded, "We shall insist that our Japanese comrades learn a lesson from the American Communist Party, and try to organize a legal Communist party in Japan." The American Communist movement had gone underground in response to a wave of arrests and deportations in 1919-20 known as the "Palmer Raids," but conditions quickly returned to the norms of bourgeois democracy as the American ruling class figured out that its rule was not fundamentally threatened. The legal party formed by the American Communists in December 1921 was the Workers Party, which had an *openly communist program*. (The American Workers Party also went on to follow CI directives in 1923 and join in the founding of a short-lived Farmer-Labor Party on a populist program.)

Replying to Zinoviev, Arahata correctly argued, "The case of the American Party is not the same as with us.... Our Party is a secret organization not because we want underground work but the situation compels us to be so" (transcript of Arahata's speech on 14 June 1923, in the Comintern archives in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History). Japan in 1923 was not a bourgeois democracy nor about to become one. The government promised to introduce expanded suffrage that year, but the first election held under universal (male) suffrage didn't occur until 1928. A legal Communist Party was not possible. Indeed, a legal party could not even call for abolition of the emperor system.

As if to mock Zinoviev's fatuous remark, the Japanese government struck out with a wave of arrests of Japanese Communists in June 1923, on the eve of a meeting between Soviet diplomat Adolf Joffe and Japanese government representatives in Tokyo. The severe repression cut short the discussion of Bukharin's draft program. Joffe had been careful not to get involved with the JCP (the Bolshevik leadership had evolved a correct and necessary separation between the Comintern's revolutionary activities and the diplomacy of the Soviet state). But the arrests were obviously meant as a statement of hostility to any red influence in Japan. At the time, powerful bourgeois circles opposed all negotiations with the Soviet state. Though Joffe remained in Tokyo for several more months, his negotiations were unsuccessful.

A few leading Japanese Communists were able to escape

arrest and get out of Japan, establishing a Japanese Bureau in Vladivostok in August 1923 with the approval of the Comintern. In fact, an émigré center was a vital continuing necessity for the JCP. The party needed a leadership collective out of reach of the Japanese state in order to produce a regular newspaper in Japanese, as the Russian revolutionary Marxists had in an earlier period published the newspaper *Iskra* (Spark) and the theoretical journal *Zarya* (Dawn) to smuggle into the tsarist empire from European exile. A stable JCP exile center would have been able to organize political debate, collect information, and keep contact with those working underground in Japan. Constant political debate over the real work of the party is a crucial aspect of forging revolutionary communist parties.

However, the CI Japanese Bureau had barely begun functioning when a horrific earthquake devastated much of Tokyo on 1 September 1923. In its wake, the country was shaken by pogroms in which over 6,000 Koreans and hundreds of Chinese were massacred. Communists, anarchists and labor leaders were hunted down and killed; some were murdered in police stations. A wave of arrests of leftist and labor leaders followed. In the aftermath, the Comintern made the criminal decision to order most of the Japanese cadre in Vladivostok back to Japan, thereby liquidating the Japanese Bureau and ending any chance of establishing a stable political and organizational basis for the JCP.

At that time, all the attention of the CI leaders was focused on a potential proletarian revolution in Germany. Those who made the decision to liquidate the Japanese Bureau, knowing

L. D. TROTSKY

The Draft Program of the Communist International

A Criticism of Fundamentals

Presented to the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International

Introduction by James P. Cannon

THIRTY-FIVE CENTS

Published by The Militant

Below: Leon Trotsky with Natalya Sedova and their son, Leon Sedov, in exile in Alma Ata, 1928, where he wrote Critique of the Draft Program of the Comintern, founding document of world Trotskyism.

Crapouillot



the full extent of the carnage and arrests in Japan, wantonly neglected the need to create and preserve a programmatically coherent JCP leadership like that which had been forged in exile by the Russian Marxists, first under Plekhanov, and later by the Bolsheviks under Lenin. More concerned with Soviet diplomatic initiatives than preserving the JCP leadership, G. Voitinsky of the CI's Eastern Bureau sent a directive to the party that concluded:

"The drawing together of Japan and Soviet Russia after the catastrophe must be made the most popular slogan among the masses of Japan, since it is only from Soviet Russia that unselfish aid can come in the form of raw materials needed for Japanese production. The party must pose the drawing together of Japan and Russia as the alternative to the economic and political enslavement of Japan by Anglo-American capital."

— "Directive Telegram by G. Voitinsky to JCP,"
14 September 1923, published in *The VKP(b)*,
the Comintern and Japan, 1917-1941 (our translation)

The Japanese cadre were sent back to Japan with no confidence that they would have an impact. The ECCI representative to the Japanese Bureau, I. I. Feinberg, wrote:

"I believe that activists are better sent to work in the country than kept idle in Vladivostok.

"From the information that we do have it is clear that the earthquake is fraught with the most severe economic consequences and will place Japan into dependence on foreign capital.... We need to take this fact into account in our policies. I believe that the instructions we prepared work towards this end. The only question is how to realize them. Speaking frankly, I don't have any great optimism. Our forces in Japan are still quite weak and inexperienced, so it doesn't make sense to expect very much from them."

— "Letter by I. I. Feinberg to G. N. Voitinsky,"
20 September 1923, published in *ibid.*
(our translation)

This criminal decision set the JCP up to be destroyed by repeated waves of state repression.

The Japanese Communists, many of whom were released from prison just before the earthquake hit, were in no position to lead any kind of public campaign. The arrests had devastated the tiny party; the earthquake's destruction compounded the problems (for example, the party's illegal press was destroyed).

Instead of following the CI's instructions to increase their

public activity, the leading Japanese Communists made a decision to *liquidate* the JCP in favor of concentrating their efforts on forming a legal workers and peasants party. Yamakawa, who seems to have done a political about-face at this time, abandoning his remaining anarcho-syndicalist prejudices in favor of the fight for universal suffrage and a parliamentarist approach, was the ideological inspirer of the liquidation. The JCP was formally liquidated in March 1924; it was not reconstituted until December 1926. In the interim the Japanese Communist movement functioned in loosely coordinated circles, overlapping with the academic Marxist milieu, but under the ostensible direction of a central bureau.

The Comintern opposed the liquidation of the JCP from the moment the news reached Moscow. Katayama and other CI leaders mobilized to organize Yamakawa's opponents (among whom numbered, at least initially, Arahata) to reestablish the JCP. But the liquidation was simply the logical political conclusion of Zinoviev's insistence that the JCP concentrate on legal political activity in the form of a workers and peasants party. During the period of liquidation the Japanese Communists—both the supporters of Yamakawa and the supporters of the CI—joined the Japan Peasant Union and Sodomei trade-union federation in forming two workers and peasants parties. The first was dissolved by the government immediately after it was founded. The second, Rodo Nominto (Labor-Farmer Party), was formed in March 1926. The reformist Sodomei leadership withdrew from Rodo Nominto within months, refusing to cooperate any longer with the Communists, and formed its own farmer-labor party. This left Rodo Nominto as a legal, "democratic" front group of the Communists. Yamakawa and Sakai were active in Rodo Nominto, even as they refused to join in any efforts to reconstitute the JCP.

Continued Controversy over Meiji Restoration and "Two-Stage Revolution"

The controversy over Bukharin's 1922 draft was never formally resolved; nonetheless, the two-stage schema was adopted as the official program of the JCP. Even so, the nature of the Meiji Restoration and the coming revolution in



Chosen Soren

Aftermath of 1923 Tokyo earthquake: bodies of some of the 6,000 Koreans killed in pogroms fueled by rumors that Koreans were responsible for arson and looting. Chinese, leftists and labor leaders were also killed; severe state repression against left followed.



Muravei-Guide



no credit

Stalin sent autographed photograph to Chinese Guomindang leader Chiang Kai-shek: "In honor of the victory of the Guomindang and the liberation of China." Four days later, Chiang massacred thousands of Communists in Shanghai, April 1927 (above).

Japan continued to be a source of controversy. Fukumoto Kazuo, who gained leadership of the Japanese Communist movement in 1926-27, argued that the Japanese Constitution of 1889 (not the Meiji Restoration) constituted Japan's bourgeois-democratic revolution, though this "was artfully concealed from the masses." Fukumoto correctly noted that the Japanese bourgeoisie had turned reactionary, and he asserted that the Japanese state "has today developed in itself the germ of fascist dictatorship." Too much of an independent mind for Moscow's liking, Fukumoto was deposed, falsely accused of being a "Trotskyist."

In 1927 new programmatic theses on Japan were adopted by the Comintern. Again this was authored by Bukharin. This lengthy and contradictory document argued: "The revolution of 1868 opened the path for capitalist development in Japan. Political power, however, remained in the hands of the feudal elements." Bukharin now had to admit that the period since the Meiji Restoration had seen "the transformation of the old Japanese state into a bourgeois state." In contradistinction to the 1922 draft program, he wrote that "Japan is governed by a bloc of the bourgeoisie and landlords—a bloc under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. This being so, illusions that the bourgeoisie can in any way be utilized as a revolutionary factor, even during the first stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, must be abandoned" ("Theses on Japan Adopted in the Session of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern on July 15, 1927," in Beckmann and Okubo, *op. cit.*). Yet the 1927 theses still set as the aim of the JCP a bourgeois-democratic revolution which would "rapidly grow into a socialist revolution!"

The 1927 theses provoked an open split with founding Communists Yamakawa, Sakai and Arahata, who formed the Rono-ha (Labor-Farmer Faction). They opposed the two-stage schema, insisting that the coming revolution in Japan would be a proletarian one. But far from being a left opposition to Stalinist opportunism, the Rono-ha faction insisted

that the activity of Japanese Communists be limited to legal work under the guise of a workers and peasants party. The debate between Rono-ha and what became known as Koza-ha (the official pro-Moscow party) on the development and nature of Japanese capitalism went on for years and encompassed thousands of pages. But it is clear that Rono-ha's insistence that the bourgeoisie ruled in Japan, while correct, was largely a theoretical justification for its refusal to call for the abolition of the emperor system or engage in any other illegal activity. Acknowledging Rono-ha's willingness to stay within the limits set by the Japanese bourgeoisie, the state allowed Rono-ha supporters to function legally until 1937, while savagely repressing the JCP. Arahata and Yamakawa played leading roles in forming the Japanese Socialist Party under the U.S. Occupation in 1945 (Sakai died in 1933).

Even after the split with Rono-ha, the question of a stagist perspective was not settled within the JCP. In 1931, after Stalin had purged Bukharin from the CI leadership and embarked on the sectarian adventurism and left posturing of the Third Period, the JCP developed new programmatic theses which described the Meiji Restoration as "a bourgeois-democratic revolution that paved the way for the development of capitalism" and argued that the coming Japanese revolution would be a "proletarian revolution that involves extensive bourgeois-democratic tasks" ("The Political Theses of the Japanese Communist Party, April-June 1931," *ibid.*).

The hint of clarity provided by the 1931 theses did not, however, last very long. Frightened by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the Stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin refused to give up the illusion that a more Soviet-friendly bourgeois regime could come to exist in Japan. The CI demanded that the 1931 theses be thrown out. New theses on Japan adopted in 1932 argued for the "overthrow of the monarchy by the victorious people's revolution," after which "the main task of the Communist Party will be the struggle for the rapid development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution



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Over 1,500 Communists were arrested in March 1928, and 500 were imprisoned.

into a socialist revolution” (“Theses on the Situation in Japan and the Tasks of the Communist Party, May 1932,” *ibid.*). By this time, state persecution had so devastated the JCP that it had virtually ceased to exist. The party was revived only in the aftermath of Japan’s defeat in World War II.

Did the American Occupation Carry Out a “Supplementary Bourgeois Revolution” in Japan?

The JCP used the two-stage schema as part of its justification for initially supporting the post-WWII Occupation led by American imperialism, which had indiscriminately fire-bombed most major cities in Japan and leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atom bombs. The JCP’s groveling effort to ingratiate itself with the Allied authorities also represented the continuation of the support which pro-Moscow parties around the world had given to the so-called “democratic” imperialist war effort after Germany invaded the USSR in 1941. The American Communist Party condemned U.S. workers who went on strike during the war as allies of Hitler and the Mikado (the emperor) and supported the internment of Japanese Americans. In 1945, the American CP hailed the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki!

The JCP hailed the Occupation authorities for moving against the so-called “feudalistic elements” of the Japanese ruling elite. In late 1945, a veteran JCP cadre, Yamamoto Masami, exulted that under the Occupation, “the military cliques were eliminated, the bureaucratic cliques were finally losing their relative independence....the so-called familistic zaibatsu were also beginning to be dissolved, and even the landownership of parasitic landlords was being touched” (quoted in Germaine Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986]). The JCP retained a conciliatory approach to General Douglas MacArthur and his occupation forces even after the Cold War began in earnest in 1947. The Japanese Stalinists did not call for an end to the occupation until Moscow publicly denounced them for not doing so in 1950, and then they did so in the name of Japanese nationalism. In the 1970s, the JCP broke with both Moscow and Beijing in favor of overt social democracy.

The view of the American Occupation as some kind of “democratic” revolution remains the predominant view on

the reformist Japanese left. A few years ago, the journal of the Trotsky Research Institute (TRI) wrote:

“The postwar reforms that were carried out by the American Occupation army were on the one hand almost thoroughgoing bourgeois reforms in a country that had a belated industrial structure and a strong state that was invasion hungry while simultaneously being in revolutionary turmoil. It was a situation where [in the prewar period] landowners ruled over semi-feudalistic villages, factory workers received very low wages and there was an absence of rights. On the other hand, the American Occupation army removed in one breath the dictatorial emperor system, unleashing a flowering movement from below which they then had to suppress and force back into the framework of a bourgeois state. Thus, because the Meiji Restoration was a ‘bureaucratic semi-bourgeois revolution from above’ which prevented a bourgeois revolution from below, the postwar reforms carried out by the American Occupation army were a ‘supplementary bourgeois revolution from above’ to prevent a socialist revolution from below. Thus Japan set a rare precedent against Trotsky’s prognosis that backward capitalist countries, in order to join the group of advanced capitalist countries, would have to go through the experience of permanent revolution.”

—Nishijima Sakae, *Trotsky Kenkyu* (Trotsky Studies), Summer 2001 (our translation)

The Trotsky Research Institute was formed in 1990 primarily by members of the Japan Revolutionary Communist League (JRCL), part of the international pseudo-Trotskyist tendency led at the time by Ernest Mandel. The Mandelites drew into their misnamed anti-Trotskyist endeavor some JCP intellectuals, like Nishijima Sakae, who wrote the article quoted above.

There was no avowedly Trotskyist group in Japan during Trotsky’s lifetime. It was only under the impact of the 1956 Hungarian political revolution that disparate elements from the JCP and independent Marxist intellectuals leaning toward Trotskyism came together to form the heterogeneous JRCL in 1957. Emerging in the context of the virulent anti-Sovietism of 1950s Japan, with no historical link to Trotsky’s International Left Opposition, the Japanese “Trotskyists” rejected Trotsky’s analysis of the bureaucracy as a contradictory caste and refused to militarily defend the USSR. Thus, they were fundamentally crippled from the beginning. Misidentifying Trotskyism as a simple democratic opposition to Stalinism, the JRCL and their JCP allies in the TRI joined the virulently anti-Soviet Japanese bourgeoisie in hailing the destruction of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe.

Before considering what actually happened in Japan under the U.S. Occupation regime of General MacArthur, it is first necessary to address a common confusion at the theoretical level. Liberals and social democrats often assign the label “bourgeois-democratic revolution” or simply “democratic revolution” to any political upheaval which results in a change to a parliamentary system, whether effected by external forces or internally. But the concept of a bourgeois revolution in an advanced capitalist country is a contradiction in terms. Thus the uprising led by the Social Democrats in Germany in November 1918 which overthrew Kaiser Wilhelm II, in the wake of Germany’s defeat in the First World War, was *not* a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It was an *incipient proletarian revolution*. The working class not only demanded the overthrow of the Kaiser, but created workers and soldiers councils—soviets—all over the country. However, the Social Democratic leadership in bloc with the army high command and right-wing paramilitary forces bloodily suppressed the organs of proletarian dual power

and exterminated the revolutionary vanguard of the German working class represented by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. In the aftermath, a parliamentary government (the Weimar Republic) was established, which lasted until it was replaced by the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler in 1933. The successive governments of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Social Democratic leader Friedrich Ebert and the fascist Adolf Hitler *all* politically represented the German financial and industrial bourgeoisie personified by Siemens and Krupp.

In Italy and western Germany as well as Japan, the post-1945 American-led military occupation brought about parliamentary governments. Unlike the Japanese emperor system, the bourgeois character of the Italian and German fascist regimes was manifest, certainly to Marxists, even though Italy retained the monarchy. Mussolini and Hitler originally came to power under conditions of fragile parliamentarist regimes shaken by massive social turbulence. Decisive sections of the Italian and German bourgeoisies supported the fascist movement out of fear of "red revolution." Thus leading German capitalist magnate Alfred Hugenberg, a former director of the Krupp empire, played a key role in installing Hitler as chancellor.

The emperor system of Hirohito was obviously of a different political character than the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. Not only was it derived from the feudal epoch, but Japan had never experienced parliamentary democracy. Nonetheless, the government of Hirohito and General Tojo politically represented the dominant sections of Japanese financial and industrial capital.

Neither the economic dominance nor the composition of the upper echelon of the Japanese bourgeoisie changed under the American Occupation. U.S. authorities initially talked about breaking up the *zaibatsu*, as part of a plan to wreck any possibility of Japan's re-emergence as an industrial power. In the end nothing was actually done in this regard. The conventional identification today of Japanese capitalism with the

names Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Sumitomo et al. testifies to the *continuity* of the Japanese ruling class from the Meiji era through the present.

The U.S. Occupation regime also preserved the continuity of the Japanese civilian (as distinct from military) political elite. Hirohito remained emperor, although forced to publicly abjure the claim of divine lineage. Yoshida Shigeru, the prime minister during most of the Occupation and also the first post-Occupation years, had been a senior diplomat in pre-1945 imperial Japan, serving among other posts as ambassador to Britain. The other top Japanese officials under the Occupation had career résumés similar to, if less exalted than, Yoshida's.

Below the level of the top government officials, the civilian state bureaucracy, including its extensive police apparatus, was preserved intact and served as the administrative agency which implemented the policies of MacArthur's General Headquarters (GHQ). Even members of the notorious Tokko (Special Security Police), commonly known as the thought-control police, were simply reassigned to other ministries. No doubt, many of them were instrumental in carrying out the "red purge" undertaken by the U.S. authorities in the later years of the Occupation.

In Italy and western Germany, the changes effected during the American-led occupation were mainly limited to the political superstructure. There were no substantial changes at the economic base of these societies. In Japan, however, the U.S. Occupation regime carried out a land reform that transformed the mass of tenant farmers into small and middling agrarian proprietors. Announcing this reform in late 1945, MacArthur, a right-wing American militarist, declared it would "destroy the economic bondage which has enslaved the Japanese farmer for centuries of feudal oppression" (quoted in R. P. Dore, *Land Reform in Japan* [London: Oxford University Press, 1959]).

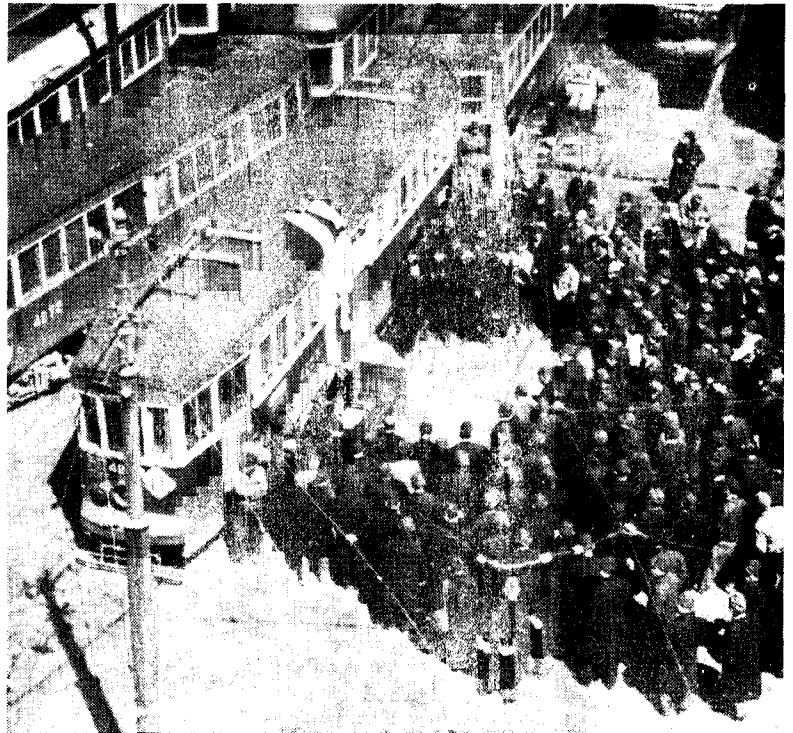
As we have seen, the main body of Japanese leftists, represented by the JCP, had long maintained that feudal forms

AP



American Occupation overseer General MacArthur with Emperor Hirohito (above). 1948 Tokyo municipal workers strike (right). U.S. Occupation presided over anti-Communist purge that broke militant unions.

Acme



of exploitation continued to predominate in agriculture. To assess the specific import of MacArthur's land reform, it is necessary to consider the overall policies of the American Occupation regime, especially as they interacted with the escalating Cold War in East Asia marked by the 1949 Chinese Revolution and the Korean War of 1950-53.

The Labor Upsurge and the U.S. Occupation

The Occupation can be divided into three phases. The first, "liberal" phase saw a massive upsurge of working-class radicalism. This was followed by a period, dubbed the "reverse course" by historians, of political reaction and repression combined with economic austerity. The final period, precipitated by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, marked the formation of the alliance between American imperialism and reviving Japanese imperialism against the Soviet Union and China.

The labor upsurge was sparked in September 1945 by a strike of Chinese prisoners of war and Korean forced laborers in the mines of Hokkaido. The Japanese government and mine owners hired thugs to instigate racist attacks, but their attempts to turn Japanese workers against their Chinese and Korean class brothers met with defeat. The courageous actions of the Hokkaido miners sparked a wider strike wave. By December 1946, 92 percent of the miners in Japan were organized. A year and a half after the war's end, nearly 4.5 million workers were enrolled in trade unions, compared to fewer than a half million at the prewar peak.

The Communist Party was the only major political organization in imperial Japan that had opposed the imperialist drive toward colonization and world war. Consequently, its leaders and cadres emerged from prison or returned from exile with enormous moral authority extending well beyond the party's previous base of support. One American liberal historian recounts in his major study of the Occupation:

"That the most principled resistance to the war had come from dedicated Communists gave these individuals considerable status. When Tokuda Kyuichi and several hundred other Communists were released from prison, they became celebrities and instant heroes in a society whose old heroes had all suddenly been toppled. Similarly, [JCP leader] Nosaka Sanzo's arrival in January 1946 after a long journey from China

attracted a great crowd. He, too, received a hero's welcome; even conservatives, it was said, joined in."

— John Dower, *Embracing Defeat, Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999)

The public meetings which greeted the release of the JCP leaders attracted large numbers of ethnic Koreans. Korean JCP leader Kim Ch'on-hae played a central role in organizing the militant Korean organization Chouren; he toured the country urging Koreans to join Chouren and the JCP. JCP militants won leadership of the most militant union federation, Sanbetsu. The working class was clearly on the offensive. The most dramatic and significant aspect of labor radicalism in this period was the formation of "production control" committees which took over factories and challenged the traditional authority of management and ownership. An American left-liberal publicist who visited Japan at the time wrote:

"In the early days of the occupation most disputes were settled quickly, and usually with a victory for the union. Employers were stunned by the defeat, disorganized and uncertain, fearful of antagonizing the occupation forces, and in some cases, no doubt, apprehensive of revolutionary developments."

— Miriam S. Farley, *Aspects of Japan's Labor Problems* (New York: The John Day Company, 1950)

Land Reform and the Defeat of the Postwar Upsurge


The land reform program implemented by MacArthur was explicitly designed to prevent the rural masses from joining forces with the urban working-class upsurge. On May Day 1946 three million workers and peasants participated in nationwide demonstrations. With a growing food crisis, Citizens Food Control Committees were springing up in various parts of the country. On May 19, a Food May Day was held in Tokyo with 300,000 workers and poor farmers surrounding the prime minister's office and demanding his resignation.

These events frightened the Occupation forces, and in response they hurried to bring out a land reform program, which was finally announced in October 1946. A third of all arable land in Japan (just short of two million cho—almost five million acres) was transferred from landlords to tenant

farmers. Landlords were required to sell this land to the government, which in turn resold it at the same purchase price to their tenants or other working farmers. The financial side of this operation was greatly facilitated by the high rate of inflation at the time. Both the government and the farmers who purchased land from it were able to pay in rapidly depreciating yen. Most tenants did not need recourse to long-term loans but were able to buy the land outright for cash in a year or two.

The proportion of land cultivated under some form of tenancy arrangement declined from 45 to 10 percent. And the number of purely tenant farmers (i.e., those who did not own any land) declined from 28 to 5 percent of all farmers. There was thus a substantial change in the structure of land ownership and a reduction in the surplus value (rent and interest) extracted from the rural toilers. This defused unrest in the countryside and allowed MacArthur to concentrate on defeating the working class in the cities.

Meanwhile, in the cities labor and the Japanese government were headed toward a major con-

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American CP cartoon hailed heinous atom bomb attack on Hiroshima, August 1945. Japanese CP supported the Allied Occupation until 1950. Below: JCP leader Tokuda Kyuichi addresses rally, February 1949.

Daily Worker

National Archives



frontation. The economic situation continued to disintegrate, with prices of basic necessities increasing nearly four-fold. Discontent was also fed by the sense that nothing much had changed in the political structure of the country. Sanbetsu called for a general strike on 1 February 1947, demanding not only higher wages but the ouster of the right-wing, widely despised Yoshida government, and for the establishment of a "people's government," demands that were enthusiastically supported by all three major union federations representing some four million workers. But the Japanese Stalinists, like their counterparts in West Europe, were unwilling and unprepared to fight for political power. Frightened, but desiring to save face, they asked MacArthur's headquarters to issue a written order forbidding the strike, which MacArthur did. At literally the eleventh hour, Ii Yashiro, head of the strike committee, called off the strike in a radio announcement.

The JCP handed the working class a huge defeat, negatively shaping the post-WWII social order. They also lost an enormous opportunity to cut through the virulent Japanese

nationalism which had tied the working class to its rulers. Chouren had collected money and organized strike support committees, writing in its newspaper, "The February general strike planned by the Japanese working class, which is in our mutual interest, should be our struggle. Their victory will be our victory and their defeat will be our defeat." Chouren wasn't even informed that the strike was called off! The Stalinists soon lost their positions of strength and authority throughout the country.

The U.S. Occupation regime now moved to break the leftist-led labor movement. In 1948, MacArthur's headquarters banned all strikes by government workers, who had heretofore been in the forefront of labor militancy. This was followed by a major "red purge." Some 20,000 Communist Party activists and other leftists were fired from their jobs. As a result, the membership of Sanbetsu plummeted from over a million in mid 1949 to less than 300,000 a year later. The social democratic-led unions, too, lost members in this period.

Japan emerged from the Occupation with the *weakest* labor movement of any major advanced capitalist country. In 1953 a strike at Nissan was defeated. In the aftermath, the private industrial sector workers were organized into company-financed and -controlled "unions." In this way it was the repressive policies of the "reverse course," not the "progressive" reforms of the earlier period, which contributed greatly to the Japanese "economic miracle" of the 1950s-'60s.

Agriculture, the Cold War and the Japanese "Economic Miracle"

The claim that the land reform implemented under the American Occupation constituted some kind of bourgeois revolution is most often based on the argument that the pre-1945 agrarian system blocked Japan's further modernization. This argument has two components. The first is the belief that the impoverished condition of the rural toilers limited the domestic market for industrial products. The second is that the development of a modern agriculture sector was essential to Japan's development and that the poverty of the pre-WWII tenant farmers blocked this development since they lacked both the financial means and economic incentives to invest in modern technology.

In the historical short term, the increase in disposable income among farm households as a result of the land reform was spent, predictably, almost entirely on consumption rather than investment. To a large extent the increased consumption of former tenant farmers and their families simply replaced that of their former landlords. In any case, the increased consumer demand for manufactured goods in the rural villages was at most a minor contributing factor to Japan's rapid industrial growth in the 1950s.

The second component of the argument also does not withstand scrutiny. The leaders of Meiji Japan pursued a policy of agricultural self-sufficiency for the same reason they effectively barred foreign investment and built up a modern military-industrial complex: to protect Japan's independence against the threat of Western imperialist states. In the 1890s, the leading Meiji statesman, Tani Kanjo, a one-time minister of agriculture and commerce, declared that Japan had to be able to feed itself in the event of war, that self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs was even more important than self-sufficiency in modern weaponry.

However, it was inefficient and contrary to the dynamics of the world capitalist market for Japan to retain a significant

agricultural sector. Thus a major economic motive for Japan's colonialist expansionism into East Asia, from the 1890s through the 1930s, was to obtain secure sources of relatively cheap, basic foodstuffs as well as raw materials for industry. When in late 1941 Japan went to war with the U.S., 31 percent of its rice and 58 percent of its soybeans came from Manchuria and the other occupied regions of China, in addition to Japan's older Asian colonies of Korea and Formosa (Taiwan).

The most significant effect of the land reform sponsored by the American Occupation authorities was at the political, rather than economic level. In the 1920s and early 1930s, tenant farmers and other peasant smallholders had engaged in mass, organized struggle under the leadership of Commu-



Xinhua

Chinese war heroes hailed by North Koreans in 1953 for helping beat back U.S. onslaught.

nists and other leftists against the rapacious landlords and village moneylenders. When in the mid to late 1940s Japanese peasants acquired their own land along with government-subsidized loans, they became politically conservative. Rural villages provided a large (though gradually diminishing) fraction of the votes which have kept the right-wing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in governmental power in Tokyo for all but a brief period in the mid 1990s. The LDP continues to retain a farming sector for political reasons. This entails not only a high level of protectionism, but also massive economic subsidies and rural public works programs which are a drain on the overall economy.

The "red purge" and union-busting offensive initiated in 1947 by the U.S. Occupation regime initially coincided with and were reinforced by a program of economic austerity. This was known as the "Dodge line" after its main architect, a right-wing Detroit banker, Joseph Dodge. Under Dodge's orders, the Japanese government slashed expenditures while the supply of money and credit was sharply contracted. As a consequence 500,000 workers were laid off in both the government and private sectors. An estimated third of all small businesses went bankrupt.

Yet two decades later it had become commonplace to speak of a Japanese "economic miracle." The root cause of

Japan's dramatic change of economic fortunes lay in world-historic events on the Asian mainland. When in 1945 the U.S. defeated Japan, the American imperialists believed they had finally gained control of China, the great prize for which the Pacific War was mainly fought. U.S. ruling circles looked to Chiang Kai-shek's regime in Beijing as their main point of support in East Asia. This was indicated at the diplomatic level by making China one of five permanent members of the Security Council of the newly formed United Nations. In line with Washington's China-oriented strategy, Japan was to be kept down, prevented from again becoming a major (and potentially rival) capitalist power in the Far East.

When, however, in 1949 Mao Zedong's peasant-based People's Liberation Army routed Chiang's forces in the Chinese civil war, American imperialism's plans for domination of East Asia were thrown into disarray. The U.S. rulers moved to build up Japan as their main strategic ally in the region, a move greatly accelerated by the Korean War. It was this major war between American imperialism and the Asian Communist countries which finally pulled Japan out of its prolonged post-1945 economic depression.

Mitsubishi, Toyota et al., became quartermasters for the American expeditionary forces in Korea, supplying them with a wide array of matériel, from trucks and ammunition to uniforms and pharmaceuticals. During the first eight months of the war, steel production increased by almost 40 percent. Japanese industry was also mobilized to provide repair facilities for U.S. naval vessels, aircraft and tanks. Prime Minister Yoshida exultantly described the Korean War as "a gift of the gods."

Thus began the Japanese "economic miracle" that would last another two decades. During the 1950s-60s, Japan consistently ran large balance of trade surpluses with the U.S. The powers that be on Wall Street and in Washington accepted this at the time as part of the overhead costs of maintaining their strategic alliance with Japan against the Sino-Soviet states. Not until the early 1970s did the U.S. move to stem the flood of Japanese manufactured imports through various protectionist devices. This marked the beginning of the end of the Japanese "economic miracle." In the decade since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, Japan has been mired in a prolonged economic slump.

Forward to a Japanese Workers Republic!

When the JCP—under pressure from Moscow—finally began to oppose the Occupation, it contended that the Allied troops had turned Japan into a dependency, even a "semicolony," of American imperialism. In 1950, JCP Secretary General Tokuda Kyuichi compared Japan to pre-1949 China under the American puppet regime of Chiang Kai-shek! Under the pretext that an "anti-imperialist" revolution is necessary to rid Japan of its dependent status, to this day the JCP continues to promote the two-stage schema:

"The present state of Japan is marked by its state subordination to the United States, which is extraordinary not only among the developed capitalist countries but in international relations of the present-day world, in which colonization is history. The U.S. domination of Japan clearly has an imperialistic character because it tramples on Japan's sovereignty and independence in the interests of U.S. global strategy and U.S. monopoly capitalism....

"A change Japanese society needs at present is a democratic revolution instead of a socialist revolution. It is a revolution that ends Japan's extraordinary subordination to the United States and the tyrannical rule by large corporation and business circles, a revolution that secures Japan's genuine inde-

pendence and carries out democratic changes in politics, the economy and society.”

—*Nihon Kyosan-to Koryo* (Japanese Communist Party Program), adopted at 23rd Congress, January 2004 (JCP draft translation)

A 1956 article in the *Rebel*, a direct precursor to the pseudo-Trotskyist JRCL, described Japan in language similar to the Stalinists as “a special dependency which lies between a colony and a dependency.” This is a view which pervades the reformist Japanese left. Thus the “New Left” group Kakumaru, which originated as a virulently Stalinophobic split from the JRCL in 1958, fulminates that:

“The Koizumi regime accepts all political, economic and military requests demanded by the Bush regime.... While Koizumi may wear a headband with a hinomaru [rising sun] on it, his underpants are oversized stars and stripes trunks and his shoes are U.S. military boots.”

—*Kaiho* (Liberation), 19 January 2004 (our translation)

With its overwhelming military superiority, the U.S. remains the predominant imperialist power on the face of the planet. But in the face of growing tensions with the U.S., particularly since the counterrevolutionary collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the Japanese bourgeoisie has dramatically increased its efforts to build up its military to match its economic power and to demonstrate its determination to protect its own imperialist interests throughout Asia. Japan dispatched naval vessels, aircraft and 1,000 military personnel to the Indian Ocean to aid the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. It has a contingent of approximately 500 soldiers participating in the occupation of Iraq. In portraying Japan as being under the thumb of American imperialism, the pseudo-socialist left shows itself to be mired in Japanese nationalism, playing into the hands of the most extreme revanchist elements of the Japanese bourgeoisie.

At the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East in January-February 1922 Zinoviev correctly declared, “The Japanese proletariat holds in their hands the key to the solution of the Far Eastern question.” While the proletariat now has real social weight in other Asian countries, the Japanese working class remains the powerhouse of the region. If Japanese workers are not to be plunged into mass unemployment or new imperialist adventures, they must join with the workers of Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, China and the Korean peninsula in the fight for a socialist Asia. In particular, this means rallying to the military defense of the states where capitalism has been abolished in Asia—China, North Korea and Vietnam—despite their Stalinist leaderships. A proletarian revolution in Japan would be a powerful impetus to the Chinese proletariat to throw out the bureaucrats who are opening the country up to imperialist exploitation and the threat of internal counterrevolution. But this means breaking with the virulent nationalism that is the ideological justification for Japanese imperialism.

In his 1933 article, Trotsky noted that “The hasty mixture of Edison with Confucius has left its mark on all of Japanese culture.” Japan today continues to be marked in myriad ways by the feudal past. Article 1 of the postwar constitution declares that the emperor is “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people” and he continues to serve as a powerful rallying point for all the reactionary forces in Japanese society. All official dates, both government and commercial, are figured in terms of the year of the current emperor’s reign. The state continues to base itself on Shinto mythology, with its racist notion of the superiority of the



Spartacist Japan

Spartacist Group Japan at April 1996 protest against U.S.-Japan military alliance. Sign in middle reads: “For the Right of Nuclear Military Testing for Chinese Workers State!”

Yamato peoples. Japanese citizenship is not automatically granted even to fourth- and fifth-generation Korean and Chinese born in Japan.

There continues to be discrimination against those whose ancestry is Burakumin. Because the majority of Burakumin are forced to live in segregated neighborhoods, the address on the state’s familial registration papers immediately identifies them. Burakumin children are bullied at school, adults are denied jobs, and in many cases lovers are separated by reactionary relatives who still believe the Burakumin are subhuman.

Japan—home to the bullet train, Sony PlayStation, robotics and developer of state of the art precision technology—has the technological capability, if placed in the hands of the world’s working class, to tremendously accelerate the elimination of hunger, want and disease. But women are still prohibited from entering tunnels under construction for bullet trains out of fear that the “mountain goddess” will become jealous. Nor can they step inside a *sumo dojo* (wrestling ring), because they are “impure.” The Japanese language continues to have a demeaning four-tiered structure requiring different levels of submissiveness depending on the class, age, sex and social status of the person one is addressing. *Onna kotoba*, a separate spoken language for women, deliberately promotes obedience and submissiveness and is required for all public functions and for use inside the family when a woman addresses her in-laws. The SGJ fights for the elimination of status, age and sex discrimination, and their concomitant reflection in demeaning language.

In almost all social indices Japanese women place at the bottom of the advanced industrial countries. Just over half of Japanese women work, compared with 70 percent of their Western counterparts. The “good wife, wise mother” ideology is codified in law and corporate practices. Most companies provide male workers with family allowances if the wife does not work; these allowances are often more than a married woman working part-time could make. Seventy-seven percent of all part-time workers in Japan are female.

On average, women's salaries are just 60 percent of men's, and this percentage has remained steady since women first entered the workforce as textile workers in the late 1800s. The social pressure exerted on a woman who hits 30 to marry and assume her "appropriate place" in society is immense. Older unmarried women are referred to as *makeinu* (losing dogs) and *motenai onna* (unwanted females).

The International Communist League stands on the heritage of Trotsky's Fourth International, studying with a critical eye its programmatic and political decisions in order to arm ourselves for future battles. Similarly, a critical approach to our legacy from the first four congresses of the Communist International has led us to have left reservations about some of the decisions made at and around the Fourth Congress. The Spartacist Group Japan continues the fight to forge an authentically communist party in Japan. This party can only be built on the basis of uncompromising struggle against recrudescing Japanese chauvinism, resurgent militarism, and the horrible oppression of women. The Sasebo dock workers who refused to load military goods onto Japanese military ships bound for the Indian Ocean in 2001 provided a powerful example to the proletariat internationally. Abolish the emperor system! Japanese troops out of Iraq, the Indian Ocean, East Timor and the Golan Heights! For an end to the discrimination against the Burakumin and Ainu! Throw the family registry into the trash bin! For full citizenship for ethnic Koreans and Chinese and all who live in Japan! Tear up the *gaijin* (foreigner) cards! Equal pay for equal work! For free, safe birth control and free, 24-hour childcare and nursing care for the elderly! The Spartacist Group Japan

champions demands such as these as part of its overall program for socialist revolution. It is only on this program that the revolutionary proletarian party which can lead the fight to overthrow capitalism in Japan can be forged. Forward to a Japanese workers republic!

Endnote

A selection of documents from the Comintern archives on the JCP has been published in Russian in *VKP(b), Komintern i Yaponiya 1917-1941 (The VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (bolshevik)], the Comintern and Japan, 1917-1941* [Moscow: Russian Political Encyclopedia, 2001], which we consulted for this article. In 1998 and 1999, Professor Kato Tetsuro, a social-democratic, anti-Communist historian, published the results of his research into the JCP Comintern archives in Japanese in a series of articles, "1922.9 no Nihon Kyosan-to Koryo" [ue, shita]; "Dai Ichi-ji Kyosan-to no Mosukuwa Hokoku Sho" [ue, shita] (*Ohara Shakai Mondai Kenkyujo Zasshi*, Hosei Daigaku, Ohara Shakai Mondai Kenkyujo, 1998.12, 1999.1, 1999.8, 1999.11) ("1922 Program of the Japanese Communist Party" [Parts I and II] and "Moscow Report of the First Communist Party" [Parts I and II], *Ohara Institute for Social Research Journal*, December 1998, January, August, November 1999). The comprehensive collection of microfilmed documents, *Comintern Archives: Files of the Communist Party of Japan*, published in the spring of 2004 by IDC publishers in the Netherlands, was unfortunately not yet available for the preparation of this article. ■

Manifesto

by the Preparatory Committee for the Japanese Communist Party

April 1921

This document was written in English by Yamakawa Hitoshi and sent to representatives of the Communist International in Shanghai for transmission to Moscow. Unfortunately, the original English version could not be located in the Comintern Archives in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History in Moscow. We translated this from the Russian version—first published in The Peoples of the Far East (No. 4, 1921)—as it appears in The VKP(b), the Comintern and Japan. The process of retranslation, while unavoidable, has no doubt introduced drift and perhaps inaccuracies.

At the time this manifesto was written, the Soviet Red Army was conducting mopping-up operations in the wake of its victory over imperialist interventionist forces and the counter-revolutionary White armies operating under their patronage. Anton Deniken, Peter Wrangel, Alexander Kolchak and G. Semenov—all former tsarist officers—were military commanders of the White forces. Alexander Kerensky was head of the bourgeois Provisional Government that had been overthrown by the Bolsheviks in October 1917. In the summer of 1918 Japanese imperialist forces invaded the Russian Far East, where they worked in league with Semenov; Japanese troops did not leave Vladivostok until November 1922.

Seiyukai (Association of Political Friends) was the dominant bourgeois party in Japan at the time. It was founded in 1900 after the decomposition of Jiyuto (Liberal Party), and evolved into a diehard conservative party. In 1900, Hara Takashi (also known as Hara Kei) joined Seiyukai and became its secretary general, running the party with several others through 1914. The so-called "People's Cabinet" (Heimin Naikaku) refers to the cabinet in which Hara was prime minister, formed after the 1918 Rice Riots. Because Hara was neither a member of the peerage nor from any of the four domains (i.e., Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa or Hizen) that had dominated the government from 1868, he has been called the "commoner" prime minister. Hara's popularity declined due to his relentless opposition to universal suffrage and he was assassinated in November 1921.

A spectre is haunting Europe, said Karl Marx at one time. Today, after 75 years, this spectre is haunting not only Europe, but the whole world. The powers of the whole world have united in one holy alliance to drive away the spectre of communism. The League of Nations, the League of Denikins, Wrangels and Kerenskys with French and British imperialists; the union of Kolchaks with Semenovs and Japanese militarists, just as thousands of other leagues and

alliances, all bear witness to the fact that capitalism is placing its final decisive stake in its struggle for its existence.

The Revolution of 1867 was the victory of mercantile capital over feudalism. Capitalist relations had not sufficiently matured up to that point in time, however, and could not, for this reason, also correspondingly reconstruct the political system. Power went to the lower layers of the old privileged classes, instead of passing directly to the bourgeoisie. This circumstance became the reason for the rise of a most complex bureaucratic apparatus and despotic monarchy in Japan—instead of bourgeois republicanism.

Industrial capitalism continued to develop from this point on in Japan under the paternal wing of the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy from its own side clearly took into account the fact that it could not survive without collaboration with the capitalists. Thus the past 50 years (from the moment of the 1867 Revolution) is the history of the development of capitalism under the sluggish and clumsy bureaucracy.

The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars were decisive for the history of capitalism in Japan. We all remember how Japanese capitalism bloated, gorging on the suffering and blood of not only its own people, but of the proletariat of neighboring countries. On this basis militarism and imperialism with such determination sank deep roots into the sun-drenched islands of the Far East.

The four years of the great European war afforded enough time and opportunity for Japanese capitalism to enter the world arena fully armed.

The development of capitalism prior to its present state naturally found its reflection in the political situation of the country, as the so-called "People's Cabinet" (Heimin Naikaku)—a government composed exclusively of representatives of the parties of large landlords and capitalists, "Seiyukai"—reached a dominant position, monopolizing parliament, the municipalities, stock market and banks. The hour had finally arrived, when the bourgeoisie of Japan could come out independently, no longer hiding behind or seeking the protection of the monarchial bureaucracy. From this moment of the bourgeoisie's open entry into the arena, the proletariat of Japan understood what its own position was in society.

In this way, the progress of capitalism in Japan, true as ever to its historic mission, gave impetus to the proletarian movement. The sharp growth of the workers movement in 1918 and later on, the innumerable strikes and workers protests, the rapid awakening and development of class consciousness of the workers, the powerful, unstoppable spread of socialist doctrine throughout the country—all of this is

the fruit of the economic development of Japan.

This development is typical not only for the cities and suburbs. The rural population has been drawn in as well. The rapid capitalization of land, the swallowing of small farms by large landlords have had the result of placing 60 percent of the population in the ranks of the proletariat. And today there is no doubt that a significant majority of the rural population will consciously go shoulder to shoulder with the urban proletariat in the coming battle for liberation. The decisive class differentiation between the proletariat and bourgeoisie in Japan—this is an already accomplished fact, and both classes are carrying on an intense struggle with each other. The "Rice Riots" that swept the country in the summer of 1918 and that within two weeks made the government tremble in their boots fired the revolutionary spirit of the broad masses. This was an indication that the moment of decisive struggle for the overthrow of capitalism has arrived.

Alongside the proletarian movement, the influence of socialism has grown in Japan as well. For an entire quarter of a century Japanese socialists courageously, but unsuccessfully fought with those mighty forces that were organized by the gigantic police apparatus of the militarist bureaucracy. But the time has finally arrived when we may reward ourselves for all the past sacrifices. We now have a truly revolutionary proletariat; the broad popular masses are seized by a spirit of indignation; we have in addition the Communist Party of Japan, the vanguard of the proletarian revolutionary army.

Further, at the same time as capitalist Japan has entered the arena of international capitalist exploitation, the Japanese proletariat has entered onto the broad road of World Revolution. When the proletariat of Russia overthrew its oppressors in the momentous October days, the left wing of Japanese socialists, in spite of vigilance of the police and spy networks, joyfully hailed the brilliant victory of their Russian comrades. We stated then, "The proletariat of each country must eliminate the bayonets aimed against the workers of other countries, and aim them against their genuine enemies in their own countries."

We were too weak then to carry out our words in deeds, but we still firmly held the banner of international solidarity of the proletariat even in the period of vicious incessant attacks by the rabid capitalist government. Now we are able to greet the revolutionary proletariat of all countries in the name of the Communist Party of Japan.

Long Live the Proletarian Revolution!

Long Live the Communist International!

Long Live Communism!

Program of the Communist Party of Japan

September 1922

This program was written in English in September 1922 and sent to Moscow for the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, which was held in November-December 1922. We publish here the original English version found in the Archives of the Communist International in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History in Moscow. We have added obvious dropped words, corrected obvious misspellings and use of definite articles and prepositions, but otherwise not changed the somewhat awkward English.

The document was sent to the Comintern over the signa-

tures of Aoki Kunekichi (pseudonym of Arahata Kanson), as General Secretary of the JCP, and Sakatani Goro (pseudonym of Sakai Toshihiko), as the party's International Secretary. They wrote that the program was approved by a national convention of the JCP held in September 1922, but we have found no other record that a JCP conference was held at that time.

The last section of the program opposes Japanese imperialist expansion in Asia. When the program was written, Japan still maintained troops in the Russian Far East, which it had invaded during the Russian Civil War. Japan

had fought a war against China in 1894-95, winning Formosa (Taiwan) and economic control of Korea. In 1904-05, Japan fought tsarist Russia, seizing strategic Port Arthur in southern Manchuria and Southern Sakhalin Island. In November 1905 Japan declared Korea its protectorate, and in August 1910 annexed it outright.

The Communist Party of Japan, a section of the Third Communist International, is an illegal, proletarian political party, whose aim is the overthrow of the Capitalist regime through the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat based on the Soviet Power.

Japan has been the most powerful of the capitalist nations of the Orient, and the favourable position she occupied during the World War has brought about a sudden development and expansion of her capitalistic system. Under the pressure of the world economic crisis, Japanese Capitalism is struggling hard to tighten its grip of already unequalled exploitation and persecution upon the toiling masses, the workers, peasants, and other lower strata of the population. The Communist Party takes upon itself the task of organizing these proletarian masses into a powerful fighting body, leading them on to the Proletarian Revolution—the seizure of political power and system of production in the hands of the proletariat.

Labour Movement

The workers' movement in Japan is still in an infantile stage. The trade union movement, under the yoke of the Japanese Tsardom, has not yet followed the normal line of development. Side by side with a large number of passive, intimidated, unorganized masses stands a minority of self-conscious, militant elements, whose temper and ideology are as revolutionary as those of the most advanced section of the European workers. Even among the unorganized, the feeling of instinctive revolt is as wide-spread and deep-rooted as among any brutally oppressed toilers. To these instinctive revolt and revolutionary demands the Communist Party strives to give a most clearly defined aim as well as the most effective methods of realizing it. For this purpose, the Communists must penetrate into every workers' organization so as to take control of the union policies, maintain the closest contact with the unorganized masses so as to educate, guide and organize them for the proletarian struggle. In this difficult work, the Party, while holding fast the ultimate aim of establishing the proletarian dictatorship, must organize its legal activities with the view to an active participation in the daily struggles of the workers, pushing through at every opportunity the Communist tactics of the "United Front." Only through its successful struggle along these lines can the Communist Party expect to acquire the character of a proletarian mass party, the true vanguard of the Proletariat.

Some of the more active, influential sections of the industrial workers have been infected with the infantile malady of the anarcho-syndicalist ideology. Naively cherishing an illusory idea of the "Free Workers' Regime," they are opposed to centralized organization and all "political" actions including the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and are still in a position to lead and influence a minority of workers, to the detriment of both the immediate need for undivided effort and the ultimate victory of the proletariat.

These revolutionary elements, while deserving no concession on the matters of our principles, must be approached by

the party with utmost patience and generosity in order to win as many of them as possible over to our aims and tactics.

Agrarian Problems

In the domain of agriculture the process of pauperization has been steadily going on, resulting in a remarkable growth of tenancy and concentration of land. This tendency was accelerated by the sudden development and expansion of industries. Awakened by the rebellious action of the industrial workers, the rural toilers have started to organize and to fight their class enemy, and found their position strengthened by an acute labour shortage caused by the War. Even after the industrial depression has set in, the tenant farmers carry on their fight and organization. They demand a reduction of rent with the threat of quitting the cultivation; thousands of acres of land have been abandoned by the tenants; and the owners are being compelled to till it themselves with aid of hired labour and agricultural machinery.

In view of the situation, and particularly of the more fundamental fact that the small farmers and the tenants occupy nearly seventy per cent of the entire population, and without their aid the proletarian victory is impossible, the Communist Party of Japan should take initiative in the organization of tenants, carry on an untiring agitation and propaganda in the villages so that the rural workers may come to understand Communist ideas and see their only salvation in the Social Revolution.

Political Action

The political parties in this country are the parties of the Capitalist Class. Their rule, however, is checked by the influence of the Bureaucrats and Militarist Clique, the remnants of Feudal Japan. Thus, the conflicts and compromises of the two forces constitute the bone of the present day politics. Bourgeois Democracy has yet to see its palmiest [most flourishing] day, and universal suffrage has yet to be fought for.

The Communist Party, while convinced fully of the truth that the Parliamentary System as such is nothing but a bourgeois institution and in no way dependable as an instrument of proletarian revolution, nevertheless holds that its perfection constitutes an essential stage in the normal development of proletarian struggle. The party, therefore, organizes proletarian political action to help accelerate the "progress of Democracy." Our political activities within and without the parliament, however, must remain a feature of our general Communist propaganda and agitation. They shall consist in broadening and intensifying the proletarian struggle on the one hand, and in exposing the hypocrisy and futility of bourgeois democracy, and demonstrating to the proletariat the necessity of creating their own machinery of Government on the other hand. Only thus, the Party believes, will the proletariat be convinced of the essentially political nature of their struggle and become ready to carry their fight to the finish, the seizure of political power. And only thus, we are confident, will the proletariat follow the lead of our party whose goal it is to establish the Proletarian Dictatorship based on the Soviet of the workers, peasants and soldiers.

Militarism

The Japanese Empire, known as the Germany of the Orient, has its world-famous Militarist Bureaucracy. The Jingoists of Japan do not shrink from the idea of a war with the United States. And their natural allies are the bourgeois capitalists,

whose greed for markets is insatiable.

The secret of the militarist influence lies in their patriotism. The patriotism which they have been so eager to preach in the schools and armies still has its hold upon a large mass of people. Blinded and deafened by the poison of patriotism, they are not yet able to realize that the real function of the army is to maintain capitalist rule, enabling the capitalists to exploit and oppress the producing masses ever and ever more effectively.

The Communist Party is determined to fight militarism. By breaking the spell of patriotism, it must upset the foundation of militarist power, and thus prepare the way to the organization of the Red army of the revolutionary proletariat.

Korean, Chinese, and Siberian Questions

The Communist Party of Japan is resolutely opposed to every species of the Imperialist policy. It is opposed to the intervention, open and secret, in China and Siberia, the interference with the government of these countries, the "Sphere of Influence" and "Vested Interests" in China, Manchuria, and Mongolia, and all the other attempts and practices of similar nature.

The most infamous of all the crimes of Japanese Imperialism has been the annexation of Korea and the enslavement of the Korean people. The Communist Party of Japan not only condemns the act but takes every available step for the emancipation of Korea. The majority of the Korean patriots, fighting for the Independence of Korea, is not free from bourgeois ideology and nationalist prejudice. It is necessary that we act in cooperation with them—necessary not only for the victory of the Korean Revolution but also for winning them over to our Communist principles. The Korean Revolution will bring with it a national crisis in Japan, and the fate of both the Korean and Japanese proletariat will depend on the success or failure of the fight carried on by the united effort of the Communist Parties of the two countries.

The three principal nations in the Far East, China, Korea, and Japan, are most closely related to one another in their political, social, and economic life, and thus bound to march together on to the goal of Communism. The international solidarity of the proletariat, and particularly of these three countries is the condition indispensable to the Victory and Emancipation of the Proletariat, not only of the respective countries but of the whole world.

Report on Differences at the Special Congress of the Japanese Communist Party

by Arahata Kanson

May 1923

This report on the 15 March 1923 JCP Congress was written in Japanese in Moscow for the Third Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, which was held in June 1923. Unfortunately, the Japanese original could not be located in the Comintern Archives in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History in Moscow. We have translated this from the Russian version which appeared in The VKP(b), the Comintern and Japan. This Russian text was translated from an English version which was made from the original Japanese by the Comintern. The process of translation from Japanese to English to Russian and back has no doubt introduced drift and perhaps inaccuracies.

Written using Arahata's pseudonym of Aoki, this report sought to amplify a report that Sakai, as International Secretary of the JCP, had sent to the Comintern in March 1923. Sakai's report detailed the differences that developed in the JCP over Bukharin's 1922 draft JCP program and the "two stage" conception of revolution it propounded. The language in Sakai's report, written under the name Sakatani Goro, is not as clear as that used by Arahata. In several places in this document, Arahata explains phrases used in Sakai's report, which is also published in Russian in The VKP(b), the Comintern and Japan.

Arahata refers to a Mercantile Industrial Party led by Japanese textile manufacturer Muto Sanji. Muto's short-lived, liberal bourgeois party is better known as Jitsugyo Doshikai (Businessmen's Association).

Yuaiikai (Friendly Society) was Japan's first major labor organization, founded in 1912 by the Christian reformer Suzuki Bunji. Kagawa Toyohiko was also a Christian reformer and Yuaiikai leader. Modeled on British friendly

(mutual aid) societies, Yuaiikai advocated collaboration between labor and capital, and concentrated on organizing craft unions. In 1919 Yuaiikai was reorganized more along the lines of an industrial union federation and renamed Dai Nihon Rodo Sodomei-Yuaiikai (Greater Japan General Federation of Labor-Friendly Societies). The name was later shortened to Nihon Rodo Sodomei (Japan General Federation of Labor), or simply Sodomei.

The Kakushin Kurabu (Reform Club) was a small party that represented the most liberal members of the Diet, having as its base of support the urban middle class and prosperous farmers. It advocated universal suffrage and a reduced military. Its ranks were divided over passage of the Peace Preservation Law of 1925, and the Reform Club was dissolved that same year, with most members joining the dominant bourgeois party, Seiyukai.

When Arahata's report was written the Communist International was engaged in an international campaign against the French occupation of the Ruhr, which began in January 1923, after Germany defaulted on the reparations payments it was forced to pay France under the terms of the Versailles Treaty.

Certain points of the CC Report are insufficiently clear and require explanation.

The question of organizing a legal labor party brought out differences at our Congress. One part of the party insisted on an immediate founding of a legal political party, another part maintains that the moment for this has not yet arrived. The first tendency maintains that a bourgeois revolution in Japan is inevitable and believes that a proletarian revolution is only possible after a bourgeois [revolution].

They point to the movement for the founding of the Shoko-to (Mercantile Industrial Party), led by Japanese cotton king Muto Sanji, to the efforts toward a political workers party led by the chairman of the "Yuaikai" (Japanese Federation of Labor), Suzuki Bunji, and to an analogous tendency in the "Kakushin Kurabu," as symptoms of the coming bourgeois revolution.

If there is not an active Communist Party that will take the leadership of the movement into its hands, the proletariat will fall under the influence of the bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that they insist on a legal political workers-peasants party, which must act to hasten the bourgeois revolution, which sooner or later must come about. This in turn would prepare the groundwork for the proletarian revolution that will follow after the bourgeois revolution. This political party must also include radical elements of the bourgeoisie, since at the present time the proletariat as a whole still remains under their influence and it would be difficult to ignore them.

The other part of the Congress supports the position that a purely bourgeois revolution, along the lines of the Great French Revolution or the March Revolution in Russia, is impossible in Japan as a result of the rapid development of the Japanese bourgeoisie during the imperialist war, and even before that.

In its developing stage, the Japanese bourgeoisie leaned on the bureaucracy, on the remnants of feudalism. But now it is already able to stand on its own two feet. In addition to which, the bureaucracy has become an obstacle to the further development of the bourgeoisie.

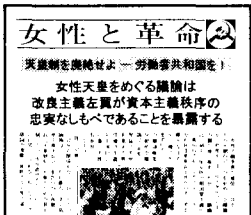
After the heavy blow that it took from the economic crisis that followed the war, the bourgeoisie came to the conclusion that the only course toward re-establishing its forces was the capture of economic and political power, tearing the latter out of the hands of the bureaucracy.

It is without a doubt that toward the bureaucracy the Japanese bourgeoisie is quite radical, but as soon as the question touches on the overthrow of the Mikado and the establishment of a genuine bourgeois democracy with republican forms of rule, it becomes thoroughly conservative. Thanks to the living example of Europe, the bourgeoisie understands full well that the beginning of any revolution will be its death knell. Just as the Mikado, in the hands of the bureaucracy, had been a tool for the enslavement of the popular masses, precisely so is the bourgeoisie using him as a tool for the defense of their interests. The bourgeoisie fully takes into account the attitude of the Japanese people toward the Mikado. Even though on the one hand the Mikado represents an obstacle to the bourgeoisie, in other respects he represents a valuable tool in their hands. In reality, the bourgeoisie only wishes to replace the present bureaucratic government. But it maintains that this must be done by completely constitutional means.

It is absolutely clear that, being unable to independently take power out of the hands of the bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie must enlist the popular masses to its side. It is exclusively for this reason that Muto has launched a movement for the aforementioned (Mercantile Industrial Party), whose central demand is universal suffrage.

For the same reason, Suzuki and the lackeys of the

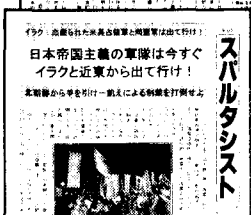
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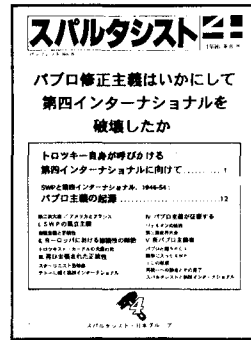
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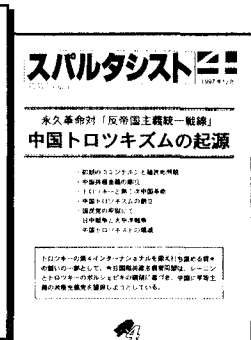
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“Kakushin Kurabu” strive to form a labor party on this same platform of universal suffrage.

In this context, the basic question is what tactic should be used against them. We must very carefully monitor every attempt of theirs to win support from the masses. For the bourgeoisie to corrupt the masses is an everyday affair in all capitalist states. If we succeed in winning broad support of the masses and to lead them, then the hour of proletarian revolution has arrived. We must remain alert, but our vigilance must not lead us to prematurely form a political party that would include the most heterogeneous elements. This would be a tactical mistake.

From this standpoint, it follows that the coming revolution in Japan will be a proletarian revolution, since, as set out above, the bourgeoisie is extremely conservative on the question of the overthrow of the Mikado. A revolution like the Great French Revolution, or the March Revolution in Russia is unthinkable in Japan as long as the masses are not revolutionized; but when the masses do become revolutionized, then that is when the hour of the proletarian revolution will strike.

If we help the bourgeoisie in its strivings to seize power, are we not consolidating the foundations of bourgeois democracy, and are we not thereby holding back the development of the proletarian revolution? It is without a doubt so. That is why we must carry out a policy toward proletarian revolution, and concentrate all of our attention on this goal. (In the Report, the phrase “striving to the extent we can, to block the political revolution” should be understood in the sense of “conduct a policy and develop a movement that will block the consolidation of bourgeois power.”)

It is from this standpoint that there is opposition to the formation of a political party in which the worker-communists are to form a left wing, the social democrats the center, and the radical bourgeoisie, the right wing.

As to the question of founding a purely proletarian political party, the first part of the Congress maintained that this must be organized immediately. They believe that the danger of losing the sympathy of radical (syndicalist) workers by doing this is only a passing danger. The opposition of syndicalists to a political movement is actually prompted by the propaganda of revolutionary socialists in the past. Propaganda for a revolutionary political movement that we propose will without a doubt prove successful among them. On the other hand, they argue, if we don't form such a party, the Labor Party that Suzuki and the lackeys of Kakushin Kurabu are striving to form will attract many moderate workers.

In counterposition to these views, the second part of the Congress declared that irrespective of whether we form a political party or not, it is absolutely inevitable that many workers will be drawn to the envisioned reformist Labor Party, and will wind up under its influence. This pertains as well, and even more so, to the peasantry, a large part of which consists, after all, of peasant landholders.

For instance, on the question of nationalization of land, the peasantry will support the program of nationalization *with compensation*, that is, the program that a radical bourgeois party is ready to adopt, but that stands in contradiction to the program of nationalization *without compensation*, the program put forward by the proletarian party. At the present moment the rural population is of course more backward in its political consciousness than the urban workers. In fact, we

face an interesting paradox—the left wing of the urban working class is inclined *against* the founding of a political party, believing that such a party would be limited in its work exclusively to *parliamentarism*, while the best and most radical elements of the rural population *support* a political movement, proceeding *from these very same assumptions*.

The organized and class-conscious part of the peasants who rent and of rural proletarians represents just as small a portion of their class as the organized workers represent of theirs. And nonetheless, Suzuki and Kagawa Toyohiko, the reformist union leaders, who are gradually losing their influence among urban workers, preserve their influence among rural workers. In general, the majority of the working masses in the city, as well as in the village, are moderate, conservative, and even reactionary and for this reason may become easily ensnared by bourgeois influences.

For this reason our goal must be the winning of not the broad masses in general, but the winning of the radical, class-conscious part of the working class. But the radical elements of the working class are at the present *hostile* to political activity, while those elements who are not hostile are the indifferent ones. For example: Suzuki Bunji preaches that the class struggle can be ameliorated through universal suffrage, and has publicly declared that if his Labor Party manages to get into parliament the antagonism between labor and capital will be eased. Yuaiikai, of which Suzuki is the chairman, at its congress last October adopted a resolution *against* universal suffrage and declared that if Suzuki joins the political movement, he will be expelled from the General Confederation of Labor (Sodomei). That is the situation in the Sodomei, which has more Communist elements in its ranks than any other labor organization. Of course this situation was created as a result of an overly narrow interpretation of political activity. The left wing cannot free itself of its syndicalist prejudices, and sees all political activity only as parliamentarism.

Nonetheless, those workers who are inclined against a political movement represent the very best and the most promising elements of the working class. Isn't it true that in the majority of cases those who today join in the political movement are cheap politicians? Aren't they simply paid agents of the Kenseikai party, or people bought with money thrown around by the lackeys of the Kakushin Kurabu? In spite of their traditional disorientation, we must not leave the best elements of the working class, and we must ourselves see to it that they do not turn from us. Being the vanguard of the broad masses, they will in the near future join us under the banner of Communism and will become true fighters in the front ranks of revolutionary battles. That is why we must teach them about politics through practical political activity that creates political discipline on their part, dispel their prejudices against political work, make a clear and unbroken connection between economic and political questions, and teach them that in order to attain the economic liberation of the working class, the proletariat must first of all seize political power.

The Central Executive Committee of the Japanese Communist Party has resolved to broaden its activity in economic questions. This plan entails the strengthening of trade unions, the improvement of the workers movement's situation, the winning of workers to the party and the reinforcement of the economic and political sections of the party. Already in the spring of the previous year the party organized the “Hands

Off Soviet Russia!" movement, it conducted a campaign opposing legislation against thought crimes, it is campaigning against the occupation of the Ruhr, and is at the present organizing a movement of the unemployed. Even though these campaigns have had only partial success, the party has managed to organize a trade-union committee as the leading body of these movements. In the end, this practical work (in the report the term that is used is "direct political action") cannot but help to raise the class consciousness of the working masses. At first glance this method of work may seem protracted; but it will lead to great results in the future. Rather, it is the premature creation of a political party that will risk us our influence over radical trade unions. These are the important organizations of the proletariat, who are in principle hostile to the so-called political movement. In a country

like Japan, where the Communist Party is still young and weak, this represents a very serious danger.

And so, opinions at the Party Congress divided into two: one part maintains that a bourgeois revolution is inevitable, while the other part does not. This naturally will lead to differences over tactical questions in the future. The Congress concluded, leaving these problems unresolved, tabling them to the party's sections, departments, and cells for further detailed discussion.

In essence, there are actually no disagreements over the founding of a political party; opinions diverge only over whether this party should take into its ranks only purely proletarian elements, or others as well, and opinions diverge over whether such a party should be formed immediately, or do we need to go more slowly with this. ■

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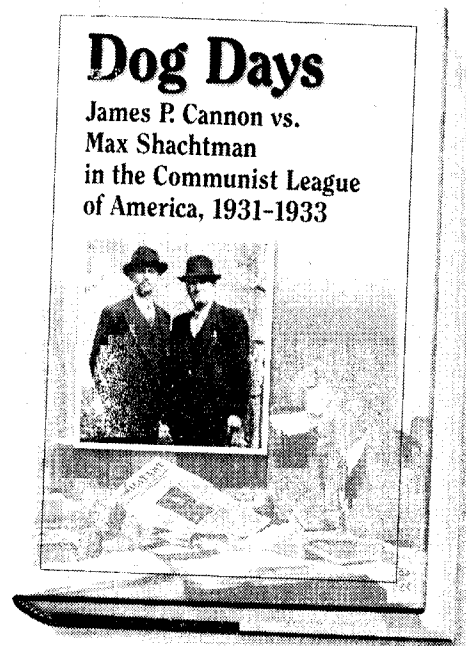
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Women and Revolution...

(continued from page 60)

onerous debt to get and keep his job. Debt bondage is on the rise across the world. Statistics are always unreliable for illegal activities; in this case, they also reflect the politics of the researcher. Unknown numbers of illegal immigrants who work as prostitutes are indeed subject to exorbitant debts to the smuggler who got them across the border, or ensnared in a criminal ring. It is generally acknowledged that workers in debt bondage are primarily illegal migrant agricultural workers, maids, nannies or hideously exploited people in small industries in the Third World.

Kidnapping, debt bondage, sexual assault, beatings—for any purpose—are horrible crimes. But there is a qualitative distinction between this kind of coercion and the fundamentally consensual act between a prostitute and her client to exchange money for sex. Part of the “anti-sex slavery” agenda is to merge “human trafficking,” “sex slavery” and prostitution together, to identify as chattel bondage all exchanges of sex for money and all illegal border crossing. All women immigrants are now possible “sex slaves.”

The Bush administration’s trick here is to recast sin and sex in “human rights” terms, appealing to religious conservatives while adopting a more modern turn of phrase. So, in a speech on the subject at the United Nations last September, Bush intoned: “Nearly two centuries after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, and more than a century after slavery was officially ended, the trade in human beings for any purpose must not be allowed to thrive in our time” (www.usembassy.it). This from a man whose attorney general is an open admirer of the slave-owning American Confederacy! Nonetheless, media pundits such as *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof have hailed Bush’s “human rights” imperialism. Describing his experience of *buying* “sex slaves” in Cambodia so he could “free them” (not with a lot of success; one returned to the brothel and refused to leave), this pro-Democratic Party liberal ended one column in praise of the current right-wing administration: “President Bush’s policies toward women have often been callous—cutting off, for example, funds for safe childbirth programs in Africa because of ideological disputes with sponsoring groups. But on trafficking, this administration has led the way” (*New York Times*, 31 January 2004).

Marching in tune with the crusade against “sex trafficking” are the U.S. government’s longtime partners in the “family



United Nations

Poverty and superexploitation in the Third World. Women’s emancipation requires revolutionary overthrow of capitalist order.

values” anti-sex witchhunt, the evangelical right and the bourgeois feminist establishment. The sleight of hand that transforms all prostitution into “sex slavery” is courtesy of right-wing feminist organizations such as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), which defines prostitution as “gang rape.” The CATW was instrumental in drafting both the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) and the United Nations “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons” (2001) as a supplement to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. These documents laid the groundwork for an international police witchhunt against illegal immigrants as “sex traffickers,” which will inevitably come down hardest on women.

The anti-woman backlash has already moved beyond cop repression. In January 2003 the Bush administration, through USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development), announced a new policy cutting funding to international projects perceived as supporting the decriminalization of prostitution and “legalization of drugs, injecting drug use, and abortion.” Such policies have a widespread impact, especially in impoverished Third World countries, where women live in conditions of backwardness, weighed down by religious reaction and customs that maintain the yoke of family oppression. As Anna-Louise Crago, founding member of Montreal’s sex worker political action group, said:

“Already in 2001, the Population Council and Asia Foundation jointly released a study that found that in Nepal, a country that receives a bulk of the anti-trafficking money from USAID, ‘a common approach to controlling trafficking is to limit women’s migration.’ NGOs were found to use frightening messages to discourage women from leaving their villages while women and girls reported being prevented from crossing the border despite vehement protests of their free will.”

—Alternet, “Unholy Alliance,” 21 May 2003

The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), passed by the U.S. Congress in December 2003,



Marie Voignier

Lyon, France, 13 August 2002: Sex workers protest against anti-prostitution ordinance. Banner reads, “Persecutions + Deportations = Death.”



National Archives

Japanese imperialist military forced thousands, mainly Koreans, into sexual bondage as "comfort women" for World War II troops.

has two main operational provisions: increased funding to "train border patrol guards and officials on identification of victims of trafficking," that is, to reinforce the border police; and strengthened provisions for U.S. sanctions against countries the State Department deems not to be in compliance with its anti-trafficking mandate. Trafficking "victims" are offered special visas, but only if they cooperate with government prosecutors; otherwise, they are subject to charges themselves as prostitutes and illegal aliens. Furthermore, the TVPRA adds "trafficking" as an offense chargeable under RICO, the frame-up law that allows the government to seize all assets so that suspects cannot defend themselves. The TVPRA also specifies that "No funds [will be] made available...to promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution."

The U.S. government doesn't appear to take even its own hype all that seriously, however. Bush plans to spend \$1.5 billion to "promote marriage"; but Congress voted only \$20 million a year for "prevention" and "protection and assistance" for "victims" in a \$100 million annual anti-trafficking budget. This too underscores the repressive, ideological intent of the law, to beef up capitalism's trinity of oppression: the capitalist state; organized religion; and the institution of the family, the main source of the oppression of women in class society.

Imperialist Onslaught Tramples on Women

This repressive crusade is sponsored by the very forces responsible for the destruction of the former East European and Soviet workers states where, despite the deformations of Stalinist bureaucracies, planned economies meant that basic necessities were available to all. Much of the unprecedented level of worldwide immigration, legal and illegal, is a direct consequence of the capitalist counterrevolution in those countries. Not only were those countries devastated, but the Third World is now increasingly vulnerable to the depredations of world imperialism. The imperialists have reduced to a trickle the financial aid previously granted as a sop to many countries during the Cold War against the USSR. The escalation of the exploitation of labor, poverty, and war means that people are on the move as never before.

In East Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, capitalist counterrevolution has dragged women back decades. Once educated and employed at one of the highest levels in the world,

they now face massive, chronic unemployment, while prostitution has soared. In post-Soviet Russia gross domestic product fell by over 80 percent from 1991 to 1997; according to official statistics, capital investment dropped over 90 percent. By the mid 1990s, 40 percent of the population of the Russian Federation was living below the official poverty line and a further 36 percent only a little above it. Millions are starving.

The atrocities that are still thriving worldwide in this reactionary social and economic climate include forced marriages, the buying and selling of children, forced segregation under the head-to-toe veil, female genital mutilation and "honor killings." Coerced prostitution, which has existed for thousands of years, is likely increasing. But the repressive measures adopted by capitalist states in the name of "human rights" and "protecting women" will only intensify these miseries through state persecution. Racist anti-immigrant laws guarantee vicious exploitation of immigrants, denial of social benefits, and lack of access to education and to legal recourse for victims of crimes.

On May 1, ten countries of economically devastated East Europe joined the EU with its supposed "open" borders, and the governments of West Europe have reacted with an anti-immigrant panic. With British tabloids claiming that 1.6 million Roma (Gypsies) from East Europe are supposedly waiting for the opening of British borders, the general fear of a massive influx of migrants from East Europe was so widespread that even the president of the European Parliament denounced it as "overblown" (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 19 February 2004). Every existing EU government passed specific measures to make people from the ten new member countries second-class citizens by restricting either the right to benefits or to work, if not both. These racist laws drive immigrants into the hands of border smugglers, since it is often the only way to get into the United States or Europe.

While vice laws in Europe are generally more relaxed than in the United States, each country has some form of legal limitation, regulation or prohibition that allows police harassment. A majority of the prostitutes on the continent are now immigrants. Compared to the tens of thousands of expulsions carried out each year in "Fortress Europe," the number of prostitutes deported is minuscule, but the vice laws give the police yet another weapon and serve to justify new laws that deny asylum to immigrant women fleeing persecution in their home countries.

In France, 40 percent of prostitutes come from the Balkans and 37 percent are of African origin. In Italy, estimates set the number of undocumented immigrants among streetwalkers at 90 percent. In 2002 Italy launched a nationwide crackdown in what Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has called a fight between good and evil. The Italian state deems the great saviors of "sex slaves" to be the Vatican and the *carabinieri* (police). Meanwhile, Italian authorities leave women and children from Albania and elsewhere to drown as they try to reach the east coast of the Italian peninsula.

While police harassment of prostitution has increased, it hasn't turned up much solid evidence of widespread "sex slavery." On 11 October 2003 Agence France-Presse reported a massive nationwide swoop in the Czech Republic, which the United Nations calls the hub of the sex trade, in a crackdown on "the white slave trade and forced prostitution." Some 4,500 police raided 435 erotic clubs and other premises across the country to look for women "being forced to



Radial Press

Refugees pick through rubble in Vukovar, 1998. Capitalist counter-revolution, imperialist bombing, murderous ethnic strife shattered society of former Yugoslavia.

work as prostitutes." Of the 96 people held for questioning, 17 were charged with pimping and 16 with "white slave trade." But of the 1,391 non-Czechs interrogated during these raids, the police found only three foreign prostitutes who asked to be repatriated.

European prostitutes have been fighting back against police harassment and abuse by criminals. In Spain, where most prostitutes are immigrants from South America, Africa and East Europe, the Collective in Defense of Prostitutes' Rights organized a demonstration in Madrid to demand labor rights, such as employer-paid social security benefits, which will help them in "trying to pay off their huge debts to mafias who got them into the country illegally," according to a spokeswoman (*New York Times*, 19 January 2004).

U.S./UN/NATO Out of the Balkans Now!

One damaging result of the hype is that it obscures the real crimes of coerced trafficking and prostitution that do exist. The situation is probably at its worst in the Balkans, where the devastation of capitalist counterrevolution was amplified by the bloody U.S./NATO imperialist war against Serbia in 1999. Murderous ethnic hatred, promoted by the breakup of the former multinational Yugoslav deformed workers state along national lines, erupts constantly. Refugees from war and ethnic strife are desperate to flee the area. At the same time military occupation by thousands of U.S./UN troops provides a fertile source of paying customers for prostitution.

These factors converge to make the Balkans ground zero for human trafficking in Europe. Traffickers bring women in from Russia and other East European countries to staff the brothels, while Albanians and others try to find their way out to the capital cities of West Europe. The U.S. government claims that criminal rings are driving the "sex slave" trade, but trafficking in the Balkans has been linked directly to U.S./UN/NATO personnel. In a 24 April 2002 statement to the House Committee on International Relations,

David Lamb, a human rights investigator in the Balkans who looked into forced prostitution there, blamed the trade on UN collusion and cover-up: "The sex slave trade in Bosnia largely exists because of the UN peacekeeping operation.... Trafficking of women for forced prostitution, and the prostitution trade, are controlled by organized crime warlords, most of whom came to power as aggressive and ruthless military or militia commanders during the war." In describing the difficulties in investigating these abuses, he said, "Whenever involvement of UN personnel surfaced during investigations, support from UN headquarters stopped.... My investigators and I experienced an astonishing cover-up attempt that seemed to extend to the highest levels of the UN headquarters."

Press reports have detailed the involvement of personnel from both the United Nations and the Pentagon military contractor DynCorp in running sex rings in the Balkans; women were brought into Bosnia from East Europe and had their passports confiscated ("America's For-Profit Secret Army," *New York Times*, 13 October 2002; "Bosnia:

UN Police Accused of Involvement in Prostitution," Associated Press, 19 June 2001). As far as the other NATO forces go, an article in *Junge Welt*, "The Child Brothel of Tetovo: Covered-Up Sex Scandal Among Bundeswehr Soldiers in the Balkans" (1 March 2001), revealed discussion within the German Social Democratic/Green coalition government of possible "soldiers' brothels" organized by the army. Reportedly, Green Party spokeswoman Angelika Beer expressed the government's "concern for the psychological well-being and thus the combat-readiness" of the German armed forces abroad as a reason to set up brothels of German *mädchen* to protect the troops from the presumed diseased and under-age Balkan women. The proposal was all too reminiscent of the state-controlled brothels administered through the concentration camp system by the Wehrmacht in Nazi-occupied Europe.

The U.S. rants about "sex slavery" when the worst instances of coerced prostitution exist precisely in a U.S./UN

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military occupation zone. When in 1993 Democrat Bill Clinton threatened military intervention against the Serbs amid all-sided interethnic slaughter, some of the loudest war cries came from the pro-imperialist feminists, who exploited the reports of mass rape and sexual brutality in Bosnia to call for the American jackboot to "save" Bosnian Muslim women. The National Organization for Women even called for sanctions by the International Monetary Fund, the hated international bankers' cartel which for decades has subjected hundreds of millions of Third World poor to brutal starvation policies.

War inevitably spawns prostitution; it is only a question of the degree of brutality. From U.S. Civil War general Joe Hooker, who is commonly believed to have given American English a new word for the world's oldest profession, to the R&R stations established in Thailand for U.S. servicemen on leave from the bloody imperialist war against Vietnam, prostitution is an inevitable part of the army's train.

Harking back to an earlier imperialist war, author Lujó Bassetman wrote:

"When Queen Victoria's haughty phrase to the effect that the existence of prostitutes constituted an affront to Her Majesty was reported in Berlin, a registered whore named Christine Leichtfuss remarked.... 'I'd rather be the loose character I am than have Victoria's responsibility for the Boer War!'"

—*The Oldest Profession: A History of Prostitution*
(New York: Dorset Press, 1967)

For Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

The ruling class does not want to eliminate immigrants from the labor force, rather it aims to benefit from immigration by whatever means possible. For example, in the U.S. immigrants from Mexico serve as part of the reserve army of labor; they are necessary particularly for California agriculture, but when the economic need dries up, they can be quickly deported. Immigrants also fill especially onerous and underpaid jobs that those who are able to work legally in the U.S. won't do for the pittance those jobs pay. How desperate they can be is the subject of the movie *Dirty Pretty Things*, where illegal immigrants sell their kidneys for passports and young women give slimy bosses blowjobs to stay employed in wretched sweatshops. Many immigrants send a large part, if not most, of their earnings home to support their families. Half of the world's 120 million legal and illegal migrants are women, who generally work as nannies, maids or other kinds of domestics, and sometimes in the sex trade.

In *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, edited by Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), the introduction describes a government program in Sri Lanka that encourages women to migrate in search of domestic work, leaving their own children with relatives back home. One author reports that 34 to 54 percent of the population of the Philippines is sustained by remittances from migrant workers, whose funds are the economy's largest source of foreign currency, almost \$7 billion in 1999. Two-thirds of Filipino migrant workers are women.

While Bush has declared it "a special evil," the fact remains that for many women, prostitution can well be a better job prospect than indentured servitude in the fields at home, or backbreaking factory labor or the other dismal prospects for an "illegal" immigrant abroad. Millions of immigrant women clean the toilets and floors, change the beds and bedpans, feed the babies and the elderly, and labor in the most wretched of sweatshops at the most menial, despised



Workers Vanguard

Oakland, California, 1996: SEIU Local 1877 demonstrates for "Justice for Janitors." Immigrant workers form combative sector of U.S. labor movement.

work while enduring racist and anti-woman abuse. Starvation wages, no benefits, long hours and beatings and sexual assault are all too common.

Some of the most brutally exploited women workers on the American continent work in the *maquiladoras*, the border-area "free trade" zones in Mexico that have been the source of huge profits to the imperialist corporations. Women there, many as young as 16, suffer exposure to poisonous chemicals, pain and finger deformities caused by the repetitive mechanical movements of assembly lines. Many endure degrading strip searches; some have been compelled to offer proof that they are not pregnant as a condition of employment. United class struggle by workers on both sides of the border is urgent as U.S. capitalists continue their "free trade" rape of Mexico.

Prostitution: What's in a Name?

While most people would say that they know what it is, the definition of prostitution reflects the perspective of the respondent. The renowned experts on human sexuality William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson comment, "Prostitution is difficult to define since humans have always used sex to obtain desirables such as food, money, valuables, promotions, and power" (*Sex and Human Loving* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1988]).

The status of the prostitute is related to the status of women generally in society, itself a measure of a society's advancement. Thus the conditions faced by the prostitute vary greatly with time, place and class. In the industrialized world, where women have greater access to education and jobs, prostitutes tend to be among the poorest and most desperate. Statistics vary widely, but some trends do emerge: in the U.S. at least, a large percentage of prostitutes are unskilled and without a high school education. Given the vicious racism of American society, it's no surprise that black women are over-represented in prostitution—especially among those who are arrested and jailed. In San Francisco, according to the Sex Workers Outreach Project, 57 percent of the prostitutes are black (the city as a whole is only 8 percent black). One striking fact is confirmed by most sources: runaway teenagers,

who in fleeing a miserable family situation have very few other choices indeed, often become prostitutes.

There is a world of difference between the luxury and easy living of a Hollywood madam like Heidi Fleiss (who got locked up all the same) and the AIDS-infected, drug-addicted streetwalker in an impoverished ghetto, with no options and no way out. Nonetheless, *all* prostitutes are subjected to the general social opprobrium of bourgeois moralism and hypocrisy, which sets them up for abuse, beatings, rape and theft. Prostitutes take the brunt of hatred of women. For example, in the 1980s the "Green River killer," Gary Leon Ridgway, murdered 48 women in the Seattle, Washington area; most were street prostitutes, targeted because he thought he could get away with it.

In economically backward societies, as a woman's status is lower and her options more limited, to that degree prostitution is a more attractive alternative to virtual family bondage. Only the most beautiful and cultured women became geisha in ancient Japan, for example.

A "Crime Without a Victim"

Because it is generally illegal or heavily regulated under capitalist law, Marxists consider prostitution to be a "crime without a victim," like drug use, gambling, pornography, homosexual sex and "statutory rape." Such activities are labeled crimes in the U.S. because bourgeois Christian morality deems them sins. From the standpoint of the working class, the act of performing sex for money is not a crime on the part of either the prostitute or the john. While we recognize that prostitution is more often than not degrading and exploitative, we make no moral judgments on it, whether practiced by a high-priced call girl or a woman forced into the trade by a debt to a criminal gang or by the hard, mean, racist reality of capitalism.

Some argue that prostitution is not a "crime without a victim" because the prostitutes themselves are victims. The leader of the Russian Revolution, V.I. Lenin, identified the source of the prostitute's victimization: "They are unfortunate double victims of bourgeois society. Victims, first, of its accursed system of property and, secondly, of its accursed moral hypocrisy" (Clara Zetkin, "My Recollections of Lenin," in *The Emancipation of Women* [New York: International Publishers, 1934]). But prostitutes are not the victims of the act of prostitution itself. As Masters and

Johnson explain, "The detrimental side of female prostitution is not the sexual activity itself but the evils that often accompany prostitution: exploitation by organized crime and/or pimps, sexually transmitted disease, drug addiction, the physical risks of 'kinky' sex or assault by a customer, and the inability to save money for future needs." We would add that in many societies the stigma of "immoral" sex (which means anything outside of marriage) can lead to permanent ostracism or even murder, as in the "honor killings" of women who have "disgraced" their families.

The very criminalization of prostitution forces the prostitute into a lumpen milieu, which complicates or denies her access to social services and where she is more vulnerable to organized crime and to the whims of her pimp. It also serves as a source of police corruption and individual victimization. We oppose all laws against "crimes without victims" and fight for the separation of church and state. We are opposed to government interference in people's private, sexual lives, as well as to any categorical criminalization of a sex act, such as the reactionary "age of consent" laws that try to dictate a sexless existence to teenagers. We advocate the concept of effective consent, that is, mutual understanding and agreement is what matters in all sexual acts.

In calling for an end to these laws we do not believe, however, that these practices should be a matter of indifference to the socialist movement. Recreational drug use is nobody else's business, but widespread drug addiction and alcoholism sap the revolutionary energy of the working class and other sections of the oppressed. The social oppression that breeds alcoholism and drug addiction among the poor should be fought through the moral authority of the proletarian socialist movement, and not through state coercion. The government's anti-drug witchhunt has unleashed massive cop terror in the ghettos and barrios and imprisoned many hundreds of thousands.

In the case of immigrant prostitutes, it is also necessary to fight against racist deportations and for full citizenship rights for all in the country where they live, however they got there. Domestic workers and prostitutes are especially vulnerable since they are isolated in their employers' homes or on the street, separated from social production and the labor movement. Yet immigrant women workers form a part of the growing and increasingly combative immigrant sector of the American working class. The contradiction is

BBC News

Sheba Chhachhi



Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2000: Sex workers celebrate legalization of prostitution (above). Delhi, India, 1980: Protesters condemn "bride-burning," which kills 5,000 women each year.





Metropolitan Museum of Art

For sale by lifetime or hour: (left) Detail of John Singer Sargent's portrait of the Wyndham sisters, 1899; E. J. Bellocq photographed prostitutes in legendary Storyville, New Orleans.



E. J. Bellocq

captured in Ken Loach's film *Bread and Roses*, the story of the fight to organize the largely undocumented workers who clean the corporate office buildings of Los Angeles. The movie focuses on immigrant Latina sisters, one who sleeps with the boss to get her sister a job, the other who leads the unionization effort for the Service Employees International Union "Justice for Janitors" campaign. Far from being helpless victims, immigrant women workers will play a powerful role as revolutionary fighters in the multiracial, internationalist party of the working class that we Marxists are striving to build. Such a party would also fight against all instances of women's oppression as part of its mission to link the needs of the most downtrodden and degraded victims of capitalism to the social power of the proletariat.

A Necessary Institution of Capitalist Society

In his classic Marxist text on women's oppression, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), Friedrich Engels says of the status of women in ancient Greece:

"In Euripides [*Orestes*] a woman is called an *oikurema*, a thing (the word is neuter) for looking after the house, and, apart from her business of bearing children, that was all she was for the Athenian—his chief female domestic servant. The man had his athletics and his public business from which women were barred; in addition, he often had female slaves at his disposal and during the most flourishing days of Athens an extensive system of prostitution which the state at least favored. It was precisely through this system of prostitution that the only Greek women of personality were able to develop, and to acquire that intellectual and artistic culture by which they stand out as high above the general level of classic womanhood as the Spartan women by their qualities of character. But that a woman had to be a *hetuera* before she could be a woman is the worst condemnation of the Athenian family."

In his book Engels, basing himself on the scientific information then available, traces the development of the institution of the family from primitive communist tribes or clans through the division of society into classes. Ancient hunter-gatherer society was one of equality between men and women, where the necessary division of labor, based on women's childbearing role, entailed no subordination by sex.

Since only the mother of a child was known, kinship was generally determined through the female line. But with the development of a patriarchal property-owning ruling class, it was necessary to have a sure means for the inheritance of property and power, and that meant the enforced fidelity of the wife to determine the paternity of the children. The state arose to ensure the dominance of the ruling class by force. Thus was born the monogamous family in which marriage meant the subjugation of women by men and the destruction of mother-right. As Engels said, "the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property" brought about "the *world historical defeat of the female sex*."

Engels critiques bourgeois marriage customs of his own time, when the nubile daughters of the ruling class were hawked to the highest bidder in the marriage mart (the subject of many 19th-century European novels). He comments:

"This marriage of convenience turns often enough into the crassest prostitution—sometimes of both partners, but far more commonly of the woman, who only differs from the ordinary courtesan in that she does not let out her body on piecework as a wage worker, but sells it once and for all into slavery. And of all marriages of convenience Fourier's words hold true: 'As in grammar two negatives make an affirmative, so in matrimonial morality two prostitutions pass for a virtue'."

It is the institution of the family that brings money into sexual relations. Whether it's renting a prostitute by the hour or a wife by the lifetime, the family and the oppression of women are founded on private property, and the religious codes of morality and capitalist law are all that distinguish the wife from the prostitute in this fundamental sense. It is a matter of statistical record that many women suffer a decrease in their standard of living as a result of divorce, while access to health care in the U.S. depends on a job or being married to someone who has a job. While the dowry and bride price are no longer common in Western societies, obvious examples today of the relationship between money and marriage are palimony, pre-nuptial agreements and the divorce law business, the subject of the screwball comedy *Intolerable Cruelty*.

In capitalist society today, one purpose of the institution of the family is to impose on the working class the burden of

rearing the next generation. The mother is subjugated to domestic drudgery and the care and nursing of the young, the old and the sick, and the children are raised to be the next generation of wage-workers and taught to respect authority. The family also has a conservatizing hold on the man, who is supposed to support his family as part of the very definition of manhood. That a large section of the population—if not the majority—does not live this way only serves to drive the bourgeoisie into a frenzy of “family values” reaction as it attempts to shore up its tottering institution.

The “conjugal partnership of leaden boredom, known as ‘domestic bliss,’” Engels tells us, has yet another result: “Together with monogamous marriage and heterism, adultery became an unavoidable social institution—denounced, severely penalized, but impossible to suppress.” The difficulty is that our group-living mammalian species adapts to lifelong heterosexual monogamy about as well as you can stop a volcano from erupting. Despite punishments as cruel as stoning to death (for example, as mandated in the Bible), people persist in flouting the mandated “correct” sexual behavior, and they are remarkably imaginative about it. From this conflict between the demands of class society and the most intimate personal feelings and desires comes the alienation, the ugly hypocrisy, the misery and frustration, and the tales of ecstatic love, that are the subject of works of art from Lancelot and Guinevere to *La Traviata* and *The Hours*.

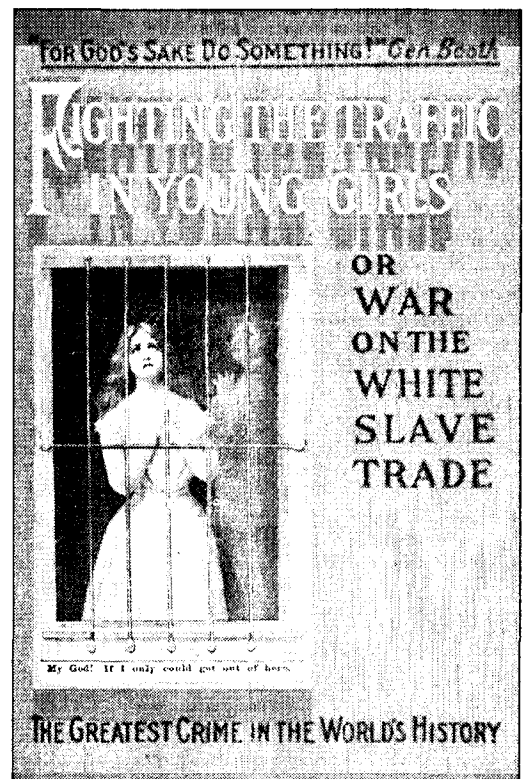
The prostitute is a player at all levels. On the sexual level, she compensates for the hangups and fears that can keep especially women from enjoying sex. Many customers come to prostitutes for “kinky” sex—the kind of thing you want to hide from your wife, neighbors, family and associates. Certainly gay male prostitution is a prime example of this. As social historian Hilary Evans says in *Harlots, Whores and Hookers: A History of Prostitution* (New York: Dorset Press, 1979), it is necessary to “recognise what perceptive madams and prostitutes have known for years: that, except at the lowest level, the prostitute is providing much more than just a physical body to meet a physical need.”

The German Marxist August Bebel said in his classic work *Woman in the Past, Present and Future*, “Prostitution becomes a necessary social institution, just as much as the police, the standing army, the church, the capitalist.” While we oppose the criminalization of prostitution under capitalist law, we see prostitution as a component of the oppression of women, an analogue to the institution of the family. Under socialism, the family will be replaced by communal child-care and housework, enabling women to participate fully in economic, social and political life. Job training and education will be open to all, with a stipend for all students, which will enable teenagers to live independently of their families. Birth control and abortions will be free and on demand, with free, quality health care for all. Sex will be free from the snooping of preachy busybodies and corrupt cops. The liberation of the prostitute can’t be separated from the liberation of women as a whole, and prostitution will die only as the institution of the family is replaced. For women’s liberation through socialist revolution!

The “White Slavery” Panic in the U.S. and the Status of Women

Splashed on the cover of the *New York Times Magazine* on 25 January 2004, Peter Landesman’s “Sex Slaves on Main Street: The Girls Next Door” painted a sensationalist picture of seemingly normal family homes on every other

block harboring women who are held in “sex slavery” and are “sometimes killed.” It turns out that Landesman manipulated or left out some facts. Among other problems, he neglected to mention that one of his main sources, the former “sex slave” Andrea, who can’t remember her real name or her age, is recovering from multiple personality disorder. The controversy over Landesman’s article resulted in a formal acknowledgment by the *New York Times* that some errors had been committed. The sensationalist cover of the magazine, showing the body and knee-socked legs of a school girl, was misleading; the *Times* admitted that the girl is actually 19 years old, and the photo was retouched to remove her school insignia, in violation of the *Times*’ policy against altering photos. However, the *Times* stated that it stood by the facts in Landesman’s article. Now a movie based on the article is in the works, with a script by Landesman and to be directed by Roland Emmerich, known for such sci-fi thrillers as *Independence Day*.



“White slavery” tract, 1910, one of many that flooded U.S. in anti-immigrant sex panic.

Landesman’s over-the-top sensationalism could have come right out of the “white slavery” hysteria that swept Europe and the United States 100 years ago. When populations not of Protestant Northern European extraction began to dominate immigration into the U.S., this development ignited profound racist and nativist reactions with accompanying hysteria over sex, religion and culture. Thus, while official government policy toward immigration is largely determined by the labor needs of the economy, social and cultural questions play an important role.

This was probably most dramatically seen first in reaction to the Chinese immigration in the American West, particularly with regard to women. The federal Page Law of 1875 forbade the entry of Chinese, Japanese and “Mongolian”

contract laborers, and of women for the purpose of prostitution. This exclusion effectively banned all Chinese women from joining their husbands, except for the families of merchants, from 1882 to 1943, when the law was finally changed. So a lively trade in prostitutes from China arose, where someone could buy a girl and ship her overseas to a brothel—real sex slavery.

In some cases, when impoverished Chinese families sold their daughters into American prostitution, the women faithfully sent hundreds of dollars home to help their families. The women often stunned social workers by refusing to leave their sexual bondage for Christian missions. Real prostitutes have always had more complicated hopes and fears than the mythic creatures the moral reformers went forth to rescue.

Prostitution became a national obsession during the Progressive Era, roughly from 1900 to 1920, when a period of capitalist reform made the vice laws what they are today. Progressivist reformers sought to clean up what they considered



Dennis Silverstein

Nina Hartley, socialist and X-rated movie star, says, "We cannot...be drawn into limiting by law what consenting adults do in private."

to be the worst abuses of capitalist exploitation in the urban centers, from lack of health care to slum housing and dangerous working conditions. Some of the political attributes of Progressivism are well illuminated by its anti-prostitution drive, which was actually a debate about the status of women in society and is documented in *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, by John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

The new wave of immigration after 1900 was largely from South and East Europe; for example, Italians, Polish Jews and Russians. At the same time, birth rates were going down among white Protestants as the divorce rate went up, prompting cries of "race suicide." This was also the period of an unprecedented entry of women into the workforce other than domestic service. From 1900 to 1910 the number of

female wage earners went from 5.3 to 7.6 million, a 43 percent increase, concentrated in office, telephone and factory work. At the same time unionism and political activism grew among women workers—which was definitely not to the credit of the racist, anti-woman AFL craft union bureaucracy. In New York City, for example, on 8 March 1908 women workers on the Lower East Side first celebrated what was to become International Women's Day. In 1909 shirtwaist workers went on strike in the city.

This growth of wage work meant the emergence of a layer of young, independent, working-class women in the cities. It's the classic Marxist point that the entry of women into the labor force represents the first step in their liberation from the family yoke. In 1914, a report by the Massachusetts Vice Commission put it this way: "The early economic independence of working girls brings temptations, and makes them intolerant of restraint. It has become the custom of young women to go about freely, unaccompanied."

At this time prostitution was formally illegal but generally tolerated in most American cities. Each city had its red-light district, such as Storyville in New Orleans, the Levee in Chicago, the Barbary Coast in San Francisco, where vice flourished. Of course the reform movement went after them first. Anti-vice crusaders held marches and outdoor prayer meetings in red-light districts.

In 1909 a sensationalist panic burst on the scene, launched by the Chicago magazine *McClure's*, which described an "international Jewish white-slavery organization." The hysteria spread like lightning as articles and books with titillating titles and lurid illustrations poured out, charging a conspiracy to abduct and force women into prostitution. This "white slave trade" was described as an international, organized syndicate run by foreigners who brought foreign prostitutes into the U.S. and also lured or kidnapped thousands of innocent American maidens into a life of slavery and sin.

Dozens of cities launched investigations into prostitution and "white slavery." A prime example is a Chicago Vice Commission report of 1911, "The Social Evil in Chicago," which adopted as its motto, "Constant and Persistent Repression of Prostitution the Immediate Method: Absolute Annihilation the Ultimate Ideal." Historian Mark Thomas Connelly describes these reports as identifying "clandestine prostitution" as "almost any premarital or nonmonogamous female sexual activity," i.e., any sex act deemed a violation of bourgeois morality (*The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980]). The solution was to discourage women's departure from traditional roles, and various measures were pursued to try to force this to happen. Campaigners attacked ice cream parlors, restaurants, dance halls, saloons and the automobile and demanded censorship of movies, while they urged families to keep their daughters home and out of the workforce. Since the "social evil" was linked with alcohol in the reformers' minds, the movement for Prohibition, which became law in 1920, gained much momentum. Despite the hysteria, very little evidence of a traffic in "white slaves" was ever uncovered, and none at all of an organized international syndicate.

Prostitutes faced intimidation, exploitation and violence, which only increased under this persecution. Those who were immigrants suffered further. Racist reformers indignantly warned "respectable" women to enter those "dangerous" Chinese laundries only with an escort, lest they be ensnared in a Chinese brothel (James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The*



Hulton Archive



Edna and Art Rust Jr.



Hans Arne Nakrem

Mann Act victims: Charlie Chaplin, hounded by FBI for Communist sympathies, acquitted in 1944; Jack Johnson (with his wife), target of race-hate for boxing title, convicted in 1913; Chuck Berry spent three years in jail.

Politics of Sin in American History [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003]). By 1920 a panoply of laws had shut down the red-light districts and driven prostitution underground and onto the street. Control of prostitution changed hands from madams and prostitutes to pimps, mobsters and cops. Physical violence rapidly increased.

The witchhunt came to a head with the outbreak of World War I, when fears of sexually transmitted disease prompted government legislation to "protect" military recruits from prostitutes. By the end of the war some 30,000 women had been apprehended on suspicion of prostitution and incarcerated, often without the benefit of due process, trial, or legal representation. The law permitted the government to incarcerate any woman suspected to have a sexually transmitted disease, and her lifestyle or rumored sex life could be reason enough for a medical examination.

The Mann Act and the American Witchhunt

The most potent witchhunting law emerging from the "white slavery" scare was the Mann Act (1910), which made it a federal offense to transport women across state lines for "immoral purposes." Over the next eight years, the Justice Department obtained almost 2,200 convictions for trafficking in women. The act's official title is the White Slave Traffic Act, but according to historian David J. Langum, the first arrest was a madam escorting five willing prostitutes from Chicago to Michigan (*Crossing Over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994]). The Act was soon interpreted by the Supreme Court to apply to noncommercial sex as well. In the 1917 Caminetti case, two young married guys from Sacramento, California got arrested for taking a train to Reno, Nevada with their girlfriends. Enforcement of the Mann Act began the transformation of the tiny Bureau of Investigation from a small Washington office into the nationwide FBI.

One of the first victims of the Mann Act was heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson, who was a hero to the oppressed black masses across the country when he won his title. But the racists were not going to allow Johnson to rest on his laurels, particularly since he was known for his relationships with white women. When federal agents persuaded white prostitute Belle Schreiber to testify that John-

son had paid for her travel from Pittsburgh to Chicago for "immoral purposes," the way was paved for an indictment under the Mann Act. In May 1913 an all-white jury convicted Johnson, who was sentenced to one year in prison.

The Mann Act is still law in the United States. While it has been amended so that it cannot be so easily used against unmarried couples who travel across state lines, other amendments have *strengthened* its clout. It now applies to male "victims" as well, and it has been used to crack down on gay prostitutes in Washington, D.C.

Unholy Alliance of Feminists and Religious Right

Today, stories of the perils of ice cream parlors and the like are reserved for the witchhunt against a supposed national epidemic of child abuse, which conflates everything from the brutal rape and murder of Megan Kanka to consensual sex with a person under 18. It was not very long ago that even more ludicrous charges of sex crimes grabbed headlines and mobilized police to persecute innocent people. Throughout the 1980s dozens of people went to jail, charged with crimes that never happened, in the panic over "Satanic ritual abuse" of children in day-care centers. This hysteria was also braintested by the capitalist state, the religious right and the U.S. feminist movement.

This unholy alliance began in the 1980s when Women Against Pornography declared porn to be the "cause" of violence against women, and Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon drafted a law (later ruled unconstitutional) that redefined pornography as the "sexually explicit subordination of women." Feminist ideology played a major role supporting and justifying the government censorship drive for busts that closed down mom-and-pop stores that rented x-rated videos and spurred attacks on erotic art. Meanwhile, anti-abortion bigots were torching clinics and threatening abortion doctors with death, but the reaction of the mainstream feminist movement was to call on the racist, anti-woman state to "protect" abortion rights. Today the feminists call on that same state to supposedly "liberate" prostitutes and "sex slaves" through the anti-trafficking campaign.

The feminist guru of the crusade against "sex slavery" is Kathleen Barry, professor of sociology in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Pennsylvania

State University. Her book *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1979) is considered the seminal work in the anti-trafficking movement. Barry later updated her views to cut a wide swathe indeed in the definition of "sex slavery":

"Female sexual slavery includes not only women in prostitution who are controlled by pimps but wives in marriages who are controlled by husbands and daughters who are incestuously assaulted by fathers. My definition...breaks away from traditional distinctions between 'forced' and 'free' prostitution and between wives and whores. When women and/or girls are held *over time, for sexual use*, they are in conditions of slavery....Slavery is one aspect of the violation of women and children in prostitution, in marriage, and in families."

— *The Prostitution of Sexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 1995)

Just in case she left anything out, Barry argues that whatever isn't "sex slavery" is sexual exploitation. Women, you see, believe in love, but men just want sex. She wrote a 381-page book just to rehash that old tripe.

The voluminous anti-trafficking literature is peppered with references and footnotes to Barry's writings, which give the cachet of academic respectability to what is simply anti-sex ranting. But Barry is no mere theoretician. She conducted her first international meetings on the subject in 1980, moving on to an international conference in Rotterdam in 1983. In 1988 she founded the CATW, which lobbies mightily to change anti-prostitution laws so that, as is now the law in Sweden, it's the *customer* who is penalized instead of the prostitute.

The Network of Sex Work Projects, an organization that fights for the rights of sex workers, organized a demonstration in protest of CATW policies at the July 2002 International Conference on AIDS in Barcelona. Their leaflet, "The Anti-Sex Work Anti-Trafficking Agenda: A Threat to Sex Workers' Health and Human Rights" (www.nswp.org), states in part:

"CATW recently published a 'hit list' of organisations receiving US funding, accusing them of 'promoting prostitution.' This hit list includes well-known and well-respected organisations providing essential HIV care and prevention services."

The CATW was one of 13 feminist organizations that lobbied the U.S. Congress for the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act; others included the Feminist Majority, the National Organization for Women and Equality Now. They joined forces with anti-abortion bigot Congressman Chris Smith, a sponsor of the bill, and the International Justice Mission, a group of Christian missionaries that launches raids on Asian brothels to "liberate" the prostitutes, while the Dateline NBC cameras roll. As a reward for the feminist contributions, Laura Lederer, director of the anti-trafficking Protection Project and editor of the anti-pornography bible *Take Back the Night*, was given a prominent position in the U.S. State Department's trafficking office.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

In functioning as an ideological prop of the capitalist state, the American feminist establishment is simply fulfilling its role as the voice of those bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women whose only quarrel with capitalist society is that it denies them full access to the boys' club of ruling-class power. But for most women the system of capitalist imperialism means unemployment, homelessness and lack of health care, or for Third World women, oppressive practices like female genital mutilation or enforced segregation



Workers Vanguard

San Francisco, 20 March 2004: Spartacist League joins in protesting U.S. imperialist occupation of Iraq.

under the veil. In the Third World, most women get to watch their children die and die young themselves, often in childbirth or after some botched abortion. To single out prostitution as somehow a problem towering over this brutality can only play into the hands of the bourgeois ideologues backing up U.S. imperialism.

The "sex slavery" crusade is a cynical and dangerous business because it both legitimizes government persecution of immigrants and invokes state authority to intervene as moral arbiter in our most intimate affairs. It bolsters the anti-sex witchhunt as a whole and deflects attention from the real violence perpetrated every day against women and children under this class system. The social alienation of a system in which the mass of people are tools for the enrichment of the very few is compounded by the institutionalized inequalities of race, religion, nationality and sex. Violence against women springs in part from the deep sexual insecurities fostered by repression and social irrationality.

Women have fought in the front ranks of every revolutionary struggle on this planet, from the women of Paris who marched on Versailles at the beginning of the Great French Revolution of 1789 to the women workers who sparked the Russian Revolution on International Women's Day 1917 with a march demanding food for their starving families. Today the struggle for women's rights has assumed even more political importance after the capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR and East Europe. The International Communist League looks to organizing the courage and dedication of militant women workers under the banner of the revolutionary proletarian party. The precondition for women's emancipation is the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order, which exploits women as workers and oppresses them as household drudges.

As we said in "The 'Date Rape' Issue: Feminist Hysteria, Anti-Sex Witchhunt" (*Women and Revolution* No. 43, Winter 1993-Spring 1994):

"To create genuinely free and equal relations between people in all spheres, including sex, requires nothing less than the destruction of this class system and the creation of a communist world. In a classless society social and economic constraints over sexual relations will be non-existent, and in the words of Frederick Engels, 'there is no other motive left except mutual inclination'." ■

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Women and Revolution



NY Times



David Turnley/Corbis

New York Times Magazine (25 January 2004) foments hysteria over immigrant women as "sex slaves" in U.S. Right: Romanian woman illegally entering Germany arrested by border police, 1993.

Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against "Sex Trafficking"

In a tribute to American imperialism last New Year's Day, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell patted himself and his chief, George W. Bush, on the back with these words: "In 2003 we freed thousands from oppression through President Bush's program to combat human trafficking.... We have saved lives and redeemed the enslaved, and we will do more in 2004" (*New York Times*, 1 January 2004). The United States has indeed escalated its crusade against human trafficking, "especially sex slavery," according to Congressman Christopher H. Smith, the author of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Since words like "freedom" and "redemption" are American imperialist lingo for increased government repression and the bloody military jackboot, just as "liberation" is

Washington's word for the colonial rape and occupation of Iraq, the pledge to "do more" is a threat. Here, "redeeming the enslaved" means unleashing the cops and courts in a multiple attack on immigrants, women and sex.

Government sources claim that thousands of women and children each year are coerced, kidnapped, smuggled across borders, and forced into prostitution by gangs of criminals. The U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, headed by former Republican Congressman John R. Miller, features on its Web site stories of rape, sexual abuse, beatings and coerced prostitution. The media is pitching the story with dramatic headlines, pictures and lurid stories.

What the government terms "modern-day slavery" is largely debt bondage, where a worker is forced to pay off an

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