

Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League



\$1.00

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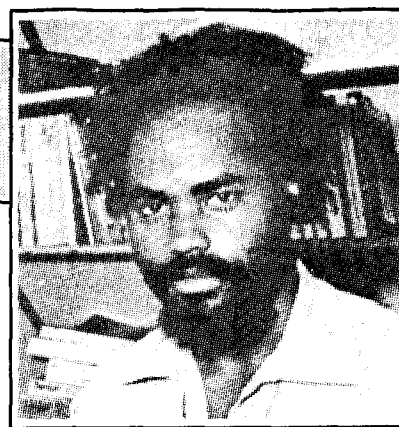
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Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!

Save the Life of Mumia Abu-Jamal!



In solitary confinement in Pennsylvania's Huntingdon state prison, Mumia Abu-Jamal awaits the electric chair. He is a death row political prisoner today because he has defied this racist, capitalist order. A former Black Panther Party spokesman, outspoken MOVE supporter, and a journalist called "the voice of the voiceless" for his championing the rights of the oppressed, Mumia has been in the cross hairs of Philadelphia's racist killer cops for 21 years. Because he is a militant, still resisting the racist system which is trying to kill him, the state is readying the legal lynch rope for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Mumia's history reflects that of a generation of black militants from the civil rights movement through the Reagan years. At the age of 13, Mumia was first beaten and arrested for protesting a rally for Alabama governor George "Segregation Forever" Wallace, held in the white racist bastion of Mayor Frank Rizzo's South Philadelphia. At 14, Mumia was co-founder and Minister of Information of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party; as he recalled, this experience "charged my pen with a distinctive anti-authoritarian, and anti-establishment character that survives to this day."

A widely acclaimed journalist since 1970, Mumia broadcast on national radio networks, interviewing Julius Erving, Bob Marley, Puerto Rican independence fighters and others, and was elected president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Association of Black Journalists in 1980. Mumia is a well-known supporter of the Philadelphia

MOVE organization, itself the target of a murderous vendetta unleashed by Rizzo's cops. In 1978 Mumia covered Rizzo's campaign against MOVE, including the siege of the Powelton Village MOVE home by more than 600 heavily armed cops. In 1985, this vendetta culminated in Mayor Wilson Goode's hideous bombing of MOVE, which left eleven, including five children, dead.

On 5 November 1988 in Philadelphia, a labor/black anti-Klan rally triumphantly occupied Independence Mall, site of a threatened skinhead/Klan march. The Partisan Defense Committee's work in building the "Stop the KKK!" mobilization led to a massive outpouring of opposition to the race-terrorists from union members, civil rights activists, community groups and others, which successfully stopped the KKK/skinheads from daring to appear. Mumia Abu-Jamal sent a taped message to the rally in his hometown: "It's time folk de-hood the Klan and take a close look at what's beneath," he said, describing "the Klan's primary role and function: to use racial hatred to divide the many peoples who make up this country so that the few, the ruling class, can more easily exploit the many." "Around the Klan demonstration no doubt stand the squadron of cops whose sole assignment is to protect the Klan if they were to appear," Mumia continued; "It is fitting that one agency of the state, the cops, are assigned to protect another agent, the Klan. For make no mistake, the KKK serves the interests of the ruling class who must divide to rule.... Far more deadly racists sit in black robes, send blacks, Hispanics and poor into prisons where the state plays slavemaster."

On 9 December 1981 the cops tried to kill Mumia Abu-Jamal in the streets, but failed. He was hospitalized with a bleeding stomach wound, arrested and framed up on charges of killing a cop. At his trial he was denied counsel of his own choice. To get a hanging jury, the court permitted the seating of a white juror who admitted he could not be impartial, while excluding eleven prospective black jurors simply on the prosecution's request. Witnesses gave conflicting testimony. Although Mumia requested it, the cop who arrested him wasn't allowed to testify. At the 1982 sentencing hearing, the prosecutor argued that Mumia be condemned to death simply for his political history and beliefs, claiming that Abu-Jamal's prior membership in the Black Panther Party and a 12-year-old quotation that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" proved he was a committed cop-killer!

The prosecution claimed Mumia would get "appeal after appeal after appeal," trying to hoodwink the jury

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Women and Revolution

**Journal of the Spartacist League Central Committee
Commission for Work Among Women**

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CHRIS BROWNLIE

1950-1989

On 28 November 1989 Chris Brownlie died of pneumonia due to AIDS at the age of 39 at his home in Los Angeles, California. A leading gay activist, Chris fought for decent health care for AIDS patients and organized to stop the California ballot initiative that would have required detention of all those testing positive for HIV.

Chris had been active in politics in Los Angeles since the early 1970s, when he helped found the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center. All his life he was a passionate anti-racist. Chris was a member of the Lavender & Red Union, founded in LA in 1974, which defined itself as a "Gay liberation-Communist organization." The L&RU's serious inquiry into political program and struggle over the next three years led to a decisive break with its New Left Maoist/sectoralist program. Renamed the Red Flag Union, the group fused with the Spartacist League in August 1977 after months of intense discussion and political collaboration, including around the defense of democratic rights for homosexuals against Anita Bryant's witch-hunting bigotry. In its last issue, published as a special fusion supplement to *Workers Vanguard*, *Red Flag* printed "Homosexual Oppression and the Communist Program." Understanding that the fight for gay rights must be part of a working-class struggle for rights for all, the majority of the RFU was won to the revolutionary program of the international Spartacist tendency (now the International Communist League).

As one comrade wrote after Chris's death, "At the time of the RFU fusion, I remember a senior comrade commenting that the fusion enriched the SL as a whole in a unique way and was in the best Leninist tradition of the party being a tribune of the oppressed. Chris was a gifted individual who had a lot to offer." Chris worked as a party activist for over three years in the Spartacist League branches in Boston, New York and Chicago. In December 1980 he resigned from membership. Although Chris later became quite distant politically from our organization, we do not forget the years of good work he put in as a member. Comrades remember fondly his wit and his warmth.



Mitzi Trumbo

The last few years of Chris's life were dedicated to fighting for the rights of AIDS patients. He served as a volunteer for the AIDS Project Los Angeles and the Minority AIDS Project. His work with the AIDS Hospice Foundation was so pivotal that in recognition the first hospice in Los Angeles County was named the Chris Brownlie Hospice. While thousands died, victims of both a terrible disease and criminal neglect by the bigots in the Reagan/Bush administrations, people like Chris Brownlie undertook the fundamental work of public education and support for the sick which should have been the emergency priority of the public health system.

In February 1987 Chris was diagnosed with AIDS himself. He survived seven bouts of *pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, as well as two attacks of cryptococcal meningitis and a potentially blinding CMV retinitis infection. Between hospital stays he devoted his time to the fight for care for AIDS patients. He died with his longtime companion, Phill Wilson, and friends at his side. On December 16, over 200 people attended a memorial service and over 50 people paid tribute to his memory at a rally and candlelight march organized by ACT UP.

Letter

Marx and Engels on Homosexuals, Revisited

In *Women and Revolution* No. 35 (Summer 1988) we printed "In Defense of Homosexual Rights: The Marxist Tradition," which sparked some controversy over Marx and Engels' views of homosexuality. A letter to the editor and a reply appeared in *W&R* No. 36 (Spring 1989). We print here another contribution to this discussion.

17 March 1989

Dear Comrades,

I'm surprised you didn't recognize the central thrust of Engels' remarks in his 22 June 1869 letter to Marx even through the uptight British translation. Specifically, I would like to see independent evidence (i.e., not the passage in this letter) that Engels actually believed the repressive Prussian state might abolish anti-sodomy laws (as opposed, say, to his agitating for such a repeal as a *political tactic*).

For surely it is apparent that this whole section of the letter is characterized by repeated word-play, in which increasingly implausible (and ludicrous) situations are envisioned, culminating in the image of the founding fathers of Marxism being forced to "pay bodily tribute" to the triumphant socialist-pederasts [German Lassallean J.B. von] Schweitzer & Consorten. In other words, it's just one joke after another, something your sober-sided reading somehow missed.

Some examples (my translations throughout): the mock horror at "the younger generation"; the "high and highest [?!] pederasts": the at least semi-blasphemous double-entendre with "introite" (enter in)—a mocking reference to the introit in a church service or the biblical "enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" or both simultaneously. The "droits du cul" might be a parody of the "droits de seigneur" (appropriate and funny), with perhaps the added suggestion that for socialists such an ass-backward approach is a *cul de sac*.

Your comment then that a lot of less than serious parlance was perforce relegated to correspondence in the pre-telephone era is right on the mark, but you seem somehow to have missed the French connection—no Francophone available?—in the phrase "Guerre aux cons, paix aux trous-de-cul," which of course parodies the socialist slogan "Krieg den Palästen, Friede den Hütten!" (war on the palaces, peace to the cottages!). (Like 'Enry 'Iggins in *My Fair Lady*, Marx and Engels seem to have felt that "the French don't much care what they do so long as they pronounce it properly" and were more comfortable resorting to French for such risqué material.)

To assume in this overall context of verbal play that the reference to the new North German Penal Code's recognizing the *droits du cul* expresses Engels' serious belief as opposed to being there just to set up further witticisms

(his feigned fears for "poor frontside people like us") then strikes me as heavy-handed pseudo-literalism: it was precisely because the thought of any such action by the staunch defenders of capitalist morality was ludicrous (in both senses of the word) that Engels could use it to hang his little joke on. In fact this very sentence culminates in yet another delicious double-entendre, scanted in the International Publishers edition: "Just wait till the new North German Penal Code has recognized the *droits du cul* and then he'll come/operate in quite a different way."

Necessary consequence of this misreading is then your notion of the "politically disoriented" Engels. And I think this should have sent alarm bells ringing. For it is hard to imagine the Engels portrayed here—a believer in the divorce of the morality enforced by the state from its class basis—as being capable, for example, of writing *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

What has happened is that you were deceived by a Stalinist(-instigated) translation with all the typical defects: a petty-bourgeois, prudish, indeed bowdlerizing, approach that finds it necessary to glorify the infallible founders of "Marxism-Leninism" by excising or covering over all their warts and blemishes, turning them into remote icons and, not so incidentally, robbing them of their essential humanity and much of their very genuine human appeal. So Engels' letter in fact emerges in quite a different, and favorable, light: Engels was, of course, well aware of Marx's affection for word-play and irony (witness the German text of *Capital*) and deliberately played up to it here. It's a nice aspect of their friendship, and his "Moor" must have been delighted.

You rightly note that Schweitzer's homosexuality did not prevent Marx from assiduously trying to recruit him to the First International. So while Marx and Engels (inevitably) shared some of the moral values of their time (Engels explicitly terms Schweitzer's homosexuality "Schweinerei": another prettification in the I.P. translation), sexual proclivities were to them of secondary or tertiary importance (or wholly irrelevant). The proof can be found in the passage in question, where Schweitzer's sexual leanings, far from provoking a moral diatribe, are simply the take-off point for a series of witticisms, i.e., are trivialized or, more accurately, accorded no more weight than they deserve. (Engels actually seems most distressed at Schweitzer's Germanic tendency to erect them into a program.) For Marx and Engels, though, it was *socialist* program that counted, for the liberation of all man- (and woman-) kind, not just that of homosexuals, this last in any case a utopian desire so long as capitalism held sway.

Comradely,
Dimir

Spartakists Fight Against Capitalist Reunification

Fourth Reich: Mortal Danger to Workers

The results of the March 18 East German elections, a landslide vote for the right-wing parties promoting speedy capitalist reunification, represent a mortal threat to the DDR working class, women and youth. The West German bankers and bosses want to level every social gain of the DDR—a deformed workers state built up from the rubble of Hitler's Third Reich. They intend to exploit the population as a new low-wage labor pool for Western capital and to seize the DDR as a launching pad for their *Drang nach Osten* (drive to the East) to reconquer that one-sixth of the globe ripped away from the capitalist market through the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

It won't be so easy. The gains of the East German workers state—collectivized property and a planned economy including subsidized housing, day care, education, full employment—can't be wiped out by paper ballots. Many who voted for the fool's gold of capitalist prosperity will resist a Fourth Reich that threatens to shred the fabric of their lives to rags. Many defensive battles loom ahead. What's necessary is to build an authoritative Leninist-egalitarian party to mobilize the power of the DDR working class in the plants and in the streets to defend the gains of their state against a capitalist rollback that means unemployment, gutting of social services, and resurgence of Nazi racism.

The vote reflected massive false consciousness and illusions in the lying promise of wealth offered by Western capitalist parties in slick campaign brochures and staffers paid for in hard currency. It also reflected the deep disorientation and demoralization of a population which

brought down the corrupt and bureaucratic Honecker regime in October but was denied the time to question, debate and build a genuine, socialist egalitarian alternative before they were blitzkrieged in a concerted campaign of economic and political destabilization by the West. Especially in the face of Gorbachev's seemingly limitless efforts to appease imperialism (e.g., by withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, pushing the Cubans out of Angola, etc.) and his introduction of inequalities and market reforms in the Soviet Union, many looked West and not East.

An Unfinished Revolution

The political revolution in East Germany erupted like the shocking force of a volcano presumed dormant. Erich Honecker had presided over one of the most encrusted Stalinist regimes on the globe. Last summer, his rule began to crack under the impact of events in East Europe which revealed that, unlike the suppression of the Hungarian workers revolt in 1956 or the "Prague Spring" in 1968, this time the Soviet Red Army would not be employed to back up local regimes by force. Severe economic dislocation was produced by the outflow of personnel, mainly educated and skilled people, through Hungary into West Germany. The exodus was self-selected. Millions stayed to fight for genuine socialism, reflected in banners with slogans like "For Communist Ideals! No Privileges!" Mass popular street demonstrations centered in Leipzig swelled week by week and on November 7 the entire East German government



Spartakist Workers Party demonstrates outside East Berlin Volkskammer (parliament), March 6: Against privatization! No to capitalist reunification!



Reuters



Der Spiegel

Sinister forces for capitalist Anschluss: Skinheads in Leipzig burn leftist literature; German nationalists raise banner of "Germany One Fatherland."

resigned. Travel restrictions to the West were lifted with the opening of the Berlin Wall (which also eased the exodus).

A "Round Table" was incorporated into the government as a semi-advisory body, including not only the rapidly decomposing Stalinist party but also right-wing Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, dissident groups such as New Forum and the United Left. The hated *Stasi* (secret police) was disbanded. The DDR was in the throes of a thoroughgoing political revolution: the masses rejected the legitimacy of their rulers and the bureaucrats could no longer rule in the old way. The early months of the revolution were marked by a palpable mass euphoria

and spirit of inquiry for new ideas and alternatives, but crucially with very little organized participation by the working class.

At the same time, the West German bourgeoisie began mobilizing very heavily on all political and economic fronts to undermine and absorb the DDR. It was a concerted campaign of destabilization, similar to the way the U.S. imperialists turned the economic screws on Chile under Allende. The Volkskammer (parliament) elections scheduled for May 6 were moved up to March 18. Joint ventures and financial takeovers of state-owned industries began before people could even cast a vote in this distorted plebiscite on reunification.

Our comrades in the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands [SpAD]) fought as the only clear, unambiguous opposition to a capitalist reunification of Germany. Our fight was not an electoralist one. Our candidates in Berlin, Halle, Leipzig and Rostock (who received 2,396 votes in those districts, 0.07 percent) ran in these elections to advance a program of struggle that must be taken up by proletarian fighters throughout the DDR today. The choices are starkly posed: fight for a Germany of workers councils to replace the corrupt, nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies, or be eaten alive by the imperialists who intend terrible immiseration and exploitation of the workers of East Germany and beyond.

Decades of Stalinist Betrayal

Why was the working class so passive in the dramatic events of these months? Contrary to the arguments of the capitalist press, the SED (the Stalinist party) was not the preserve of an elite few, but a mass party embracing much of the working class. Workers experienced a deep sense of betrayal at the revelations of their leaders' corruption and mismanagement. They were rightfully upset about the special retreats reserved for party bosses, their fleets of private cars and their swimming pools. Yet these

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privileges pale in comparison with the grotesque extremes of wealth and poverty that condition life in the "free world." In New York, the finance capital of U.S. imperialism, the wealthy few inhabit a glitzy Trump Tower while the homeless huddle for warmth on the heating grates outside. The revulsion expressed by the working people of East Germany at the bureaucrats' privileges is testimony to a belief in egalitarianism that runs deep in their social consciousness.

The DDR is a *deformed* workers state, where despite a planned economy and collectivized property, the workers have been politically denied direct and democratic control of their society through the rule of their own elected factory councils. A bureaucratic caste lorded over them and made a mockery of communism. Fifty years of Stalinism atomized the working class and left little collective experience of independent political struggle. After Stalin's death in 1953 a series of political revolutions swept through Eastern Europe; the 17 June 1953 uprising in the DDR was the first mass workers revolt against Stalinism. The workers' move toward political power in the DDR and in Hungary and Poland in 1956 was brutally crushed by the Stalinist regimes.

Since the DDR political revolution began last fall, workers have been increasingly confronted with the contradiction between their nominal and their actual position in society. Nominally, they are the ruling power; it's supposed to be a workers state and they believe that the factories belong to them. But everyday experience led them to believe, correctly, that the bureaucracy was doing something behind their backs, making deals against them. They knew who was trying to buy their factories, but who the hell was trying to sell them and on whose authority?

Treptow: The Turning Point

In early January the fascists committed a gross anti-Soviet provocation and racist desecration of the Soviet war memorial at Treptow Park where 5,000 Soviet soldiers who died liberating Berlin are buried. We Trotskyists initiated a call for a mass, proletarian-centered united-front protest to stop the Nazis. So out of touch with the working class and so fearful of them, the Stalinists initially opposed our call because they didn't think workers would respond. As our leaflet was distributed in factories throughout Berlin the Stalinists then endorsed and moved to take over the demonstration. But in the new political climate, with party hacks falling all over each other to disavow "Stalinism," the mobilization retained its united-front character, featuring anti-fascist speakers from West and East Berlin including Trotskyists.

A quarter of a million people came out on January 3 to show their outrage and determination to stop the Nazis and to express their solidarity with the Soviet soldiers in the DDR—to the horror of the West German rulers and Social Democrats who paint the 370,000 Soviet troops as a foreign army of "occupation." We Trotskyists spoke under our own banners and debated the future course of the DDR while the Stalinists, some booing for all they were worth, learned that they couldn't orchestrate all publicly expressed opinion anymore. The Social Democrats, who we warned were the "Trojan horse of capitalist counterrevolution," and the West German bourgeoisie literally saw red and hounded the SED for associating with the Trotskyists. Tearing a page from Goebbels' note-

books on the "Big Lie," they screamed that the SED itself had defaced the Treptow monument as a pretext for re-establishing the *Stasi*. Recoiling before the capitalist campaign of threats and intimidation, the disintegrating SED capitulated to the bourgeoisie and its social-democratic handmaidens.

Renamed the "Party of Democratic Socialism" (PDS) the ex-SED accepted and promoted the prospect of "unity" with the capitalist exploiters. As the PDS vacated the political field, the West German bankers and the Social Democrats rushed in to fill it—with an avalanche of D-marks and ax handles. Bombarding DDR citizens with lies that the economy was on the verge of collapse, they sabotaged the economy and then tried to turn panic into votes by promising financial salvation in capitalist restoration. The Monday demonstrations in Leipzig became reunification rallies fringed by skinheads and fascists. Anti-fascist youths waving DDR flags in opposition to reunification were savagely beaten by Social Democrats at a rally in Neubrandenburg. This was the climate in which people were to "freely" express their will in the elections.

"The World's Biggest Takeover"

In an unusually candid article, the *New York Times* (15 March) described the stampede for unification before the elections:

"West German companies have announced so many deals recently that some people have dubbed German reunification 'the world's biggest takeover.'"

NEUES DEUTSCHLAND
SOZIALISTISCHE TAGESZEITUNG

— 3 January 1990

AN ALLE BÜRGER

Kommt zur Demonstration gegen rechts!

HEUTE UM 18 UHR
in der Anlage des Treptower Ehrenmals

Es häufen sich die neofaschistischen Aktivitäten in unserer Republik. Tief betroffen sind wir über die Schändung des Treptower Ehrenmals für die im zweiten Weltkrieg gefallenen Sowjetsoldaten. Das geschah im Herzen der Stadt, von der Hitlerfaschismus und zweiter Weltkrieg ausgingen.

Wir brauchen Einheitsfront gegen rechts!

Laßt unser Land nicht zur Heimstatt der Neofaschisten werden!

Zur Demonstration haben aufgerufen:
SED-PDS, Komitee der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer, Gesellschaft für DSF, Vertreter der Initiativen „Für unser Land“ und „Vereinigte Linke“, die Führungsgremien von DRD, LDPD und NDPD, die Gründungsgruppe der „NELKEN“, Spartakist-Gruppen und die Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands, SEW und SDAJ sowie viele andere antifaschistische und demokratische Bewegungen aus beiden Teilen Berlins.



Front-page announcement in SED's *Neues Deutschland* lists Spartakist-Gruppen and TLD among groups calling for united-front demonstration on January 3.

Интернационалистический привет
нашим товарищам
советским солдатам и офицерам!

Зимой 1917 года большевистская революция открыла перед
человечеством возможность жить в условиях коммунистической

¡Saludos internacionalistas a
nuestros compañeros cubanos!

Internationalistische Grüße an unsere vietnamesischen Genossen!
Cách mệnh quốc-tê chào đón cộng sản bạn Việt-Nam!

Cách mạng tháng Mười 1917 đã đón mừng chiến sĩ cách mạng từ mọi
quốc gia như chính những công dân của cộng hòa xã hội Việt.

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Polityczna rewolucja robotników niemieckich nawołuje do bohaterkiej tro-
rosyjskiego, polskiego i niemieckiego komunizmu, opartego o międzynarodową jed-
ności którego uosobieniem była Roza Luksemburg. Losy tych, tak ściśle ze-
związanymi, rewolucji znówu się wazą.

Towarzysze Polacy, przyjeżdżając na prace do NRD (DDR), nie spotkali-
tu obelgi od szowinistów, niżetne zarobki, niżetne pomieszczenia, a teraz i specja-
przepisy mające na celu ograniczenie Waszej wolności ruchu i bytu w tym kraju gdzie
pragniecie, testetnie pracownikami którzy nie starają na swoje zarobki i pomierzo-



Spartakist Photos



Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands organized Spartakist-Gruppen in DDR around key demands "Down with Stalinism!", "No to Capitalist Restoration!" and "For a Red Germany of Workers Councils in a Socialist United States of Europe." Spartakist banner: "For a Leninist-Egalitarian Party!" (left). Greetings in Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese and Polish distributed to Soviet soldiers and immigrant workers; Trotskyist literature was eagerly received, including outside December SED conference (above). TLD and Spartakist-Gruppen members founded the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany on January 21.

"Privately, some executives say another reason for the rush to announce deals is that investments and prospects of prosperity should translate into fewer votes for the Communists' descendants.

"Volkswagen's chairman said about his huge joint venture in East Germany, 'We see this as a European car project, with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia just around the corner'."

There's a word for this—*Anschluss*. Hitler did it to Austria in 1938. When Hitler figured that Austrian workers and even the Austrian clerical fascists were not going to vote for annexation by Germany, the German army arrived before the plebiscite was held. And today it isn't just East Germany that's targeted. The Poles, who suffered terribly under Hitler, worry that a Fourth Reich's tanks will soon rumble across their western border, the Oder-Neisse. Indeed, Helmut Kohl yearns to be the first "Reichs chancellor" since Adolf Hitler. The headquarters of his Christian Democrats in Bonn is adorned with a

map of Germany expanded to its 1937 borders! Uniquely among the regimes in East Europe, the anti-socialist and openly counterrevolutionary Solidarność government is now eager to have the Red Army stick around, given the alternatives!

The political, economic and social consequences of *Anschluss* would be devastating. Already the economy is being deliberately sabotaged so that the West can buy up plants at cheaper prices. At the Bergmann-Borsig plant in East Berlin, workers began to arrive at the factory with decks of cards and sleeping bags because there was no work due to a sudden lack of parts. In Erfurt, six day-care centers were closed which means women cannot go to work. They've even cut children's school lunches. Housing costs will soar and workers may be lucky to have a roof over their heads at all! A "reprivatization" law (a fancy word for theft of the people's property) passed by the Volkskammer would enable former capitalist owners



Spartakist

Treptow Park, January 3: "We will never forget that 20 million Soviet citizens gave their lives to smash Hitler's fascism," TLD speaker Renate Dahlhaus (lower right) said to 250,000-strong rally against fascist desecration of Soviet war memorial.

to seize their property back. The Spartakist Workers Party organized a largely ignored demonstration at the Volkskammer to protest the reprivatization law as it was being debated. Toralf Endruweit, a young SpAD member and candidate in the elections, addressed the protesters:

"We are here to say we will not allow our property to be stolen from us. We are here to say we will not allow our social gains to be destroyed. Who elected the ladies and gentlemen of the Volkskammer to give away our enterprises, our collective farms? Not us! Who do they speak for? Not us! These are the same bureaucrats who in the service of Stalinism expropriated our political power. Now they serve the capitalists who want to expropriate our social wealth....

"Our property must be under our control, the control of workers and soldiers councils, democratically elected to serve the working people.... We have to stand against the SPD handmaidens of capitalism. We have to fight the demoralizing influence of the PDS. A big 'no' vote to the parties of 'Deutschland One Fatherland' on March 18 will slow down the imperialist campaign of destabilization and panic-mongering. A vote for the SpAD is a vote for a clear and resounding no to capitalist reunification."

Meanwhile, the PDS and its fake-left colleagues in the Volkskammer acted out a fantasy popular front—their idea was to pass new laws to preserve all the decent and wonderful social programs of the DDR in a reunified capitalist state. Fat chance. A capitalist reunification means being swallowed by a revanchist ruling class that wants to mercilessly exploit the DDR's highly skilled working class, and to turn those workers into an underclass that can be wielded as a club against workers in the West. At the same time, labor struggle is inhibited because the East German workers have not even seen their new masters yet. And the new masters have not yet decided which factories they're going to tear down and which they will retain and where they will rebuild.

Struggle has already broken out when and where workers learned what was in store for them. At a construction site in East Berlin, workers learned of a planned joint venture that would reduce the workforce of 6,500 at their

Kombinat to just a few hundred. The news spread like wildfire and a small rebellion ensued. They decided to strike unless the Kombinat directors canceled the contract. A resolution was adopted and delivered to the *Generaldirektor*: "We were appalled that our Kombinat director had even considered such an idiotic contract. For years our Kombinat director was just a servant of the state too, and now he's treating the Kombinat as though it were his own property." The deal fell through.

At the EAW electrical plant in Berlin there have been warning strikes by workers against threatened layoffs which target first and foremost the foreign workers, like the many Vietnamese who must work or be deported. The Spartakist Workers Party has made a special effort to reach the Vietnamese, Polish and Cuban workers in the DDR, issuing greetings in their languages. Perhaps the most popular activity among the new members of the SpAD was to distribute solidarity greetings in

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**Trotskyism:
What It Isn't and
What It Is!**

February 1980 Spartacist Publishing Co. Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Russian to Soviet soldiers and officers in an effort to bring Trotskyist politics and the program for political revolution to these troops in the DDR—370,000 of whom stand as the front line of defense against NATO.

We fight to unify the working class throughout Eastern Europe—both East and West German, native and immigrant, including Vietnamese, Turkish and other “guest” workers, in Eastern Europe and the USSR—around a program of class struggle and revolutionary internationalism because the fate of all these proletarians is intertwined. Throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union now the question is posed, “which class shall rule?” A capitalist Greater Germany would unleash dark forces that even now are practicing their demagogy in the beer halls. It would be a springboard for the imperialists to mobilize against the Soviet Union. A revolutionary linkup of German with Soviet workers and soldiers would not only be a bulwark against the plans of the NATO revanchists but also a powerful basis for an internationally planned economy. A healthy planned economy requires workers democracy—passionate debate among the parties in workers councils over all the urgent political and economic problems of the day.

For Workers Political Revolution Against Stalinism!

Last year the smug sages of the American ruling class proclaimed “the end of history.” They claimed an eternal triumph for “democracy” and the “death of Communism.” Workers beware: World War I broke out when

capitalism also appeared to be at the apex of its powers and bourgeois parliamentarism an “eternal” regime. As the deformed workers states appear ripe for plundering, the competition among the major imperialist powers for the spoils vastly increases the danger of new wars. What we are witnessing is not the “death of Communism” but the death agony and unraveling of the Stalinist bureaucracies throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Since 1924, when Stalin led a bureaucratic political counterrevolution in the USSR codified in his “theory” of “socialism in one country,” Stalinism has been the antithesis of Leninism and the fight for revolutionary struggle of the working class on an international basis against its exploiters.

More than 50 years ago, Trotsky analyzed the deep social and economic contradictions of Stalinism and predicted its breakup. Prior to the Second World War, Trotsky remarked that the objective conditions for socialist revolution were not only ripe, they were overripe, but what was lacking was a genuine and authoritative revolutionary leadership at the head of the proletariat. That excruciating contradiction is even more true today. Once again this century, Germany is at the center of the struggle for revolution or counterrevolution. The International Communist League and the Spartakist Workers Party will continue our work in Germany—in the West and in the East, and points further east. Our task is to build a party rooted in the working class to fight for state power. For the communism of Lenin, Luxemburg and Liebknecht! Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky! ■

ARBEITERPRESSEKORRESPONDENZ SPARTAKIST

Nr. 17 Mittwoch, 10. Januar 1990 5 Pfennig



Aufruf der Spartakist-Gruppen und TLD Ehrt Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg!

Am 25. Januar 1924 wurde von Berlin Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg von Nazis hingerichtet. Am 21. Januar 1924 starb Vladimir Lenin in Moskau. Am Sonntag den 14. Januar wird in Berlin Friedriehsfelde ein Gedenkfest in Berlin Friedrichsfelde, an dem die Arbeiterrevolutionäre sich treffen. Liebknecht und Luxemburg zum 66. Jahrestag ihres Märtyrertodes und an die 66. Jahrestage des Todes von Lenin werden die Spartakist-Gruppen und TLD in Zusammenarbeit mit den Gruppen und TLD in Ostberlin, Leipzig, Chemnitz und anderen Städten der DDR ein Gedenkfest durchführen. Die Spartakist-Gruppen und TLD werden in allen Städten der DDR und in Westberlin an diesem Tag Demonstrationen durchführen. Die Spartakist-Gruppen und TLD werden in allen Städten der DDR und in Westberlin an diesem Tag Demonstrationen durchführen. Die Spartakist-Gruppen und TLD werden in allen Städten der DDR und in Westberlin an diesem Tag Demonstrationen durchführen.



Spartakist

Honor Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg!

Trotskyists lay wreath at grave of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde on January 14. In commemorating the “Three L’s” of Bolshevism in *Apprekorr* No. 17 (10 January), the TLD and Spartakist-Gruppen demanded:
• For a Leninist-egalitarian party! Return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky!

- Stop the Nazis through workers united-front action!
- Full citizenship rights for foreign workers!
- Down with NATO! Defend the DDR and Soviet Union!
- For a planned economy under a government of workers and soldiers councils!
- No sellout of the DDR! For a red Germany of workers councils in a socialist Europe!



Schmidtko/Neues Deutschland



Der Spiegel

Demonstrators in East Berlin on February 13 "Against Social Dismantling." Over 90 percent of women in the DDR are in the workforce.

Defend the Gains of East German Women!

Threatened with forced reunification with capitalist West Germany (BRD), the women of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) stand to be among the first to lose hard-won gains, already under attack in the Fourth Reich's *Anschluss*. Bonn has set July 1 as the target for making the West German mark the official currency of both countries and for final "merging" of social benefits—the wholesale dismantling and destruction of the planned economy and the "cradle to grave" social programs in the DDR.

That East German women have gained so much—despite the bureaucratic stranglehold of Stalinism over the economy and society of the DDR—is a testament to the power of the planned, socialized economy of the workers state. Highly educated, highly skilled, with the best maternity and childcare benefits in the world, and over 90 percent employed, women are a key component of the East German working class. But without a class-struggle fight against the privatization of production and the dismantling of the social programs, women will be driven from the workforce as unemployment and social austerity measures soar in pursuit of capitalist profits. In *Workers Vanguard* an article datelined Berlin, March 19, described the situation:

"Women will be hit particularly hard by social cuts affecting childcare, kindergartens and rent subsidies for single mothers. At the EKO steel plant in Eisenhüttenstadt, where one-third of the workforce are women, the night-shift crèche is being eliminated on weekends.

'That's it for me here,' fears one mother speaking for many."

—"Fourth Reich Wins in DDR Vote: D-Mark Elections in East Germany," WV No. 498, 23 March

Workers at the huge Leuna plant in Halle have expressed concern that women in the BRD are prohibited from working night shifts (based on laws from Bismarck's Reich). In a reunified capitalist Germany these laws alone would force thousands of East German women out of their jobs. We say, *all* workers should be protected from dangerous or onerous conditions at work.

The Bonn politicians have made no secret of their appetites to drive East German women back to "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (children, kitchen, church). One of the components of the CDU's platform in the Volkskammer elections was for "protection of the unborn." The CDU (Christian Democratic Union) seeks to export to the DDR the vicious witchhunt against abortion rights faced today by women in the BRD, where church bells are rung for victims of the "infant holocaust." In the weeks before the election DDR Deputy Education Minister Volker Abend, a member of the CDU, spoke out against state-funded school meals and day care: "This self-evident expectation, that the state should make such a social offer to everybody, as is still the case here, goes together with the socialist—and, I would like to say, the dictatorial—conception of the state" (*Neues Deutschland*, 13 February).

In the elections the candidates of the Spartakist



Spartakist speaker at International Women's Day rally in Käthe Kollwitz Platz, East Berlin. Spartakists called for defense of women's gains against threatened capitalist restoration, as well as for the extension of childcare through establishing free 24-hour centers.

Workers Party of Germany (SpAD) alone took a categorical stand against capitalist reunification, calling for the building of a Leninist-egalitarian vanguard party to stop the sellout by leading sharp class struggle. The important defensive fights ahead must galvanize the working class to strike back at the capitalist takeover. Already partial struggles have broken out: On February 13, 800 protesters, primarily women and children, demonstrated in East Berlin under the slogan "Against social dismantling—for all children and every woman." Striking West Berlin teachers joined the protest. Speakers reported a rise in abortions due to women's insecurity about the future. A demonstration in Dresden protested the closing of six day-care centers there, effectively making it impossible for women to work.

Defend Women's Gains!

The DDR was born from the destruction of Hitler's Reich by the Soviet Red Army and built by the victims of the Nazi regime. While the overthrow of capitalist property relations was established from above and not as the result of victorious proletarian revolution, social transformation in the DDR was deeper than elsewhere in Eastern Europe because it was necessary to root out the Nazi bourgeoisie and because there was a deep communist tradition in the German working class. Like all the deformed workers states, the DDR was from the beginning a fundamentally contradictory phenomenon: a society where a Stalinist bureaucracy rested upon the collectivized property and gains of the working class, yet denied political power to the proletariat, substituting bureaucratic commandism for the workers democracy which is vitally necessary to a planned economy. Inherent in Stalinism, with its anti-revolutionary dogma of "socialism in one country," is the destruction of Leninist internationalism by this socially conservative bureaucratic caste, imperiling the very survival of the workers states by appeasing world imperialism and selling out the struggles of workers in other countries.

Certainly, more than almost any other question, the status of women throws glaring light on the economic, social and political contradictions in the East German deformed workers state. The tremendous gains, side by

side with continuing inequality, stultifying repression and bureaucratic corruption, offer a classic confirmation of Marx's famous words: "Social progress can be measured exactly by the social standing of the fairer sex." At an eyewitness forum given in New York City on March 16, an SL spokesman recently returned from East Germany told a story that encapsulates the essence of Stalinist mismanagement as people experience it in their daily lives:

"The DDR is maybe the easiest country in the world to obtain a divorce. If both parties don't want to be together anymore, they can get divorced in about three weeks. While comrades from the West were marveling over this, one of our new East German comrades explained, 'Yes, but with the housing shortage, after I divorced my wife, I still had to live with her for a year and a half!'"

The working class of the DDR had to live these contradictions in their daily lives: free health care in a society where the air is so filthy from burning low-quality fuel that rates of lung disease soar; massively subsidized rent in ugly concrete buildings with no place for the children to play; claims of "socialism" for a society where political participation and the free exercise of the arts were stifled by bureaucrats backed by a dreaded secret police.

From the beginning the Stalinist ruling party, the SED—a conscious creation of the Kremlin to establish a bureaucratic grip on the highly political, highly militant German working class—subscribed to the Stalinist dogma that the institution of the family, the main social institution oppressing women, can be turned into a "fighting unit for socialism." Yet (as is true in the Soviet Union itself) this dogma is undermined by the gains of the collectivized economy, especially by the broad social implications of the fact that most women work full-time.

After World War II, with a generation of young men dead or crippled, women shouldered a large part of the burden of rebuilding society. The *Trümmerfrauen* ("women of the ruins") spent millions of hours clearing the rubble of the bombed cities to rebuild homes and factories. For a time women made up 60 percent of the workforce. With continuing labor shortages the DDR had to provide the necessary childcare and social support to enable women to work and to be mothers at the same time. The DDR's advanced industrial economy provided the material resources for broad social measures to quali-

tatively improve women's lives. And not least because of the German working class' long history in defense of women's rights, this commitment to equality for women is far more than the formal statement in the DDR constitution. The substantial material gains and benefits available to women from the state, and the support networks, such as workplace organizations, in this deeply collectivist society, have had a profound effect on social structures and attitudes. The socialization of household functions such as free, readily available childcare have helped to release women from the confines of the family.

At the birth of a child, women get a full year off work, with pay, at no risk of losing their jobs (the "baby year"). Available state benefits mean that women have less economic compulsion to stay married, and as a result there are many single mothers in the DDR, where for example a single mother with two children has the right to a two-bedroom apartment for 30 marks (\$5 in January 1990). Only a quarter of the people who have emigrated to the West in the last six months are women. The single mothers who have moved West are shocked to find that there are no provisions for them or their children.

In the DDR, women are truck drivers, crane operators, surgeons, judges. But they still come home at night to hours of household drudgery (the "second shift") made all the worse by desperate shortages of housing and consumer goods. Under the Ulbricht/Honecker regime women were virtually absent from the upper echelons of the party elite. Childcare facilities in state-run crèches and kindergartens are plentiful, inexpensive, well staffed by highly trained personnel, often at the work site itself. But many close by 6:30 or 7:00 p.m., making it difficult for women to have a life outside of work. Full 24-hour childcare is a fundamental demand of the Spartakist Workers Party, as part of our program for the genuine liberation of women in all aspects of social, political and economic life.

Defend Women's Right to Abortion!

Proclaiming the "death of Communism," the bourgeois press has of course been mum on the gains of East German women. Instead the capitalist journals have tried to paint Marxism and the question of women's liberation with the colors of the Stalinist Dracula Ceausescu in Romania, where draconian anti-abortion laws backed up by secret police terror meant thousands of arrests of women and doctors. Significantly the press has been silent about what Polish women face under pro-capitalist Solidarność: the Catholic church has joined with other right-wing forces to illegalize abortion there, seeking to "make Christian morality the basis of the social order" (*International Viewpoint*, 12 June 1989).

In 1956 Poland made abortion legal and free in the state health service, although shortages in care drove many to expensive private abortions. But in February 1989 a bill was put before the Sejm to give "legal protection to the unborn child" which would impose three years imprisonment for women and their doctors for abortions, without any exceptions, even for rape. The bill would also illegalize treating a woman's illness if the treatment could harm her fetus!

With the *Anschluss* of West German capitalism to the DDR will come the conditions faced by women in the BRD, where the anti-abortion witchhunt is also flourish-

ing. The BRD's abortion law, known as Paragraph 218, was introduced into the penal code in 1871 when Bismarck founded his Reich. Under Hitler it was changed—to make abortion punishable by death. Anti-abortion hardliners insist that in Bavaria this death penalty still exists! In 1988 under the slogan "Abortion Is Death" the Bavarian state, in traditionally Catholic southern Germany, tried and convicted Dr. Horst Theissen, a Memmingen gynecologist, for performing "illegal" outpatient abortions. Over 500 of his patients—many of them poor and immigrant women—and their families were interrogated and harassed; some were also put on trial. On 5 May 1989 Dr. Theissen was convicted on 38 counts of violating Paragraph 218a and 219 of the German penal code and sentenced to two and a half years in prison. The case is currently being appealed.

In the DDR Paragraph 218 was struck from the books with the 1950 Law for the Protection of Mother and Child and the Rights of the Woman, which provided for abortion when there were medical, social or ethical indications. While this law qualitatively improved women's access to abortion, it proved much too restrictive, as women had to justify their need before a committee. Many women continued to turn to illegal abortion.

In 1972 the DDR passed the Law on the Interruption of Pregnancy, which allows abortion on demand, fully paid for by the state, during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. There are only two restrictions: a woman can have no more than one abortion in any six-month period and she will be refused an abortion if it is a threat to her health. The woman receives full sick pay for any time off work she takes. Free contraceptives are available in the DDR to any woman 16 or over; in 1974 eleven million packets of birth control pills were distributed. As a result of these measures and others to ensure quality medical treatment of women and the rest of the population, the DDR has one of the lowest maternal death rates in the



West German protest in 1988 against criminal prosecution of Dr. Horst Theissen for performing abortions.



Institut Für Marxismus-Leninismus, DDR

Clara Zetkin fought in early SPD for revolutionary work among women. *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), founded in 1891, became a forum for internationalist, antiwar left wing. *Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale* (Communist Women's International) extended work among women internationally under direction of the Comintern.

world: in 1977 the DDR maternal death rate was 18 per 100,000, while in prosperous West Germany it was 34—almost twice as high. The DDR is also one of the safest places in the world to be born, with an infant mortality rate of 8.1 per 1,000 live births in 1988.

These gains must be defended! It is not only Helmut Kohl's conservative CDU which is the threat. Where the Catholic governing party has met with resistance, the SPD—arm in arm with the Protestant church—serves obligingly as the most effective organizer for the moral crusade against women. In the early 1970s a strong movement to strike Paragraph 218 from the books in the BRD was sabotaged by the SPD, which pushed through a "compromise" measure, the very law which is being used against Theissen and other doctors! The SPD has consistently suppressed the widespread outrage in their trade-union base over the abortion witchhunt.

Marxism and the Woman Question

Since the political revolution which burst the walls of Stalinist repression last November, East German women have been exploring the parameters of women's liberation, long considered a subversive area in the Ulbricht/Honecker era. The rich history of Marxist thought on the question of women's emancipation has been squandered and suppressed by the Stalinists. The great proletarian holiday International Women's Day, begun by women textile workers in New York and declared an international workers holiday by the pre-1914 German Social Democ-

racy, was caricatured as a sort of Mother's Day in the DDR. The SED puppet women's organization trivialized women's interests: it oriented to what it considered the "daily concerns" of women, for example exchanging sewing patterns.

Before World War I, Germany was known as the "heart of the workers movement," where the German Social Democracy represented the theoretical and organizational leadership of the International. The Marxist understanding of the woman question was welded to strategy and tactics which are models for communist work among women. It was here and in the trade unions that the great questions of women's rights were fought out: protective laws for women workers, the right to vote, the role of the family in society.

Hard political fights over 40 years yielded methods of work among women to address the specific issues of their oppression: in contrast to the feminist separatist idea that their liberation is the concern of women only, the Marxists understood that the oppression of women was indissolubly connected to the institution of the family and the private ownership of the means of production. Insisting that working-class women must be organized as part of the revolutionary proletarian movement, the SPD established a women's section of the party to pursue special work among women, mobilizing around their felt needs and drawing them into broader political work.

The magazine *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), founded in 1891 and edited by Clara Zetkin until 1916, was an important organ for the SPD left against the growing revisionist current. For thousands of women *Die Gleichheit* was the vanguard in the struggle for their rights and against capitalist exploitation and imperialist war. But after 1914, when the Social Democracy defected to the capitalist class and supported the "fatherland" in the mass imperialist slaughter of World War I, it gave the revolutionary Marxist tradition on the woman question a third-class burial. The SPD became the staunchest pillar of the bourgeois family, its "women's work" a women's auxiliary for empty electioneering.

The proletarian women's movement fought against the bourgeois feminist notions which only tinker with capitalism's image but leave the root cause of women's oppression untouched. Left-leaning and working-class women who wanted to fight their oppression joined the SPD, not the feminist Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF). The BDF existed from its inception in a highly politically class-differentiated society with a mass working-class party; in Weimar Germany it grew even more conservative. When Hitler came to power, the feminist organizations, led by the BDF, went over massively to the fascists.

Today West German feminists, turning a blind eye to escalating female unemployment and wholly inadequate day care, have barely lifted a token finger to defend Dr. Horst Theissen from Bonn/Munich's anti-abortion witchhunt. Instead feminist guru Alice Schwartz has raged with the zeal of the Inquisition against pornography, echoing the reactionary, moralistic crusade of the church and the CDU and SPD politicians. Her paper *Emma* has even claimed "Coeducation makes girls stupid!" while right-wing social democrats and fundamentalist Greens seek to show how sexually segregated education will "benefit" young girls. They are going after an essential

Save Abu-Jamal...

(continued from page 2)

into thinking that the death sentence would never be carried out. Yet Mumia's petition to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to re-argue his appeal was denied on January 26—the second time in less than a year that court turned down his legal challenge to the racist witch-hunt which has condemned him to die. No legal barrier today stands between Jamal and the governor's signing a death warrant.

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal is what the death penalty is about. It exposes not only the barbarity and arbitrary cruelty of this ultimate form of state terror, but the inherent racism in its application. As Mumia writes, "The death penalty in America is a symbol, a ritual, a relic of a time of total dominance, of one people, by another. Therein lies its attractiveness in the U.S., and in the apartheid regime in South Africa" ("Pull the Hood Off the Hangman," *Workers Vanguard* No. 477, 12 May 1989). In both countries, capital punishment is the legacy of racial subjugation which denied to whole peoples fundamental human rights, reducing man to a beast of burden and the disposable property of his master.

In 1987 the U.S. Supreme Court admitted that while there is a discrepancy in death penalty sentences depending on the race of the victim (convicted killers of whites are still 4.3 times more likely to get the death penalty than killers of blacks), basically it didn't matter! Black life is held cheap by the USA's rulers. Today, one out of every two people on death row is black or Hispanic, four times their proportion in the population as a whole; two-thirds of those with Mumia on death row in Pennsylvania are black.

The Partisan Defense Committee has undertaken a massive campaign to save Mumia's life and to abolish the racist death penalty. The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization which champions cases and causes in the interest of the whole

of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. At a February 24 rally in Atlanta, in the heart of the "death belt" South, unionists, students and death penalty abolitionists joined forces to demand: "Stop the Racist Legal Lynchings, Abolish the Death Penalty!" The PDC's work in building a large anti-Klan rally in Atlanta in January 1989 laid the basis for its ability to bring the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal to these militants.

The urgency of the fight to save Mumia's life, and the hundreds of prisoners on death row around the nation, was underlined on March 5, when the U.S. Supreme Court announced new grounds for denying federal appeals in many death row cases. Now the states are gearing up their killing machines again. In California, which has 273 prisoners on death row, protest has (for now) blocked the first execution there since 1967.

Over 12,000 people around the world have signed petitions demanding Mumia not be executed, including California Congressman Ronald Dellums; actor Edward Asner; Operation PUSH, Chicago; ILWU Local 6, San Francisco; and South African poet Dennis Brutus. Support is growing internationally as well, with reports on Mumia's case appearing in France, Belgium and Germany, including a major piece in the West German paper *taz*.

We urge our readers to join the fight to save Mumia Abu-Jamal. Write Governor Robert Casey, Main Capitol Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120, to demand: "Mumia Abu-Jamal Must Not Die!" The PDC has available tapes of Mumia speaking from prison, copies of the powerful columns he continues to write from death row, and bundles of its newsletter *Class-Struggle Defense Notes*, which you can order to bring Mumia's case to the attention of your community, union or campus group. To contribute to this urgent case, earmark checks "Save Mumia Abu-Jamal," and write the Partisan Defense Committee at Box 99, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, or call (212) 406-4252. ■

bourgeois-democratic gain which was the *consequence* of the integration of women into the workforce.

For Women's Liberation—For Trotskyism!

The Bolshevik Party under Lenin and Trotsky carried on the Marxist tradition of work among women. When in 1917 in Russia the Bolsheviks led the working class to power, they instituted a number of measures for the emancipation of women. To the extent that they were able in a backward and war-torn country, they sought to replace the social functions of the family with free, 24-hour childcare centers and communal laundries and canteens—measures to enable women to fully participate in social and political life. In *The Revolution Betrayed* Trotsky polemicized against the Stalinist program to restore the family, declared an article of faith in 1936 when as part of the Thermidorian reaction Stalin outlawed abortion in the USSR (it has been legal again since 1956):

"The triumphal rehabilitation of the family, taking place simultaneously—what a providential coincidence!—with the rehabilitation of the ruble, is caused by the material and cultural bankruptcy of the state. Instead of openly

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

Across the DDR millions of workers want to fight to *defend* the hard-won gains against the looming onslaught of capitalist reunification. What's necessary is a revolutionary vanguard party to lead the struggle against the imperialist stampede, to strike against privatization of the factories, to protest the closing of childcare centers, the rise in rents. The SpAD calls for the building of a Leninist party to fight for workers political revolution. Working women will be in the first ranks of the struggle to defend the social gains of the DDR against capitalist rollback. To defend what we have already won is the first, crucial step toward fighting for what we really want: a communist world with an internationally planned economy which will renew human relations on a truly egalitarian basis. ■

France

Muslim Girls Banned from School in Anti-Immigrant Hysteria

In the fall of 1989 the "affair of the Islamic headscarves" exploded across France and Belgium. In September in Creil, France three young North African women came to school wearing the *hidjeb* (the Islamic headscarf, a light scarf covering the hair and tying under the chin). In a disgusting act of anti-Muslim chauvinism, the school principal sent them home—claiming their clothing violated the principle of secular education! Later they were expelled from school. After six weeks of raging debate, the Conseil d'Etat (the French high court) ruled that "discreet" wearing of the *hidjeb* is allowed in school. In January 1990 it happened in Britain: two young Muslim women living in Cheshire, England were expelled from school for wearing the headscarf.

That the blatantly racist expulsion of Muslim girls from school can be dressed up as defense of a democratic, secular school system or a question of health (the despicable excuse used in Cheshire) testifies to the consummate hypocrisy of the capitalist class, as it uses every form of bigotry and discrimination to bolster its rotting system. In Britain, the social and political power of the established church is a major prop of capitalist reaction, along with other aristocratic holdovers such as the monarchy and the House of Lords. For centuries the Church of England ran England's school system; for

example, until 1871 Catholics, Jews and non-Anglican Protestants were barred from taking a degree at Oxford or Cambridge.

In France the temporal power of the Catholic church came under attack in the Great Revolution of 1789 to 1793. But the separation of church and state was not established in France until the early 1900s in the aftermath of the Dreyfus case. The reactionary mobilization around the case of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army officer framed for treason and shipped off to prison on Devil's Island, "was enough to bring the people to the brink of civil war," in the words of V.I. Lenin. To weaken the power of the right wing, measures were taken to limit the influence of the Catholic church in the state. Since then a series of compromises with the church has eroded the democratic principle of secularism, which now is wrongly used to proscribe all religious symbols—the supposed justification for the exclusion of the Muslim girls.

The veil (which can take many forms, from *hidjeb* to *chador*) is specified in the Koran. Unlike the Christian cross—which French schoolchildren certainly wear—or the Jewish yarmulke, however, the veil is more than a symbol of religious affiliation; it is the instrument of subordination of women to men in daily life. Christianity



Roberto Cristofoli

In a blatant act of racist exclusion, young Muslim women were expelled from school in Creil, France for wearing the *hidjeb* (Islamic headscarf).

and Judaism also preach, in their many variants, stifling moral codes seeking to uphold the patriarchal family, the main social institution oppressing women. But sections of Christianity and Judaism, religions with roots in pre-capitalist society, adapted to conform with rising industrial capitalism and the bourgeois-democratic nation-states where they existed. Islam did not, largely because it remains rooted in those parts of the world where imperialist penetration has reinforced social backwardness as a prop to its domination. In fact, women in some relatively backward Christian countries don a headscarf when they are married or engaged and don't take it off in public until death; Orthodox Jewish women wear a headscarf as well. The head-to-toe *chador* imposed in Islamic countries is of course much worse, literally a prison for women's bodies, physically excluding them from society.

As Marxists and as fighters for the emancipation of women, we struggle for a revolutionary transformation of society to remove once and for all the conditions of poverty, exploitation and oppression which breed religious illusions and cause such things as the veil to exist. But these expulsions by an arm of the bourgeois state can only be vicious acts of racist exclusion and religious bigotry. As we stated in "Jim Bakker, Oliver North and Bourgeois Hypocrisy" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 489, 10 November 1989), "in a secular state you're not supposed to mess with people's personal beliefs, including weird and medieval religious practices, except when they do violence to others or come into fundamental conflict with the common good."

France: Racist Anti-Immigrant Hysteria Targets Muslim Workers

While the French left waffled in turmoil over the "affair of the Islamic headscarves," the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, French section of the International Communist League, condemned the exclusion of the Muslim girls from school as "nothing but an act of racial discrimination." The question cannot be separated from the rising tide of poisonous hate targeting the hundreds of thousands of North African immigrants and their children (who call themselves *beurs*) now living in France.

Once again demonstrating that the popular front in power can only serve the interests of capitalism, President François Mitterrand (elected 10 May 1981) has used his credentials as a member of the Socialist Party to enforce austerity, virulent anti-Sovietism and increasing racial segregation. North African workers were among the first to take up the struggle against Mitterrand's increasingly *un-popular* front when predominantly immigrant workers at the nationalized auto plant in Flins struck against the government in 1982. Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy whipped up anti-immigrant hysteria by labeling them "Muslim fundamentalists."

The government soon issued decrees against "illegal" immigrants and authorized arbitrary police "stop and search" checks of identity papers. By 1984 the government had set up 13 "administrative detention camps," concentration camps designed to facilitate the expulsion of foreign workers. Ministers Georgina Dufoix and Pierre Joxe pitched in by making it nearly impossible for foreign workers to bring their families to France and deporting immigrants already there in specially chartered planes.

Fascist Le Pen spews racist genocide: his murderous thugs openly beat immigrant workers in Marseille, April 1987.



Nurtured by government policies of vicious reaction, the fascist race-terrorists under Le Pen have rampaged through immigrant communities. The cops unleashed a campaign of harassment of non-whites and wanton killings of immigrant youth. In January of this year two cops were let off with a slap on the wrist for having brutally beaten to death a young Arab student during the student strike of 1986.

But this rising tide of racism has been challenged by the awakening political consciousness of the masses of *beurs*. The *beurs* erupted onto the political scene in December 1983 with the March of Minguettes, a massive demonstration in Paris, named for an immigrant ghetto near Lyons from which the protest was launched. The growing political ferment posed the necessity of uniting the *beur* struggle with the power of the industrial proletariat, where North African workers now play a strategic role. However, playing on the *beurs'* distrust of political parties, Mitterrand's Socialist Party has successfully kept their program limited to demands to pressure the government. The most prominent organizations of militant *beurs*, such as SOS-Racisme, have consolidated as simple vehicles manipulated by the Socialist Party. The condition of



Verdy/AFp

In 1982 immigrant workers at the nationalized auto plant in Flins sparked class struggle against the racist, anti-working-class government of "socialist" Mitterrand.

beurs remains unaltered: segregated housing, racist attacks, poor education, astronomical unemployment—and young women *beurs* face the additional oppression of the patriarchal family and the weight of Islamic custom.

The LTF has consistently opposed the Mitterrand popular-front government from the start. Our French comrades fight to smash racist reaction, raising as demands "Full citizenship rights for immigrants!" "Down with racist segregation!" and "For working-class mobilizations against racist terror!" The LTF struggles to break the working class from the treacherous dead end of the Mitterrand coalition with the bourgeoisie and to win workers to the need to build a multiracial class-struggle workers party to fight for socialist revolution. We print below a translation of "Reactionaries Seize Upon the Affair of Islamic Headscarves: Down With the Anti-Immigrant Campaign!" from *Le Bolchévik* No. 97, November-December 1989.

7 NOVEMBER 1989—As classes reconvene after the All Saints' Day [November 1] vacation, the "debate" over Islamic headscarves is increasingly taking the form of a referendum on the question of integration or segregation of the children of "immigrants." While the fascist leader of the National Front, Jacques Bompard, rants, "They cover their women with a scarf and ours with a shroud" (*Libération*, 6 November 1989), Juppé, the arch-reactionary general secretary of the RPR [the Gaullist party], declares, "there is more to this affair: there is the problem of our entire conception of the great principles of the Republic's school system, of the school system itself, and beyond that, the problem of national identity is posed..." (*Le Monde*, 7 November 1989).

Using defense of secularism (and even of "equality between the sexes"!) as a cover, the most obscurantist forces of this country—fanatical adherents of "Work, Family, Fatherland" [slogan of Vichy France], pious defenders of the Catholic church and hysterical enemies of

contraception and abortion—have seized upon the issue of Islamic headscarves to call for reinforcing the policy of segregating "immigrants" and *beurs*. Even more dangerous and scandalous is the attitude of those on the left—from the Communist Party (PCF), the FEN [teachers union] and certain sectors of the Socialist Party (PS) to Lutte Ouvrière (LO)—who support the expulsion of young *beur* women from schools in Creil, Marseille or Avignon for wearing the *hidjeb* in class. Moreover, since 1981 the "left" in power [the government of "socialist" Mitterrand] has carried out an anti-immigrant campaign—from "administrative detention" camps and the Joxe charter flights to the Dufoix decrees against reuniting families—which have encouraged the reactionaries.

Certainly we hope that as they grow up these young women will reject the oppressive veil, but today they are being penalized for the beliefs of their families. This is no war against the Afghan "holy warriors" to liberate women from the slavery of the *chador*. Nor is it Kemal Atatürk's campaign against the veil and the fez in the early 1920s, which aimed at smashing Turkish reaction. In this country, poisoned with chauvinism and racist terror, these expulsions can be nothing but an act of racial discrimination. That is why we condemn them.

Furthermore, the few voices raised to say, correctly, that wearing the *hidjeb* is not primarily a sign of religious faith but rather of the oppression of women and their submission to men, have today been largely silenced.

The proposed solutions, which all remain within the framework of the bourgeois order, are just so many dangerous dead ends for these young women, shackled to patriarchal reaction. Jospin, Danielle Mitterrand and SOS-Racisme all preach "respect" for "cultural differences"—which means toleration of women's oppression and the preservation of cultural values and characteristics which, like female clitoral excision, are products of the barbaric oppression of another age. Others propose expulsion or forced assimilation carried out in the style of [Socialist defense minister] Chevènement to the accompaniment of

the *Marseillaise*, which sowed terror in the colonies. All of these "solutions" really attack the victims themselves!

Only the working class of this country, organized in its unions, has the capacity to fight effectively to liberate these young women from the multiple oppression that weighs them down as youths, *beurs* and women in this capitalist society. But as the FEN shows once again, the reformist, social-chauvinist trade-union leaderships are obstacles to this policy. It is the duty of the workers movement to mobilize massively against all racist attacks; it must also integrate and educate its own ranks and struggle against every manifestation of bourgeois ideology, such as racism and anti-woman bigotry, and against every manifestation of obscurantism.

The Veil: Confinement of Women

Amid the shrill chorus of indignant declarations in which everyone spouts his own more or less hypocritical line on secularism, religious tolerance, etc., Daniel Yousouf Leclercq, former president of the National Federation of Muslims in France (FNMF), knows full well what hides behind the "religious matter" of forcing women to wear the veil: "It is a question of modesty for women. This modesty...ought to be respected even by Christian and Jewish women. The clothing of the Virgin Mary is closer to that of a Muslim woman today than to that of Madonna" (*Libération*, 20 October 1989). Nor is it, as the good liberals would maintain, a quaint cultural attribute. It is not simply a reactionary sign of membership in a community like a cross or a yarmulke. It is not a sign of submission to one or another deity, but a physical symbol of the submission of women to men and the permanent, imposed affirmation of their inferior status. It represents the extension outside the home of the seclusion imposed on women by the reactionary *Sharia* [Islamic law].

Even if it is not as bad as the *chador*, that prison for the body beneath which Afghan and Iranian women suffocate, the *hidjeb* is nonetheless an ostentatious manifestation of the social program of the most reactionary

forces. This is the program in operation in numerous countries such as Iran and, in a lesser but real way, in North Africa, and it means nothing less than slavery and total servitude for women, keeping them in ignorance and in the condition of a beast of burden.

If any skeptics still need convincing, the nature of this program is illuminated by the fact that one of the principal mentors of the families in Creil, FNMF deputy secretary general Abdallah Thomas Milcent, was converted to Islam during a trip to Afghanistan and has since been a sympathizer of one of the worst bands of anti-woman cutthroats, the Hezb-e Islami.

Certainly Fatimah, Leila, Samira, Souha, the teenagers forced to wear the Islamic headscarf, will not suffer the fate of Iranian women. But it's a sure bet that, if left to the arbitrary will of their families, and especially if expelled from school, they will feel like prisoners behind bars. Their future will be forced marriages, confinement to the home and successive pregnancies until they are worn out. This is what the hypocritical liberals and social democrats call "the right to be different."

Full Citizenship Rights for Immigrants!

The appearance of these headscarves—fortunately a limited phenomenon—bears the smell of a provocation on the part of the Islamic fundamentalist milieu, particularly in the Creil affair. The fathers of the three teenagers are not mere simple believers. One, a member of a Muslim brotherhood known worldwide for its militant proselytizing, occasionally acts as imam at the Turkish mosque in Creil. The other accompanies the president of the FNMF on pilgrimages to Mecca. Furthermore, the fact that the Creil families were immediately taken in hand by several *islamiste* organizations such as the FNMF or the Union of Islamic Organizations in France shows that behind the smokescreen of religious freedom is a twofold political plan. [An *islamiste* is a Muslim seeking to extend the influence of Islam in politics.] The *islamistes* want to obtain official status and to maintain and deepen the segregation of those of Muslim origin—the only hope the *islamistes* have for organizing a population which is on the road to secularization.

Scandalously, these workers, who have lived in this country for 20 or 30 years, whose children are primarily French citizens, are still called "immigrants." Their decades-long presence here has meant that genuine religious practices are observed by only four percent (*L'Express*, 27 October 1989). In this country Muslim fundamentalism could be the ideology of only a horribly oppressed community that had lost all hope of ending its social oppression. This is a danger which unfortunately cannot be ruled out. Under the conditions of segregation and racist terror to which they are subjected every day, shunned by the chauvinist leaderships of the workers movement, the Communists and the Socialists, some will seek refuge and an illusion of rediscovered dignity among the religious fundamentalists. If generalized, this would be a real catastrophe for the entire workers movement in this country. The organizations of the working class must defend and protect their class brothers. That is why we fight for powerful workers mobilizations to smash the fascists, for protection of immigrant neighborhoods by worker/immigrant militias based on the unions and for



Atlan/Sygma

Fueling anti-immigrant chauvinism, in 1980 French Stalinist mayor in Vitry had the homes of black African immigrants destroyed by a bulldozer.

the organized workers movement to take up the demand for full citizenship rights for immigrant workers and their families!

For Separation of Church and State!

The purported threat of "Islamization of France" decried by the reactionaries and the fascists, or the threat of a "Lebanonization" evoked by the likes of Chevènement, are intended to create anti-immigrant hysteria. The real threat in this country is the danger of French chauvinism and racist reaction. And behind it stands the Catholic church, historically the dominant church in the country. It most recently played its traditional role as a pillar of reaction by launching the mobilization—worthy of the infamous Inquisition—against Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a mobilization which the fascists took to its extreme by burning down movie theaters.

International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

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The biggest reactionary demonstration since 10 May 1981 was sponsored by the Catholic church, on 4 March 1984 at Versailles. Today the same bourgeois politicians who agitate for secularism (the better to promote segregation) were then mobilized behind the clergy to defend "free" schools. This is nothing but contemptible cynicism. "Secularism" in this country is the fruit of a compromise between the bourgeois state and the Catholic church (in particular reserving one day a week for religious instruction), a compromise which the bishops are always trying to renegotiate in their favor. Where is the separation of church and state when an academic inspector must consult the religious authorities each time a *public* institution wants to go over to the continuous school week? Where is this separation when Catholic chaplaincies can be opened in *public* secondary schools or when the state subsidizes religious schools?

It is no accident that the school system is at the center of the "debate" over the *hidjeb*. The right to education for all men and women symbolizes the hope of escape from religious obscurantism and of emancipation from family domination. Nor is it an accident that all religious hierarchs, Catholic or Jewish, have taken up the *islamiste* refrain on the right to religious expression in the schools. One of the gains of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1789 was to lay the basis for the separation of church and state—a profoundly democratic principle which puts religion where it belongs: in the strictly *private* domain. But after exhausting its progressive role, the bourgeoisie had to rely on, or at least conciliate, reactionary forces such as the powerful Catholic church to maintain its class domination over the exploited and oppressed.

In this area, as in so many others, the "left" government—a great defender of secularism in words and loyal administrator of capitalism in deeds—capitulated to clerical reaction. Already in 1984, the government, in connivance with the episcopate, had drawn up the Savary Bill, which recognized and financed religious instruction. Nonetheless, under pressure from the street orchestrated by the Catholic church in search of even more from the government, Mitterrand retreated again. Today, the government has decided in favor of state financing of a cathedral at Evry, the first to be built in a century (*Le Monde*, 3 November 1989). At the same time, Muslim places of worship are at the mercy of any racist mayor's steam shovel.

It seems that, among other things, the Muslim religious establishment has decided to use this Islamic headscarf affair to obtain official recognition from the state on the same level as the Catholic church and other religious hierarchies of this country, as well as subsidies for its Koranic schools. But there is a historic example of another oppressed community whose religion was granted official recognition by the French state—the Jewish community. At the beginning of the 19th century, Napoleon granted/imposed the Jewish Consistories, made up of rabbis and other prominent people and charged with maintaining relations between the community and the state. In fact, the Consistory was designed as a police auxiliary to the bourgeois state, charged with overseeing, regimenting and *forcibly* integrating the Jewish community. Today, in order to control/repress the community of North African descent, the French rulers are looking

Merillon/Gamma



Immigrant women protest banning of their children from nursery school in Montfermeil: "The children have a right to go to school!"

to the religious leaders for sufficiently dependable and credible official spokesmen who will likewise serve as police auxiliaries.

As Marxist revolutionaries, we hail the democratic principle of the separation of church and state, along with its fruit, secular education, as an immensely progressive step. Today the bourgeoisie no longer defends the separation of church and state. We are its best defenders: we firmly oppose the presence of Catholic chaplains (or those of any religion) as well as religious instruction within public educational institutions. We also firmly oppose any state subsidy to religious schools. The proletariat must fight untiringly for free, coeducational schools, but it must also demand free, quality education for all: open admissions to secondary schools, universities and other higher educational institutions with full stipends for all students.

Down With Racist Segregation!

At the same time, as against the good apostles who claim that the secular school system represents a framework for "equal opportunity" for all children, we, like all conscious workers, know that the capitalist school system reproduces class inequality and perpetuates segregation experienced by "immigrants" and their children in this society. Schools in the ghettos dispense a cut-rate education that produces future unemployed. At the same time, comfortable petty-bourgeois parents can almost systematically get special permission to educate their kids outside their school districts (which are becoming more and more artificial) in order to avoid institutions "where there are too many immigrants."

Much more discreetly reported in the press than Creil, the Montfermeil affair epitomizes this racial discrimination. Since 1985, Pierre Bernard, the racist mayor of Montfermeil in the Paris suburbs, has refused to enroll in nursery school the children of families "newly arrived" from outside the country. When the school principals resisted, he fired them and cut off funding for their establishments. Under the pressure of mobilizations, he backed off—postponing his decision until January 1990. However, Pierre Bernard has his emulators. In Beaucaire, in the Gard, the reactionary mayor is trying to expel

about 30 children of Moroccan origin from schools in "his" city by excluding them from the cafeteria and school transportation. He too backed off, but in exchange for disturbing assurances from the Prefect "on the subject of immigration, social housing and reuniting families" (*L'Humanité*, 6 November 1989).

More surprising on the face of it is the stand taken by the mayor of Clichy-sous-Bois, André Dechamps, a member of the Communist Party. In a press release intended to refute the statement attributed to him by the weekly *Valeurs actuelles*—that he sympathized with the mayor of Montfermeil—Dechamps declared, "Indeed I think that Clichy-sous-Bois, like many other cities, and perhaps even more so, is confronted with real difficulties due to the concentration of foreign families in certain housing complexes.... It is therefore urgent, as the Communists propose, to stop all new immigration and to ensure that the rights and duties of foreign families living in France are respected in all cities by everyone" (*L'Humanité*, 4 November 1989). What a strange "communist"! Certainly the PCF is still the party of Vitry, where on 24 December 1980 the PCF mayor had a housing complex inhabited by workers from the African nation of Mali destroyed by a bulldozer. This is the despicable product of municipal cretinism and reformist chauvinism. Vitry—a pledge given by [PCF leader] Marchais to the Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie—enabled the PCF to participate in Mitterrand's anti-working-class government, which implemented an anti-immigrant policy. Already at that time, in a disgusting fit of anti-immigrant chauvinism, the then-Prime Minister Mauroy denounced "immigrant" striking automobile workers as ayatollahs.

In the fake-Trotskyist "far left," the Islamic headscarf affair has brought its share of ferment and peculiarities. Loyal left lieutenant of the Social Democracy, the LCR [Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire] is in the middle of a public polemic as violent—all proportions guarded—as the one shaking the PS. In the 26 October 1989 *Rouge*, the LCR Central Committee declaration opposes the young women's expulsion from school in the name of the struggle against "limiting religious freedom" which victimizes "immigrants."

The LCR leadership, tailing after SOS-Racisme and the



Le Boichevik Photos

Ligue Trotskyste de France at Talbot-Minguettes demonstration, 14 January 1984; signs say "Down with French imperialism!" and "This government is anti-working-class; break with Mitterrand!" Gilles Cazin, LTF candidate in district elections, leads protest against fascist attacks on immigrant cafe near Rouen, May 1988.

PS, thereby disappears the fact that the *hidjeb* is not so much a mark of religious faith as a symbol of women's oppression. Readers of *Rouge* will remember that in 1979 these unscrupulous charlatans, then capitulating to Khomeini, declared that in Iran the *chador* was nothing less than a symbol of the "anti-imperialist struggle"! By contrast, *Lutte Ouvrière* seized the opportunity to announce that the fight against women's oppression was central to their concerns, and therefore they solidarize with the heads of schools who expelled the young women in Creil and Marseilles!

In an article entitled "Take a Side!" *Lutte Ouvrière* (20 October 1989) declares, "it is purely a question of the status of women, and it is on this basis that the problem must be posed...one must resist all reactionary initiatives and all attempts to oppress anyone, particularly women." This is very unusual language for an organization which, in the name of a particularly narrow-minded workerist conception of "revolutionary propaganda," has always refused to put forward a perspective of mobilizing the working class to defend women and other specially oppressed layers of the population. The most nauseating example of this attitude in recent years has been their scandalous indifference to the increase in fascist provocations and racist crimes.

Furthermore, as to LO's supposed fight against women's oppression, let us recall that in Afghanistan the LO leadership refused to take the side which was—and is—the side of the most elementary social progress. In Afghanistan the liberation of women from the slavery of the *chador* has been from the start one of the most important things at stake in the civil war which pits the Islamic reactionaries, armed by the imperialists, against the nationalist petty-bourgeois government supported by the USSR. "Between the pro-Russian camp and rebels," LO delicately explains to us, "the only difference is that the former is—pro-Russian" (*Lutte Ouvrière* No. 1077, 21 January 1989). So too bad for those courageous Afghan

women who are fighting, arms in hand, to defend their right not to be beasts of burden. It is true that Afghanistan is far away for an organization known for its national narrowness but above all blinded by anti-Sovietism. But in fact, by howling with the imperialist wolves that Afghanistan is "the USSR's Vietnam," LO—just like the LCR or the PCI/MPPT [Lambertistes]—took the side of the obscurantist mullahs against Afghan women.

The leadership of LO has suddenly "discovered" the fate of women, but only to better forget the fate suffered by "immigrants" in this society poisoned by racist segregation and terror.

For Beurs, Only One Solution: Revolution!

Despite the sensationalism of the news media (like *Libération*, which is always eager for this kind of thing) around the question of Islamic headscarves, it seems that this attitude concerns only a very small minority of the young women from immigrant families. The fact that it concerns a few isolated cases is not an accident. These young women born in France, especially those whose parents are from North Africa, do not need long speeches on the meaning of the veil. Their own mothers have recent, painful memories of it. For many, family life is encumbered with patriarchal oppression, even if it does not go as far as the veil. Who among them has not had a friend forced to return to the country of origin and submit to an arranged marriage? Finally, there are many who, seeking their roots, have been confronted head-on with the condition of veiled women in the countries of North Africa.

In light of this tragic experience, that most of them prefer tight jeans to the *hidjeb* is a simple question of survival. But particularly tragic and revealing is the fact that these young women have the highest suicide rate in France (*L'Express*, 27 October 1989), a terrible reflection of the dead end in which the capitalist system traps them.

First of all as women: certainly in an advanced capital-

ist country like France, the possibility for individual freedom and significant democratic rights exists—a legacy of the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1789 and 200 years of struggle by the workers movement—for example, the formal recognition of equality between individuals, the right to education, divorce, contraception or the right to choose one's companion. Such gains must be defended tooth and nail. Nevertheless capitalism is a cruel system of exploitation in which the oppression of women in the family remains key. Concretely, in terms of the equality of individuals, capitalism has brought working-class women nothing but the right to be equally exploited. The emancipation of women can be accomplished only by a socialist revolution which will lay the material basis for the disappearance of the institution of the family.

As "immigrants" and daughters of "immigrants," these young women endure the same fate as their brothers and parents, daily confronted with racist terror and discrimination encompassing all aspects of life: housing, jobs, education and leisure.

In December 1983 the march of the Minguettes brought to the streets of Paris, as well as the political scene, the masses of *beurs* demanding the right to live decently in the country where they were born. With even less to offer to them than to the rest of the exploited, the

bourgeoisie quickly understood that this layer of the population could represent a "dangerous class." To control them and keep them in the ghetto, the bourgeoisie is carrying out a deliberate policy of excluding them from the ranks of the working class by blocking access to employment.

If successful, this policy will lead to resignation and despair—to giving up the struggle for a decent existence. But at the October 31 North African women's demonstration in Paris, a leaflet given out by the EMAF (Expressions maghrébines au féminin [Women's North African Expression]) declared, "We will never accept the obligation to keep silent or to wear the veil, and we will be present each time our rights and our gains are endangered." The possibility of winning these *beurs* to the perspective of transforming the world is a reality.

But for the "children of Ibn Khaldun [and] Voltaire" (as the EMAF leaflet puts it), born and raised in France, whose fathers have for decades contributed to building the wealth of this country and have carried out heroic battles in the working class, the only way to concretize this perspective is to take their places in a multiracial Trotskyist party seeking to overturn once and for all this system of alienation and oppression, and to replace it with a workers government in the interests of the working people and all the oppressed. ■

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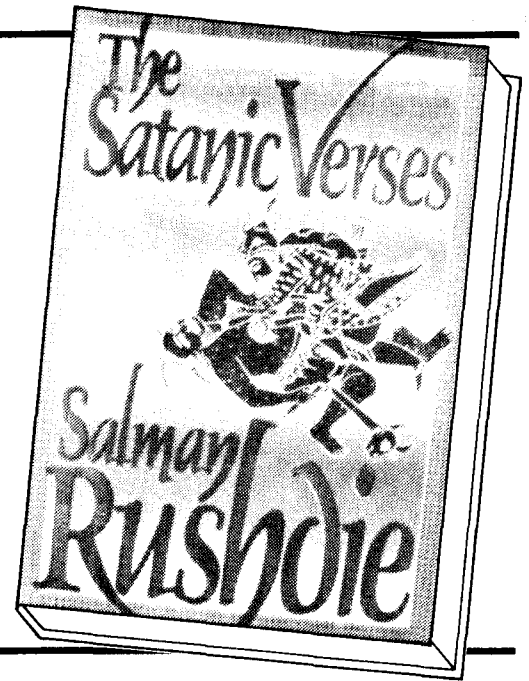
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Islam, South Africa and *The Satanic Verses*



Women and Revolution editorial note: It has been just over a year since the novelist Salman Rushdie was targeted for murder by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, his novel *The Satanic Verses* condemned as "blasphemous," burned by fundamentalists in the streets and banned in Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India and South Africa. Written by an Indian from a Muslim background living in Britain, the novel is a comedy/fantasy about the clash of cultures and the rise of Islam. Recently, still in hiding, with the Iranian theocracy renewing its death threat, Rushdie issued a defense of his work, stating, "Would I change any of the text now? I would not." He also noted, "I am not the first artist to be accused of blasphemy and apostasy; these are, in fact, probably the most common weapons with which fundamentalism has sought to shackle creativity in the modern age. It is sad, then, that so little attention has been paid to this crucial literary context" (*Newsweek*, 12 February).

It is precisely this question which is discussed in the following article by Paul Trehwela, reprinted with permission from *Searchlight South Africa*, a leftist journal published by South African exiles in London (Vol. 1, No. 3, July 1989; address: BCM 7646, London WC1N 3XX). Trehwela's incisive and insightful article is a powerful defense and appreciation of Salman Rushdie and his work, as well as a historically rich analysis of the importance of the "criticism of religion" both in world literature and in the development of Marxism itself.

We have one specific point of difference with the article. Trehwela correctly argues that "To demand that clerical education should be extended (as many Muslims in Britain now demand) is to strengthen the oppressiveness and divisiveness of bourgeois society.... The Muslim agitation in Britain for state-funded Islamic schools must ghettoize social life all the more completely, both on religious and racial grounds, further extending the conditions of Belfast and Beirut within the main British cities." Yet Trehwela then contradicts his own program by concluding, "If Muslims demand separate schooling, as in

Britain, then bourgeois society must be required to concede to them no less than it already concedes to others...." Our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain argued against the demand for state funding for religious schools in "Let *Satanic Verses* Be Read!" (*Workers Hammer*, No. 104, February 1989), and counterposed instead the only truly democratic program for education:

"We demand free secular education for all, including the teaching of minority languages such as Bengali and Urdu. Keep the mullahs, nuns, priests and above all the reverends of the established Anglican church out of the schools!"

Additionally, in Trehwela's brief mentions of Stalinism, he nowhere indicates that there is anything left to defend in the USSR. This is consistent with *Searchlight South Africa's* editorial position. We Trotskyists understand, in contrast, that the societies of the USSR, East Germany, Cuba, China, Vietnam, etc., are based on socialized property forms achieved through abolishing capitalism. This vital gain of the world working class must urgently be defended today, through workers political revolution to sweep away the splintering Stalinist bureaucracies.

Finally, while the editors of *Searchlight South Africa* correctly see a proletarian socialist revolution as on the agenda in South Africa, they deny that the democratic aspirations of the black masses are a key component and motivating force of that revolution—the central political dynamic which Trotsky described in the concept of permanent revolution. Moreover, they oppose the construction of a Leninist-Trotskyist racially integrated vanguard party in South Africa today (it would "only lead to the formation of another splinter group," the editorial in *Searchlight South Africa* No. 2 states). But this is the urgent task of the day: such a party is necessary to channel the socialist aspirations of the powerful black working class into an organization that can lead to victory. The fight for socialism is the fight for the creation of a black-led workers government, incorporating as well the coloured and Indian masses, which could offer to South

African whites the chance to collaborate in the development of what is their homeland too.

This piece contains some minor author's alterations, and a new final footnote, added since the article's initial appearance in July 1989. The accompanying graphics and captions are provided by *Women and Revolution*.

by Paul Trehwela

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It is a question today...not whether we are Christians or heathens, theists or atheists, but whether we are or can become men, healthy in soul and in body, free, active and full of vitality.... In place of the illusory, fantastic, heavenly position of man which in actual life necessarily leads to the degradation of man, I substitute the tangible, actual, and consequently also the political and social position of mankind.

—Ludwig Feuerbach¹

Incoherence of the "Democratic Movement"

The Islamic campaign for suppression of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*,² and its sentence of death against the author, are so important that they transcend all local interests. Within the general issue there is a South African dimension, and it is essential that both be clarified.

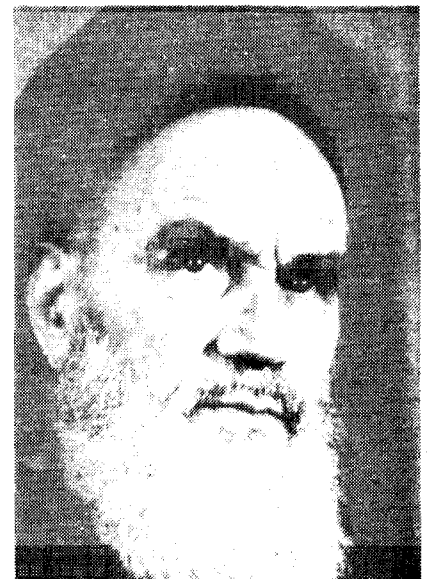
The left in South Africa has always shunned a serious study of philosophy, and has shied throughout its history at a critical examination of religion. That conforms in general with its anti-theoretical bias. Yet the sudden, violent irruption of theology as an important current in world politics in the late 20th century proves that if the left wishes to leave religion to itself, religion nevertheless will not leave it alone. Thousands of socialists, left nation-

alists, secularists and members of the Bahai faith murdered within prison walls in Iran before the Ayatollah Khomeini's decree of death against Rushdie are witness to a weakness of theory and programme in international political life, all the more fatal as in 1979 the Iranian left—above all, the Tudeh (or Masses) Party, sister party of the South African Communist Party (SACP)—welcomed the Islamic Republic.

The secular intelligentsia of the world has now been confronted, in the furore over Rushdie's novel, with a phenomenon it thought had disappeared: the bursting forth of mass popular irrationalism, which many governments are eager to conciliate. In South Africa, the so-called Mass Democratic Movement found itself divided between conflicting tendencies during the book week in Cape Town and Johannesburg in October/November 1988, organized jointly by the *Weekly Mail*, the Congress of South African Writers (Cosaw—an organization loosely in sympathy with the African National Congress) and various publishers. The leading speaker was to have been Salman Rushdie, speaking on censorship. In the event, the left and its intelligentsia were covered in shame. According to a report by Chris Louw (1988), the book week had

"been billed around the participation of Rushdie, whose invitation had been made possible by the intervention and agreement of the 'broad democratic movement' in South Africa. Implicitly, this also meant that his participation had the approval of the international anti-apartheid movement, and therefore, indirectly, of the ANC."

At the moment when Rushdie was due to embark for South Africa he found himself the focus (or target) of a process of censorship directed simultaneously from several sources. Life proceeded to excel his own fiction in the grotesqueness of its contradictory elements. Firstly, certain Muslims in Cape Town and Johannesburg threatened Rushdie with death, should he have the temerity to arrive in South Africa to speak on censorship. These gentlemen



Syigma

Dejean/Syigma

"Burn the books and trust the Book," said the Imam in the novel *The Satanic Verses*. Fanatics torched Salman Rushdie's novel in Bradford, England; Ayatollah Khomeini launched murderous vendetta against the author in February 1989.

threatened also to bomb his meetings and attack those who had invited him. Muslim organizations could not be persuaded to ensure Rushdie's safety, despite nearly six hours of talks with leaders of Cosaw, among them its executive representative, the novelist Nadine Gordimer.

The South African government (no friend of literature) then banned Rushdie's novel, along with the governments of India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iran and many others. Shortly afterwards it shut down the *Weekly Mail*—which had organized this and previous book weeks—for a month. These actions followed the demand of the South African Muslim Judicial Council that the government ban the book (*Cape Times*, 1 November 1988), and its call on Muslims to boycott the book week.

As the victim of these forces of censorship, against which he was invited to speak, Rushdie was at the last moment disinvented by Cosaw, represented by Gordimer, the very people who had invited him. The decision to deprive South African audiences of Rushdie (and to deprive Rushdie of a South African audience) was taken without his being consulted, on the grounds of his own safety. This provoked a first-rate row in Cape Town among participants in the book week, many of whom were sharply critical of the "experience of censorship" (Louw's phrase) to which they and Rushdie had been subjected.

In Cape Town, Cosaw's decision was attacked from the platform by the novelist J.M. Coetzee, who alleged the visit had been sacrificed in "some kind of trade-off" between Cosaw and Muslim leaders, "for the sake of not making life too difficult for Muslims in the alliance" [the United Democratic Front (UDF), a mass organization in sympathy with the ANC]. Cosaw upheld freedom of speech, he said, only so long as it did not threaten this political alliance (*Sunday Tribune*, 6 November 1988). From the same platform, Gordimer repudiated Coetzee's accusation, insisting that Rushdie's safety had been Cosaw's prime consideration, and that this could not have

been secured without the tender services of the South African Police.

Behind Coetzee's allegation, however, lay this fact: in demanding that Cosaw cancel Rushdie's visit, Muslim groups had been joined by two political organizations allied for many decades with the ANC—the Transvaal and the Natal Indian Congresses (*Star*, 11 November 1988). After the withdrawal of one panellist, "in the face of death threats from elements within the Muslim community" (Louw), this political dimension became more apparent. Another panellist, Professor Fatima Meer, a sociologist at the University of Durban, withdrew from the book week in solidarity with the call by the Muslim Judicial Council. Meer departed with a statement in which she denounced Rushdie as someone who played the "colonizer," despite Rushdie's transparent anti-colonialist views, set out clearly in his book on Nicaragua (1987). "In the final instance," said Meer, "it is the Third World that Rushdie attacks, it is the faith of the Third World in itself, and in its institutions, that he denigrates...." Rushdie had made "a malicious attack on his ethnic past," in defiance of millions "who combat the tyranny of materialism by their faith in an ideal or ideology," for whom "the absolute is imperative." He was guilty of "parodying the faith by which the generality of human beings live" (*Cape Times*, 4 November 1988).

Meer's contribution is interesting, since she was prominent in the activities of the UDF in the years of upsurge from 1984 to 1987, and had published a biography of Nelson Mandela only a month previously. The principal speaker at the launching of her book had been Winnie Mandela. Her confusion of Rushdie's views on religion with his attitude towards imperialism is in harmony with the Iranian theocracy, which shortly afterwards decreed death to the "apostate," having pronounced him guilty of a "colonial atheistic challenge to holy Islam" (*Times*, London, 14 March 1989):

As Louw reports, the book week "had originally been made possible precisely through the good offices of



Workers Vanguard

**New York City,
19 January 1989:
Spartacist League
and Partisan Defense
Committee called
for worldwide
emergency protests
against Khomeini's
mass executions
in Iran.**

[Mongane Wally] Serote as the ANC's Arts and Culture representative in London," and it was Serote—in his dual capacity as poet and official representative of the ANC—who at short notice replaced Rushdie as panellist in Cape Town, via a telephone hotline from London. (When the book week continued later in Johannesburg, Rushdie spoke for himself by telephone from London to the audience.)

The ANC appears to have taken no stand on the threat to Rushdie's life as the guest of Cosaw, nor to the banning of his book by the South African state, nor to his forced exclusion from South Africa by organizations informally allied to itself. The SACP carried no report, either on the book week or the principles at stake, in either of the two subsequent issues of its journal, the *African Communist*. Yet Rushdie was the first really major world cultural figure to be invited to the country by supporters of the "broad democratic movement." Its leading organizations are now silent, after the international murder hunt set in motion against him. To their credit, however, a number of prominent South African cultural workers—including Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, Athol Fugard, Don Mattera, André Brink, Pitika Ntuli and Barney Simon—joined the world protest by writers and publishers against the international lynching of Rushdie and suppression of his book. The main victor in this affair was the state, indicating what a poor thing in South Africa is any really democratic, let alone socialist, politics.

Irreligious Criticism

The standard of enlightenment is central to the issue of *The Satanic Verses* and its author. In South Africa it is all the more crucial, since the country has yet to experience a climate of thought such as preceded both the French and the Russian revolutions, and such as Marx's thought took shape in during the 1830s and 1840s in Germany.

Clearly, what has most offended Muslims in Rushdie's novel is his use of ribald language in association with sacred characters in Islam, through sequences involving dream, fantasy or madness: in style reminiscent of the surrealist film *L'Age d'Or* by Buñuel and Dalí, which provoked the anger of the Catholic Church. In several passages the sacred is discussed through everyday language of the streets. Ultimately it is the novel's secularizing tendency that is at issue, its intention (as Rushdie has stated) to "discuss Muhammad as if he were human." As he explained after the storm had broken over him, his aim was to

"discuss the growth of Islam as a historical phenomenon, as an ideology born out of its time. These are the taboos against which *The Satanic Verses* transgressed (these and one other: I also tried to write about the place of women in Islamic society, and in the Koran)...I have tried to give a secular, humanist vision of the birth of a great world religion."

—Observer, London, 22 January 1989

This of course is a proper theme for study, whether by means of literature, historical research or philosophical critique.

Precisely such a project, beginning as a movement of theological criticism, culminated in the revolution in

thought brought about by Marx. This was the philosophical movement of the Young Hegelians in Germany in mid-19th century, in which Marx learned to think. It involved from its inception a critique of religion that drove it successively to more and more radical conclusions. His critique of social relations in *Capital* is unthinkable outside the criticism of religion developed by these young Germans of the 1830s and 1840s. One of the most harmful legacies of the Althusserian current of the 1970s is that it cut off many South Africans from study of this conceptual relation. Arising from Hegel's system of philosophy, the movement in thought of the Young Hegelians led Marx to develop the theory of the place of the working class in the modern world. Marx was not issuing an empty slogan when he wrote in 1843/1844 in "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction," that "the critique of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism."³ In this article—in which he first set out his conception of the revolutionary role of the proletariat—he wrote: "The foundation of irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man" (p. 244). Here he summed up the fatal "sin" (or blasphemy) running through the entire school of Left Hegelians, whose thought was a necessary prerequisite to his own. In this, notwithstanding differences between their thought, there is something in common with Rushdie's project concerning Islam.

Rushdie's novel involves (as one of many elements) an attempted fictional, surreal "biography" of the prophet Muhammad as an actual religious and political leader living under imagined historical conditions, in which history is transmuted through fantasy, and theology through an artistically presented history. By comparison, the first major act of Young Hegelian criticism was *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* by David Friedrich Strauss, published in 1835.⁴ As the editor of a recent anthology of Young Hegelian writings explains, Strauss argued that the reports of miracles in the New Testament were

"ultimately grounded in a shared mythic consciousness of their authors, a consciousness so excited by messianic expectations that it set a series of totally unhistorical supernatural episodes about the natural historical personage of Jesus."

—Stepelevich, p. 19

That is, Strauss treated Jesus as an ordinary historical individual (as Rushdie does Muhammad), about whom the messianic longings of the Jews created a vast superstructure of myth—in a word, ideology. Further, for Strauss, as his editor Stepelevich writes, "mankind is the actual Christ insofar as it is its own savior" (p. 7). The real, active, moving principle towards a betterment of human existence is shifted with Strauss from heaven to earth, from the divine to human, from the ideal to the material. The fact that Strauss' philosophy did not exclude an ultimately religious conception of the world was not least of the contradictions at the birth of this movement of radical criticism. The German enlightenment after Hegel was the history of the unravelling of these contradictions latent in Strauss' critique of religion. Marx was its culminating figure. *The Life of Jesus*—translated into English by the novelist George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)—

and to have a part in intellectual life. For his blasphemous remarks, he was sacked from his post at Tübingen University and never permitted to teach again.

Years later, following study of the English classic economy of Ricardo and Smith, Marx found the principle of modern conditions to lie in the alienation of labour, as the source and substance of value. In the same way as the Young Hegelians drew the conclusion that the concept God was the objectification of man, and that the imagined deity and the deity were an inverted mirror image of the concepts of 'humanity and nature, so Marx concluded that being human labour must re-possess for itself the alienated powers embodied against it in the form of money and capital. The study of capital, and particularly the struggle for emancipation from capital by the proletariat, was Marx's life's work. In his article of 1843/44 that it was the task of philosophy to "unmask self-estrangement in its reality, and through criticism of the state, political economy, etc., once the holy form of human self-estrangement has been unmasked" (p. 244).

In his doctoral dissertation, Marx had written the deification of Prometheus, 'in a word, man's philosophy [philosophy's] own profession, her own god, is the god of heaven and earth who deifies through man's self-consciousness as the highest divine power.' Much later, in 1865, in reply to a questionnaire by one of his daughters, Marx gave as his favourite motto the Latin phrase: *De omnibus dubitandum, to doubt in everything.* Against the fatal certitudes of theism, and the theme of doubt, and loss of faith, remained constant in Rushdie's book. This was significant, since the charge of apostasy, and the penalty of death, particularly from Iran. A well-known survey of Islamic theology explains that from its beginning, the Shi'ite branch of Islam was

...a movement which places the emphasis on the leader.... It is the manifestation of a deep unconscious need—a feeling which men have that they would be happier and more satisfied mentally if they had a charismatic leader to follow, the notion of whom the Shi'ites dreamed is personified in the Imam by a charismatic leader.... Since the Imam is believed to be divinely preserved from error,

Shi'ite doctrine was encouraging a very autocratic form of government.⁷

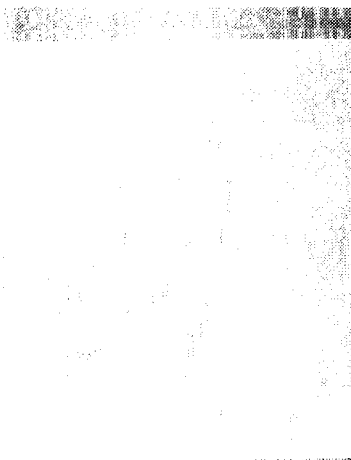
Between the critical artist and Islamic theocracy there could only be the sharpest contradiction.⁸

Profanity of the Sacred

Bruno Bauer, Strauss' immediate successor in the debate, and like him a theological scholar, went one stage beyond Strauss in considering Jesus to have been not merely not a god but a creation of fiction. For Bauer, Strauss' theory of a historical Jesus surrounded by ahistorical myths was inconsistent. To invalidate the miracles of the New Testament, with their central place in the Gospels, was to invalidate the Gospels as a whole. Bauer argued that Strauss had not investigated the problem of historical priority in the writing of the Gospels, and concluded that a single author (he thought Mark) had been the actual source of what Strauss regarded as a social myth unconsciously and collectively cast up by the Jews. In his eyes, Strauss was no less superstitious and unhistorical than the biblical texts he criticized, since he had failed to produce any factual evidence of an actual Jesus. By contrast, Bauer attempted to identify a specific human source for the Christ legend.

Like Strauss before him, Bauer was removed from his teaching post in 1842 and forbidden to teach in any Prussian university: a sentence benign compared with the decree against Rushdie. Earlier still, the fate of Strauss and Bauer had befallen the most materialist of the Young Hegelians, Ludwig Feuerbach. In 1844, writing from Paris, Marx tried earnestly but without success to persuade Feuerbach to join the future Communist League, though years later (not long before his death) Feuerbach did join the First International. Feuerbach's career as a university lecturer had been ruined in 1830, when he published a work critical of the notions of an immortal personal soul and of the transcendence of God. His *Provisional Theses for a Reform of Philosophy* was banned by the German censors in 1843. How ridiculous it is, Feuerbach wrote later that year,

"to wish to suppress the 'atheism' of philosophy without suppressing at the same time the atheism of everyday experience! How ridiculous it is to persecute the theoretical negation of Christianity and at the same time to let



Progress Publishers



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The young Marx drew on the work of classical German philosophers G.W.F. Hegel, David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach (left to right) in developing his dialectical and materialist outlook.

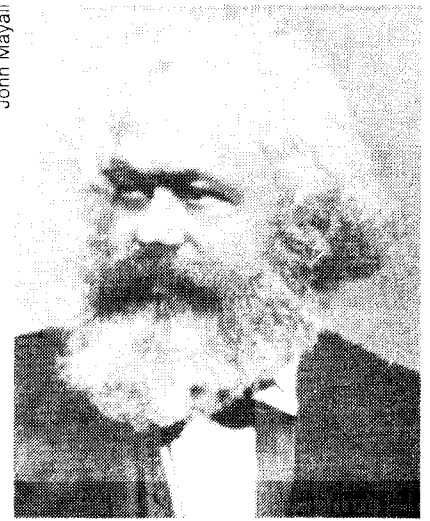
the actual negations of Christianity, in which the modern world abounds, to stand as they are.... And yet how rich with such ridiculous things is history. They repeat themselves in all critical periods."⁹

Rushdie's presentation of sexual themes in relation to Muhammad compares with Feuerbach (also the poet Heine, and the young Marx) in emphasizing profane sexual love in opposition to the abstraction of religion, with its hostility to the senses and its supposed happiness (or torments) after death. Against the pious self-image presented by Islam as to its own origins, *The Satanic Verses* displays an imagined prosaic reality. Rushdie presents a "secret, profane mirror" in which the triumphant Islam of the seventh century registers its own nature through its own "profane antithesis," twelve prostitutes who assume the identities of the prophet's twelve wives on behalf of their clients, and who are then "sentenced to death by stoning to punish them for the immorality of their lives" (pp. 384, 376, 391). This is a matter that carries its own weight for today. In one passage, concerning a central character in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie writes: "He saw now that the choice was simple: the infernal love of the daughters of men, or the celestial adoration of God" (p. 321). There is a more than implied criticism of the status of women in Islamic society as "obedient, and—yes—submissive helpmeets" to the patriarchal husband, a notion that is developed through Rushdie's emphasis of the English translation of the term *Islam*, submission. ("The name of the new religion is *Submission*," p. 125).

Rushdie's book is a celebration of the metaphysical, through a constant counterposing of the categories of good and evil, ideal and material, life and death, sacred and profane, in association with a recognition of the senses, especially through the form of sexual love. Relating to Islam, it explores a theme developed long ago in relation to the Catholic Church by Boccaccio, Chaucer, Rabelais, Aretino and Balzac. Rushdie has done no more than claim the same rights of citizenship claimed long ago by literature, and more recently the women's movement, against Christianity. One of his characters, Salman the Persian, who rejects the prophet, puts it thus: "It's his Word against mine." This is the answer of Salman the Persian to another character, a poet (later executed on the prophet's orders), who asks: "Why are you sure he will kill you?" (p. 368). Rushdie's fiction is here confirmed, in its critical tendency, by the mirror subsequently held up to it by life. Seldom has fiction anticipated so accurately the fate of its author. Written against the contemporary background of Khomeini's republic in Iran, with its mass executions and its mass sacrifice of youth in the interests of a clerical theocracy, Rushdie's portrayal of the exiled Imam ("Burn the books and trust the Book," p. 211) was sufficient for the death sentence delivered against him by Khomeini, on account of its transparent *lèse-majesté*.

For Khomeini, Rushdie's book is a "calculated move aimed at rooting out religion and religiousness, aimed above all at Islam and its clergy." He argues that the war of Iran with Iraq "was the war of poverty against wealth," and asserts that the "genuine ulema of Islam have never given in to capitalists, money worshippers and landlords.... The committed clergy are thirsty for the blood

John Mayall



"The critique of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism," wrote Karl Marx.

of parasitical capitalists." Rushdie for him is not an independent literary figure, he is a "foreign mercenary...the result of foreign infiltration of Islamic culture." Khomeini is hostile in particular to "the propagation of the slogan of the separation of religion from politics," which he represents as the "first and most important move" by colonialism against the clergy and the seminaries.¹⁰

Here is a fully developed world view with a mass appeal in the modern world, sharing a good deal in common with attacks by National Socialism on "international finance" and "plutocracy," which for Dr. Goebbels and his ideologists were the creation and social expression of the Jews. A species of ideological anti-capitalism was for them a means to genocide. Stalinism similarly deified its own Great Leader and autocratic secular clergy with its own demonology (Trotskyism), and its equally spurious claim to represent the poor (workers and peasants) against the rich (capital).

Within Islamic thought, Rushdie has introduced the dimension of critique in a manner even more disquieting than the defence of philosophical reason by the mediaeval thinker and Aristotelian, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), against the defender of dogma, al-Ghazali. As a teacher of philosophy, Khomeini understands this. The development of a materialist current within Islamic philosophy had important consequences:

"Al-Ghazali, the 11th century Islamic theologian, in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, complained that 'skeptical, nihilistic, and sensualistic philosophers' profess atheism. The same accusation was made against all those—including Averroes, the great 12th century representative of Islamic philosophy in Spain—who professed the eternity of the world, thereby implying the existence of uncreated matter.... In his response to al-Ghazali [in a book entitled *Incoherence of the Incoherence*], Averroes...affirmed the primacy of reason over faith.... Latin Averroism was undoubtedly the most significant source of atheism during the Renaissance."¹¹

From Ibn Rushd to Rushdie there is a thread of continuity. Averroes was dismissed from his position, exiled to north Africa, threatened with hell-fire; in Muslim Spain, books on logic and metaphysics were burnt. His later followers were condemned as heretics by Judaism and the Catholic Church.¹² Grounded in a knowledge of the Indian sub-continent and the experience of blacks in

the Britain of "Mrs. Torture" (p. 266), Rushdie's free and independent standpoint as an artist takes forward a long-standing conflict of tendencies within the intellectual heritage of Islam.

Rushdie's book has a place in the history of thought, because he has dared to challenge and explore the supremacy of faith in the minds of millions. Contrary to Meer, this for him is not an absolute, it requires investigation. His project of inquiry is similar to that set in motion by Ibn Rushd, Strauss, Bauer and Feuerbach, but one that is specifically literary and artistic. It is a brave, self-exploratory, personal vision whose right to exist, and the existence of whose author, a socialist defends. Drawing on thought currents from Gramsci, Brecht, Nietzsche, Kafka and a wealth of other sources in literature, it is perhaps with Joyce's *Ulysses*—with its stream of consciousness, and its long history of suppression in Joyce's native Ireland—that Rushdie's novel may best be compared: not least because both Joyce and Rushdie are writers in revolt (and exile) from the religious universe of their compatriots.

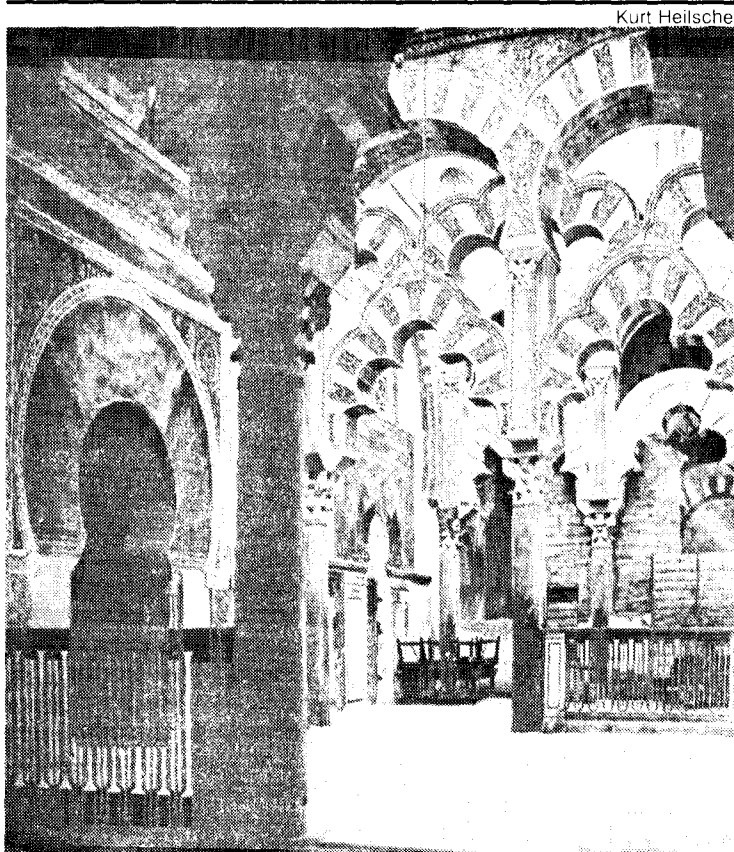
Trotsky, in particular, took the view that in the present century "true art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society." His view was that modern conditions made the artist the natural ally of revolution. Calling in 1938 for the "complete freedom of art" in a manifesto signed with the Mexican painter Diego Rivera and the French surrealist poet and critic André Breton, he demanded "No authority, no dictation, not the least trace of orders from above!" He considered that the artist "cannot serve the struggle for freedom unless he subjectively assimilates its

social content, unless he feels in his very nerves its meaning and drama and freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art."¹³ For doing this the writer is now condemned to death, as in Hitler's and Stalin's time, and his book burnt. The issue with Rushdie is not different from that of the poet Mandelstam, who died in Stalin's prison transports, or Diderot (locked up for his "godless" writings in mid-18th century France) or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, driven from one place of exile to another, whose writings—subsequently the most important texts of the French revolution—were condemned in Rome and burned in Paris and Geneva by the common hangman.

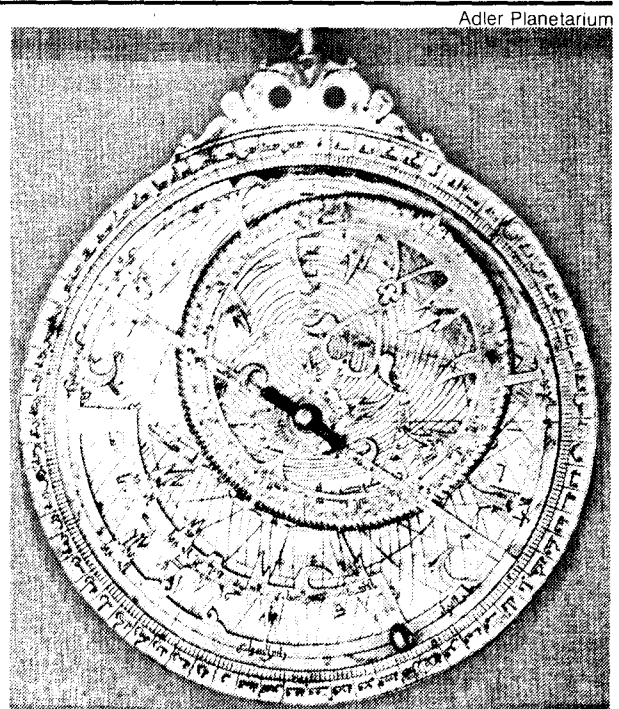
From Feuerbach to Marx

The decisive transition of Marx towards his own mature conception is in his *Theses on Feuerbach* of 1845. In this turning point in his own thought, Marx examined Feuerbach's theory of an alienated human essence as the source of religious alienation, taking it critically beyond Feuerbach. Not satisfied, like Feuerbach, to locate production of religion by human beings in their estrangement from their own needs, Marx stressed that the estranged conditions of this world be overcome in practice. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."¹⁴

Here we arrive at a point beyond which Rushdie is powerless to assist us. Once the myths in the minds of millions of human beings are stripped down to a purely human, historical source—as Rushdie imaginatively attempts in relation to Islam—then the real problem is posed, since the conditions that drive these millions to



Kurt Heilscher



Adler Planetarium

Achievements of Arabic architecture and science: The mosque at Cordova, Spain, seized by Christians in 1255 and turned into a church; the astrolabe, one of the most important instruments used by early astronomers.



Pakistani women march through Lahore in 1988, protesting Islamic law which enslaves them to the veil.

these fictions remain intact. Rushdie's work, as Marx wrote of Feuerbach,

"consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But that the secular basis detaches itself from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavages and self-contradictions in this secular basis. The latter must, therefore, in itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice."

—*Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845

Here Marx is making the same point as in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*:

"Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against that suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.

"The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their conditions is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.... The criticism of religion disillusion man, so that he will think, act and fashion his reality like a man who has discarded his illusions and regained his senses so that he will move around himself as his own true sun" (p. 244).

Thus the baying for Salman Rushdie's head does not indicate absence of respect for international law, a deficiency in secular bourgeois culture, or a return to the middle ages. It is the deficiency of late 20th century conditions that has produced this intellectual paroxysm. The cry against Rushdie is more than just the cry of power-hungry priestly zealots. Far more important, it is the cry of the oppressed creature of the late 20th century, wrapping his chains around himself with indefatigable fury because no more substantial project of emancipation has yet presented itself. The high tide of Islamic reaction is the result of the absence over decades of any international politics that would address things by the root. The campaign against Rushdie is not purely or even primarily a religious affair. It is a form of self-expression of the wretched of the earth, a major part of the world's

downtrodden, in which a contradictory mass of material and social impulses are confusedly bound together in a self-negating, self-destructive form. It is a form of anger at this world that serves only to strengthen its chains. Indignation at insults, at oppressiveness, at impoverishment is turned, not against the axes of power, but against an incidental target. As with religion, such politics is a medium in which the powerless are for a period of time permitted to indulge in the illusion of power, in order to subjugate themselves the more effectively.

It is easy to foresee, in countries such as Britain, West Germany and France, which retain gigantic resources of wealth and technique, how Muslim demands will strengthen even more powerful and more effective "Christian" demands. The imperialist state is strengthened politically among the majority of its citizens, while racist and Christian groups are permitted to assume the mantle of Charles Martel the Hammer (victor against the Muslims at Poitiers) and El Cid (victor against the Muslims in Spain). Rushdie's novel, an enormously cosmopolitan work, working backwards and forwards between the consciousness of east and west, meets its antithesis from both sides at once.

Orchestrating and manipulating the fears and resentment of the Muslim poor, as so much raw material, the Islamic campaign in each country is in the hands of this or that stratum of the property-owners. These are out to strengthen their position relative to other classes through a political alliance with the imams, in which the mosques serve as nuclei of a political organization aimed, above all, at preventing access to civil society by the younger generation of Muslim women. The anti-Rushdie campaign is thus a question of existence for the women's movement, and a test of its internationalism. It embodies patriarchal violence in the crudest form. In many of the major bourgeois countries, as well as in the cities of the former colonial world, young women from a Muslim background are leaping across centuries in their personal development. No other section of society in Britain is so much in motion as these young women, whose parents came



Aubert/Syigma

Ms. Bhutto, prime minister of Pakistan, and her generals. Spartacus Youth Club at Harvard, June 1989, protested Bhutto as "Linchpin of CIA's Bloody Afghan War."



Workers Vanguard

mainly from the Indian sub-continent. Their personal development violates the power relationships of the family at every point. To this exceptionally important social phenomenon, Rushdie is acutely sensitive, and this alone earns him the hatred of those in revolt against the 21st century. All the more is it essential for socialists to take up the cudgels, not just for Rushdie, but for the new generation of women.

The sole consistent reply to these heavenly storms is honest and fearless criticism, preparing the way for a material liberation that will permit the billions of the world to take production of their own social life into their own hands, without mystification. The principal source of mystification in modern conditions is these modern conditions themselves, rooted in money-dealing capital. What, for instance, is one to make of the statement that a certain monetary forecast had "disappointed the dollar" (Oracle news, Channel 4 television, Britain, 9 March 1989)? Feudalism presented a grandiose heavenly abstraction derived from the creative powers of humanity, yet capitalism humanizes a pure abstraction. ("Fictions were walking around wherever he went, Gibreel reflected, fictions masquerading as real human beings," p. 192.) Everyday life is determined for the vast majority of humanity by alien, hostile forces beyond rational control, under present conditions. By comparison, the ethical dogmas of Islam appear as simplicity itself.

Religion in the modern world finds its principal source of nourishment in capital, in self-generating and self-expanding value, in which the product of human hands appears as a mystical thing, dominating and negating its human producers. The international heretic hunt serves notice that modern everyday life is a source of uncomprehended, and in the present consciousness, incomprehensible, horrors. These horrors are openly present in South Africa, where human life has been dominated for a century by social relations summed up in a metal, gold.

But the nightmares of Soweto are not more vivid than those of Beirut, Belfast or the Bronx. The contemporary spectacle of mass popular reaction is not confined to Islam, though Islam has mobilized a fanatical army where other militant ideologies have (for the time being) proved less successful. Despite important differences between imperialist Europe in the 1930s and the world of Islam of the 1980s, the violent obscurantism of the anti-Rushdie campaign draws the mind again and again to the classic form of 20th century popular counter-revolution, in which the burning of books preceded the burning of people. It is only appropriate that the South African government should have banned this book, that supporters of the "national liberation movement" should have menaced its author and that luminaries of South African culture should at the critical moment have joined in silencing him.¹⁵

Policing of the Mind

Special treatment by law for any religion is incompatible with democracy. So also state restriction on religious belief. Religion cannot be abolished: like the state, and like value relationships, it can only wither away when the necessary social conditions come into existence. Religion disappears only when the need for it disappears, and for this the conscious participation of all in determining the development of society is a basic precondition. While there is a single beggar, there is still myth.¹⁶ Anti-religious oppression has never removed religious consciousness and never will. By emphasizing the powerlessness of individuals over their own lives in the most offensive way, it serves in the end only to nurture what it claims to be abolishing, as the history of the USSR and eastern Europe shows. Anti-religious oppression, like religious oppression, is the negation of freedom of criticism, which includes above all the freedom of religious criticism: above all, because the domination of religion over the mind can

disappear only in the absence of constraints serving to justify its existence. The Muslim heretic hunt and the South African state are at one with each other in repudiating such freedom of criticism, indispensable to democracy. Their interference with the right of individuals (whether Muslim or non-Muslim) to read Rushdie's book accords with their joint tendency towards a general despotism over society.

At the same time, faith is set against faith by this police meddling in civil society, just as it is set against the preconditions of democratic life.¹⁷ This is in keeping with the Christian-National colouration of the South African state. The end result is to strengthen the fissiparous, divisive forces among the oppressed—above all, among workers—obstructing the development of general, purely human bonds, reinforcing the powerlessness of society, its dependence, its lack of conscious maturity and self-responsibility. It is the old formula, Divide and rule, and complements the Bantustan and race classification policies of the South African state. Formation of the proletariat into a revolutionary class becomes impossible where religious, linguistic, racial, tribal, national, sexual or other such differences take precedence over its universal interest as the producer of modern society. The anti-Rushdie campaign is thus of first-rate concern to the working class movement. Muslim workers who uphold the South African state's ban on Rushdie's book look effectively to this state, steeped in blood, to uphold purely sectarian interests against the whole class. They uphold this state against themselves, negating the possibility of emancipation.

Professor Meer's suggestion that Islam represents the interests of the oppressed of the colonial world is nonsense. By the same token, the Roman Catholic Church could claim to represent politically the people of Lesotho, the Philippines and the whole of South and Central America. One need merely point to the service given by Islam to imperialism in Spain during the war of revolution and counter-revolution in the 1930s (see *Searchlight South Africa* No. 1), or the mass extermination of trade

unionists, peasant leaders and intellectuals in Indonesia in 1965-67 under an Islamic pogrom—supervised by the military, and its policy managers in the U.S.¹⁸—or the mass murder of Christian Armenians in Turkey in 1915. In France, the demonstrations of Muslims for religious censorship and the murder of Rushdie can only strengthen the main fascist party, the Front National, led by the ex-paratrooper in Algeria, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The Islamic war against literature comes also at a time of increased support for the two main neo-Nazi parties in Germany, which are opposed mainly to the Turkish immigrant workers. Instead of serving to strengthen unity between the minority Muslim population and the main body of the working class in these countries, the Islamic agitation isolates and weakens the very people it claims to represent.

Contrary to Khomeini, it was a tremendous step for human culture when the founders of the American republic, especially Jefferson, moved to separate church and state in the early years of the USA. Against the "loathsome combination of Church and State," Jefferson drafted an Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, passed by the Virginia assembly in 1786, stating that "our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry"; that "truth is great, and will prevail if left to herself"; and that no one

"shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall he be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

—Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (1977), pp. 252-53

Both the French and the Russian revolutions brought about the separation of church and state. Religion then ceases to exert executive power as it does today in countries such as Sudan—a multi-religious country, where enforcement of Islamic law has brought civil war and the



Camera Press

East Asian women in England were in forefront of militant battle for union rights at Grunwick Laboratories in 1977.



Eric Miller/Impact Visuals

South Africa: Launching of Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1986. Black proletariat has the power to bring down apartheid capitalism.

death of tens of thousands, mainly non-Muslims. It finds its mirror image in the tyranny of the Jewish state, with its thousands of Muslim victims. Not only unification of the working class but unification or federation of groups of states becomes impossible once a religion seizes special privileges in the state. Religious division then threatens continuously to spill over into political division, civil war and war between states.¹⁹

As for the demand for state-funded schools controlled by this or that religion, modern Irish history offers proof of the mischievous effect of clerical control of education. To demand that clerical education should be extended (as many Muslims in Britain now demand) is to strengthen the oppressiveness and divisiveness of bourgeois society, which maintains itself increasingly through the obscurantism opposed by Jefferson. The revolutionary demand, by contrast, is for all schools to be secularized free of the oppressor state, and all blasphemy laws to be repealed.

In Northern Ireland, the most important theme running through education has been the "seemingly irresistible demand for segregated schooling," in which religious leaders and most lay people believe that children "should be taught by teachers of their own denomination, that children should attend school with their own co-religionists, and that religious instruction should be woven into the school curriculum" (Akenson, pp. 193-95). Yet nothing serves the oppression of the Irish (or the Lebanese, or the Cypriots) so much as political and religious division of the workers, which segregated schooling promotes. The Muslim agitation in Britain for state-funded Islamic schools must ghettoize social life all the more completely, both on religious and racial grounds, further extending the conditions of Belfast and Beirut within the main British cities. Thus far there is no evidence of substantial campaigning for state-funded Islamic schools in South Africa. But the campaign against Rushdie, like the statement by Professor Meer, augments the principle of racial segregation in South Africa with that of segregation

by religion. The whole force of the struggle against segregation in South Africa over decades is negated by the Muslim campaign.

Nevertheless, where private religious schools are already financed by the state out of general taxation for some religions, as in Britain, it is not enough to demand an end to religious control of education. So long as discrimination persists against one faith, to the material advantage of another, the hold of religious zealots on the main body of its members is strengthened, not weakened. Before the sweeping away of all privileges, those who seek that change have no choice but to concede the principle of equal treatment of religions in relation to education. If Muslims demand separate schooling, as in Britain, then bourgeois society must be required to concede to them no less than it already concedes to others, precisely so that Muslims may freely take issue against their own religious self-limitation, as Rushdie has dared to do. There is no other way towards developing a genuinely democratic consciousness, spread widely throughout the society. Without such a consciousness, intolerant of the least sign of special privilege, social revolution is impossible. To subvert the principle of religious privilege *in toto*, it must be made general.

Birth of the New

"If the old refused to die, the new could not be born." This remark, adapted from Gramsci, with which *The Satanic Verses* begins and ends, speaks against Rushdie's traducers. Rich, complex and various, by its end the book attains a synthesis in the death of old Changez Chamchawala, with his eyes open, and without any word of God on his lips. Not having read the book before condemning it, the representatives of the Transvaal and the Natal Indian Congresses, like Professor Meer, could only miss the author's point. Old Changez's two loving and united wives, Nasreen and Kasturba, are of Muslim and

of Hindu origin. It is a conception of the future union of the peoples of the Indian sub-continent, irrespective of religion. This is a point that has importance in South Africa, where social protest is strongly infused with religion: witness the political prominence of Archbishop Tutu and the Rev. Allen Boesak, or the funding of the *New Nation* by the Catholic Church, or the religious ban on intermarriage between Muslim and Christian and between Hindu and Muslim, in a state which for a long time banned Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian*.

The attack by state, clerics and nationalist political figures on Rushdie and his book amounts to a campaign for suppression of criticism of religion. Stridently asserting the principle of segregation in personal and social life,

the clamour for Rushdie's blood further narrows the scope of political criticism, itself under ban. It is essential to state: every blow against publication of *The Satanic Verses*, and still more against Rushdie himself—whether by governments or clerics or religious zealots, whether in Cape Town, Teheran, Islamabad or London—is a blow against the emancipation of humanity. Of all popular movements, the least supportable is a pro-slavery rebellion of the slaves.

But the book will not be silenced. Its notoriety as well as its uniqueness will compel it to be read—especially among Muslims—and its merit as literature will ensure its survival. We are at the birth, painful, bloody and difficult, of a new period of revolutionary enlightenment.

Notes

- ¹ Quoted in Hook, pp. 222-23.
- ² The uproar against Rushdie derives from the text: "Idolatry is worse than carnage" (Sura 2, 186ff., *The Koran*, pp. 352, 355). Also: "When the sacred months are over, slay the idolaters wherever you find them...make war on the leaders of unbelief" (Sura 9, 4ff., p. 321).
- ³ Marx (1977), p. 243.
- ⁴ Studies of the movement of criticism initiated by Strauss include Hook, Löwith, McLellan (1969), Wartofsky and Stepelevich.
- ⁵ Marx (1971), p. 13.
- ⁶ Text in Marx and Engels (1971), p. 179.
- ⁷ Watt, pp. 20, 24, 52.
- ⁸ "Poets are followed by none save erring men.... Not so the true believers..." (*The Koran*, Sura 26, 227, "The Poets," p. 208). Poetical contests, once the forum for satirical verses directed against Islam, were stopped by the historical Muhammad. A character in Rushdie's book argues: "A poet's work...to name the unnameable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it from going to sleep" (p. 97).
- ⁹ Feuerbach (in Wartofsky, p. 25) considered the Dutch philosopher Spinoza (whose thought formed a leading element in Hegel's philosophical synthesis) "the Moses of modern freethinkers and materialists" because he conceived of God as an extended—i.e., a material—being (p. 24). For this heresy Spinoza was expelled from the Jewish community in Amsterdam in 1656. No doubt it was said then of him, as Professor Bhikhu Parekh does of Rushdie, that he had been "unnecessarily provocative" to the pious Jews and had shown "lack of elementary respect" for this immigrant and refugee community, and tended to "demean [Jews] in their own and others' eyes" ("Between holy text and moral void," *New Statesman and Society*, 23 March 1989). Parekh is deputy chair of the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain.
- ¹⁰ Extracts from a speech of 22 February 1989 by Ruhollah al-Musavi al-Khomeini (*Guardian* [London], 6 March 1989). The SACP's embarrassment over the anti-Rushdie campaign follows its uncritical support for the Khomeini regime, associating it with "popular forces" and the "mass of the Iranian people" (Editorial Notes, *African Communist*, No. 82, 1980). It also published "Why Communists Supported Khomeini: The Anti-Imperialist Tide in Iran," praising the "leader of the revolution, Imam Khomeini" and calling for "unity of all patriotic forces supporting Imam Khomeini's line" (*ibid.*, pp. 56-7). As with Stalin, so with the Imam.
- ¹¹ "Atheism," *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, 1979, Vol. 2.
- ¹² See Russell, pp. 446-49, 474-75.
- ¹³ Trotsky, "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art" (1938), in Siegel, pp. 117-20.
- ¹⁴ Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *Early Writings*, p. 423.
- ¹⁵ Muslim ideologues invoke the climate of Weimar Germany to justify their death-squads against Rushdie in their attacks on "liberalism," "the politicians" and the "dictatorship of parliament" in Britain, coupled with demands for a return of the death penalty. These charges were made by Yusuf Islam, who in a previous incarnation was known as pop singer Cat Stevens ("Open to Question," BBC2, London, 15 May 1989).
- ¹⁶ A remark by Walter Benjamin, quoted in Adorno, p. 199.
- ¹⁷ In Saudi Arabia, the religious police, the *Mutawa*, enforces Islamic law over Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The British official guide for expatriates working in Saudi Arabia states: "Murder and sexual immorality such as adultery or homosexual acts carry the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. So does apostasy.... The death penalty is carried out in public, usually by decapitation...being seen with a woman who is not a member of your family, for example, can lead to trouble with the authorities..." (*Times* [London], 17 March 1989). The South African press cited Saudi Arabia as

- the source of the campaign against Rushdie.
- ¹⁸ "The mass slaughter...increased in intensity as the month of Ramadan approached.... In five months between 300,000 and 500,000 people were killed.... By the end of [October 1965] a new army entered the field: the fanatical Muslims who claimed it as their duty to cleanse Muslim Indonesia of atheism...[launching] an attack on the communists and their associates which grew through five months into one of the most appalling massacres of human history. The butchery was soon spiritually escalated into a *mujahid*—a Holy War. "The *Ulamas*—the Religious Teachers—ruled that devout Muslims should regard communists as *kafr habir*—infidels of war—who, according to tradition, had to be put mercilessly to death" (Vitachi, pp. 138-40). The secularized intelligentsia in Afghanistan face a similar massacre. Funded by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, and U.S. armed, the *mujahidin* aim forcibly to thrust the city women back under the veil. Like the prison murders in Iran, the campaign against Rushdie expresses a general social reaction.
- ¹⁹ Specific anti-Muslim oppression has opened the old Balkan wounds, in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The collapse of Stalinism permits old religious and ethnic hatreds to gain freer expression, all the more virulent because under Stalinism they were expressed unfreely, often mediated through the dictatorial elite itself. Careful research and study is needed to uncover the actual—as distinct from the propagandistic—history of the Muslim peoples under Stalinism, not least in the southern states of the USSR.

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Clerical Reaction Targets Women

Irish Students Fight for Abortion Rights

The following article is abridged and adapted from Workers Hammer No. 112, January/February 1990, newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain.

Students in the Republic of Ireland have won a partial victory against a reactionary crusade to stop their dissemination of information on abortion. The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC)—working hand in glove with the Catholic church—has campaigned to gag student organisations. This latest battle has underlined the need for a mass, militant mobilisation centred on the working class to break the chains of clerical reaction and win, among others, the elementary right of free abortion on demand.

The question of abortion in Ireland is explosive. Under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, abortion was already illegal. In an attempt to ensure that women would never have access to abortion, the Catholic church and SPUC instigated and won the 1983 referendum campaign to enshrine the “right of life of every unborn child” in the Irish constitution. SPUC and other reactionary outfits have mobilised over the last several years to maintain the constitutional ban on divorce, to severely limit the availability of contraception, to extend censorship and to attack any form of democratic rights for homosexuals (male homosexual acts are banned under the Offences Against the Person Act).

For the past few months, the anti-woman, anti-sex campaign has reached a near frenzied pitch. In October the Office of Censorship in Ireland forbade the London-

based women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan* to carry advertisements for abortion agencies in its Irish edition. At about the same time, a medical symposium on Parkinson’s disease was curtailed because one lecture contained information on the use of foetal transplants in the treatment of this disease. In October the Irish Family Planning Association was taken to court and charged with selling condoms to an unknown person in a Virgin Record Megastore. This offence carries penalties comparable to those for drug dealing—up to six months in prison with hard labour. (Under present law, medical contraceptives are available on prescription and condoms may be sold to people over 18, but only from a chemist shop or family planning clinic.)

The penalty for “facilitating” an abortion—let alone having one—is up to life imprisonment. As Irish Supreme Court justice Walsh declared in December: “when a pregnant woman is intent upon the destruction of the life of her unborn child...all of those who assist her or facilitate her...are acting in violation of the Constitution” (*Irish Times*, 20 December 1989). Last July the same court gave SPUC the role of “guardian” for the “unborn” and the Irish constitution.

Student unions have made a statement of defiance and simple decency in printing abortion information in their handbooks. Last October, SPUC lost its bid for an injunction against 14 named student leaders (in December the Irish Supreme Court partially reversed this victory). SPUC’s “referenda” on campuses blew up in



Derek Speirs/Report

Students at Trinity College Dublin demonstrate for abortion rights, 9 October 1989.

its face. Overwhelmingly, students voted to retain distribution of abortion information, not only at Trinity College Dublin, which had been the scene of political ferment over SPUC's campaign, but also at the largely working-class technical colleges. At Carlow Regional Technical College, the vote against SPUC was 1000 to 6.

Stop "Pro-Life" Bigots' Offensive!

Each year over 10,000 women from the South as well as from Northern Ireland, where abortion is also virtually banned, take the "abortion trail" to Britain. As the pamphlet *Abortion in Northern Ireland—The Report of an International Tribunal* says, "They do so quietly; more, given the repressive laws and attitudes in both societies, they do so secretly." And there are of course those who don't go, not least because they can't afford to.

In the Ireland of the 1980s, the tragedy of Ann Lovett exemplifies the deep-rooted social influence of the Catholic church. In January 1984, 15-year-old Ann Lovett died alone giving birth to a baby in the winter cold in an open-air grotto with its statue of the Virgin Mary in Granard, County Longford. Her baby died with her. Her 14-year-old sister committed suicide three weeks later.

Grinding poverty combined with the institutionalised stigma attached to "illegitimacy," the absence of abortion rights and near-absence of contraception has driven many women to the terrible "option" of infanticide. Obviously, statistics do not exist. The state's victimisation of a woman wrongly accused of the brutal murder of a baby in County Kerry in 1984 shed harsh light on this hidden fact of life. Joanne Hayes was picked up by the Gardai (the Irish police) and charged with the murder of a baby which had been found stabbed to death with 28 wounds. It was not her child; from the outset it was clear that the "crime" being investigated was not infanticide but sex outside marriage. Joanne Hayes was known to have had a recently concluded affair with a married man by whom she had a daughter. Lately she had been pregnant again.

Joanne Hayes tried to tell the cops that she had given birth alone and unassisted in a field and that her baby died shortly afterwards. When the cops were taken to the place, the body of her baby (with matching blood type, unlike the murdered child) was found. This did not stop the Gardai, who then tried to get her for having two babies by different fathers at the same time! Their conduct was so outrageous that a public tribunal of enquiry was called, where the charges against Joanne Hayes were dropped. Needless to say, the "enquiry" became a sensationalised inquisition and humiliation of Joanne Hayes and her family.

The "pro-life" reactionaries who wink at infanticide and the early deaths of frightened young women like Ann Lovett are no kinder to critically ill women. As Nell McCafferty reported in *A Woman to Blame, The Kerry Babies Case* (1985), "In Drogheda, on the east coast, Sheila Rodgers and her baby had just died. Radium treatment for the cancer the mother suffered had been ruled out, as it would harm the foetus. Her husband used to hear her screams as he crossed the hospital yard."

For the Separation of Church and State!

The church dominates social and political life in the Irish Republic. An essay in *Unfinished Revolution* (Belfast,



Workers Hammer

Spartacist League/Britain contingent in 1989 march in memory of Bloody Sunday, the infamous day in 1972 when British troops killed 13 people in Londonderry.

1989) explains that the 1937 Constitution, drawn up by prime minister Eamonn de Valera after "consulting various Papal encyclicals," accorded the church a "special position" in Article 44. Article 41 proscribes divorce and recognises the "Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit of Society." Furthermore "the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved." When the "special position" was removed by a 1972 referendum, the "moral" teachings of the church remained enshrined elsewhere in the constitution.

Abortion was cited by the Bishop of Ferns, then Secretary to the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, in his letter to the Taoiseach (prime minister) in 1950 as one of the principal reasons for rejecting Minister for Health Noël Browne's Mother and Child Scheme. This limited reform would have provided the basis for a much needed state-funded, free health care system for a large portion of the population. The bishop objected that health care was the property of the "family": "Education in regard to motherhood includes instruction in regard to sex relations, chastity and marriage. The State has no competence to give instruction in such matters." He further stressed that "Gynaecological care may be, and in some countries is, interpreted to include provision for birth limitation and abortion. We have no guarantee that State officials will respect Catholic principles" (Noël Browne, *Against the Tide*).

Organised religion is one of the props of the decaying capitalist system, tying the oppressed to their present plight with the promise of a better life after death. Hand in hand with the capitalists and landlords, the churches of many persuasions serve to enforce bourgeois morality—to maintain the subjugation of women in the family, to relegate them to the home and exclude them from participation in political and social life. In Ireland the church controls the educational system at primary and secondary levels for the vast majority of the population,

as well as major institutions of health care. It also shapes "much of the social legislation on the statute books." Family law "is riddled with provisions which deny women an independent legal status" (Ursula Barry, *Lifting the Lid*), even granting "the legal right to a husband to sue his wife's lover in order to get financial compensation for loss of sexual services"!

Bourgeois politicians have from time to time tried to cosmetically secularise the constitution. But as Irish commentator Mary Holland put it at the time of the Eighth Amendment Campaign to entrench prohibitions on abortion in the Irish constitution, "Abortion is the one issue on which no politician in the major parties dares be seen to be 'soft'" (*New Statesman*, 12 November 1982). Fianna Fail, the principal bourgeois party in Ireland, and its leader Charles Haughey proposed the final amendment form, while Garrett Fitzgerald and Fine Gael, the bourgeois opposition party, only quibbled with the wording. Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, has alternated between outright opposition to abortion and silence on the question.

The British imperialists have subjected the oppressed Irish Catholic minority of Northern Ireland to years of bloody military occupation by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR): from cold-blooded murder of civil rights marchers and Gestapo-like arrests of protest leaders to the brutal treatment of prisoners in the notorious H-Blocks of the prison camp at Long Kesh. The Orange demagogues in Northern Ireland use the existence of a clericalist state in the South to bind the Protestant working masses to their sectarian poison. The Green bourgeoisie in the South manipulates the deeply felt hatred of the Irish masses for centuries of British imperialist domination to divert attention from their own administration of misery in the Irish Republic. Northern Ireland is far from a bastion of social liberalism: until recently homosexuality was illegal; abortion is still severely restricted. Protestant fundamentalists in Northern Ireland joined the Catholic church in opposing the extension of the 1967 abortion reform.

Across the Irish Sea in both England and Scotland established churches exist (along with a monarchy and House of Lords). Whether in the Republic of Ireland or in Britain, we Marxists fight for the complete separation of church and state. This fight is integral to the struggle for elementary women's rights. A class-centred fight for free abortion on demand, free quality health care, smashing the prohibitions on divorce, etc., could provide a powerful basis for cutting across the sectarian divide in the North and uniting workers on both sides of the border.

Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

In the Irish Republic real unemployment levels run at 20 per cent and one-third of the population is dependent on welfare benefits to survive. Women now make up one-third of the workforce; the majority of these are single and under 30. Jobs for women are low-paid and traditionally in the service sector and health, teaching and clerical occupations. In manufacturing, women earn 60 per cent of a man's wage. The mass of working people live in virtual poverty; the treacherous trade-union leader-

ship has shackled the working class to vicious government wage restraint, keeping pay rises below 2.5 per cent while inflation runs at 5 per cent.

It has long been said that Ireland's largest export is people. The annual emigration rate is reaching an average of 46,000. Women and young workers are leaving by the thousands. (In 1841, from a population of over eight million, one and a half million starved to death in the "great hunger" and another million emigrated. Today the combined population of both Northern Ireland and the South is five million.) Emigration is a safety valve for the Irish bourgeoisie. Faced with the bleak prospects of unemployment and poverty, many don't struggle, but simply leave.

Irish immigrants in England have historically been a militant, vanguard sector of the organised labour movement. At the same time, racist victimisation by the British state of Irish people (e.g., frame-ups of "suspected Republicans" like the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six) is notorious. The media ban on Sinn Fein is an attack on the elementary democratic rights of everyone in British society. As for women's rights, in addition to the deterioration of the National Health Service, the increasingly aggressive anti-abortionists in Britain also threaten the option of an "abortion trail" for anyone.

It is starkly clear that to alleviate the poverty and oppression of the working class as a whole and the special grinding oppression of women in the British Isles requires an internationalist programme going beyond the present national boundaries. Irish workers North and South, Catholic and Protestant, and the proletariat of Britain have the material interest and the social power to smash the decaying capitalist system and establish workers rule. "Forced reunification" of the two Irelands would only reverse the terms of oppression for the Protestant minority, while continuing the exploitation of the Catholic masses by a clerical capitalist state.

The Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), is fighting to forge a Bolshevik party to lead the working class in its historic mission to liberate all the oppressed and establish a planned economy based on socialised property forms. We call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British Army from Northern Ireland. Smash the RUC and UDR! Full democratic rights for the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland! For programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage! For the separation of church and state—smash the prohibitions on divorce, abortion, homosexuality! For free abortion on demand! For free, universal secular education at all levels! Jobs for all—smash the Programme for National Recovery "social contract"! In Britain, workers revolution will sweep away the monarchy, House of Lords and established churches. Against the pro-NATO, pro-EEC Labour Party tops and the "little Englanders" we stand for a federation of workers republics in the British Isles. For a socialist united states of Europe!

As the great Irish socialist James Connolly said over 75 years ago, women in Ireland are the slaves of slaves. Their liberation requires the smashing of capitalism and its reactionary institutions by victorious proletarian revolution throughout the British Isles. ■

Abortion...

(continued from page 48)

the workforce and political life and lay the basis for replacing the family, the main institution for the oppression of women under capitalism, with socialized alternatives. They abolished all laws regarding consensual sexual relations (laws against sodomy, fornication, homosexuality) because they thought the state had no business interfering in private sexual matters.

In 1919 the Communist Party created the Department of Working Women and Peasant Women, *Zhenotdel*, for special work among women, which included organizing over 25,000 literacy schools. Before the revolution, family life lay in the grip of the church and its priests; religious prejudices were deeply rooted in poverty and ignorance. Nowhere was the condition of women more downtrodden than in the primitive Muslim areas of Soviet Central Asia, where women, shrouded in the veil, lived in seclusion, subject to the centuries-old bride price. Dedicated and heroic members of *Zhenotdel* donned the veil to meet Muslim women and explain the laws and goals of the new Soviet republic.

What was the attitude of the young workers state to the issue of women's rights which rouses such controversy today in the U.S.—abortion? In 1920 the Soviet government *legalized abortion* and made it entirely free. At first they resisted this action, because they considered abortion to be a threat to women's health. In those days, before antibiotics to fight infection, it was much riskier than it is now.

The Bolsheviks also thought that poverty and social backwardness drove many women unwillingly to abortion and that the real way to counteract this was to build housing, create jobs, education, childcare. They passed special measures to give extra help to single mothers. They believed that a woman shouldn't have to resort to

abortion, when she might actually prefer to have the child, simply because she couldn't afford to feed, clothe and educate it. Their goal was to build a new, classless society in which the emancipation of women would be achieved as capitalist relations and oppression were abolished. And although that struggle was later derailed by the rise of Stalinism and the corrupt Kremlin bureaucracy, many of its gains still remain in the USSR.

Abortion Rights Mirror Attitude to Women

But in the capitalist United States, it wasn't until 53 years later that the Supreme Court struck down state laws against abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, thus making abortion legal nationwide. Today, 16 years later, we are facing the possibility that same court will reverse its 1973 decision. George Bush is the number one crusader in this campaign against abortion. Like Reagan before him, he has urged the Court to overthrow legal abortion and applauded the "Right to Life" bigots. He grossly vetoed Congress' measure to restore federal funding for abortions for women who are pregnant because of rape or incest (*one percent* of the annual number of abortions). There's an unstated position behind Congress' funding measure: women who get pregnant because they had sex and maybe *enjoyed* it—they don't deserve the right to abortion. Bush's reason for the veto? The taxpayers' money will be "abused" by women falsely claiming they've been raped in order to get the government to pay for their abortions! Congress couldn't even get the votes necessary to override the veto. Thus our rulers show their hatred and contempt for women, their arrogant trampling on even a simple democratic right—the simple right to a medical procedure, now one of the safest in the world.

Just as the Soviet workers state mirrored its commitment to the emancipation of women in a struggle to make abortion safe and free to all, so in the United States today the right-wing attacks against abortion rights mirror



**ЧТО ДАЛА
ОКТЯБРЬСКАЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ
РАБОТНИЦЕ И КРЕСТЬЯНКЕ**



Credits: RSFSR Artist, G. Pishnek
Soviet poster (1920) hails emancipation of working and peasant women in October Revolution. Heroic Bolshevik women (right) risked their lives to spread the revolution to Muslim women in Soviet Central Asia.

the reactionaries' program for women: Hitler's "Kinder, Küche, Kirche"—children, kitchen, church. A part of birth control, abortion provides women with a small measure of freedom to be something other than eternally pregnant or entirely celibate. So for the bigots, abortion is a threat to the institution of the family, which is a bulwark of social reaction, along with organized religion and the armed might of the state forming a trinity propping up the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.

The attack on abortion rights has become a spearhead for social and political reaction because at the heart of the abortion war lies the question of legal and social equality for women. This country can't even pass a token reform like the Equal Rights Amendment, a simple statement that rights before the law won't be abridged on account of sex. Women are still systematically paid about two-thirds the wage of men in an equivalent job. Even middle-class families can't make it on one income anymore—but there's practically no decent and affordable childcare in this country for women who have to work.

While women are oppressed on account of their sex throughout this society, the burden falls triply hard on working and minority women. As American industry falls apart, concomitant soaring rates of unemployment push women out of jobs. Widespread slashing of budgets for social services over the past ten years has destroyed necessary programs for health, food, education. Funding for prenatal care, care for infants, child vaccination programs—all but gone. Young women can't get access to decent birth control, while the utterly lousy school system leaves incredible levels of ignorance about sex and reproduction among the young. The result: a soaring rate of teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood unheard of in European countries like France and Germany.

The infant mortality rate for minorities is on a par with a Third World country. In Chicago, with one of the highest infant mortality rates in the U.S.—over 16 deaths per 1,000—the average rate is half again as high for black women—nearly 23 deaths for each 1,000 babies born. In the predominantly black city of Washington, D.C., it was an astronomical 32.3 deaths per 1,000 for the first

half of 1989! It's not just that the babies are born prematurely and sick because their mothers have been unable to obtain decent obstetrical care. One-third die within a year after leaving the hospital because the mothers can't afford to buy enough food, to keep the heat up, to take the baby to the doctor.

Wages haven't risen in this country for over 16 years, while inflation continues to grind away. Even for millions of white workers it means increasing immiseration; they simply can't afford to live the way their parents did. For minorities, especially for black people, it's a nightmare of desperation. What's the government's answer to the unspeakably inhuman conditions in which millions live? More cops and more jails! Restore the death penalty! The welfare system isn't working? The capitalists' answer: smash it altogether. A year ago Democrats and Republicans in Congress gleefully united to pass a bill for "welfare reform," otherwise known as "workfare," which was cruelly called the "Family Security Act." We called it by its real name, *genocide*, because it amounts to death by starvation for millions if it's implemented. Women with children are supposed to enroll in "job training" programs—yet the government has cut these by 68 percent over the past six or seven years. And if the women turn down a dead-end job at starvation wages, they're simply cut off the welfare rolls.

So when in July 1989 the Supreme Court issued its watershed decision upholding a reactionary Missouri law and threatening women's right to abortion, the surprise was that there was anything left of abortion rights at all. In fact the Supreme Court has issued a blanket invitation to state legislatures to hand them the perfect case with the perfect legal argument to overthrow *Roe*. In particular they have encouraged measures such as "parental permission" requirements for young women, seeking to bolster the authority of the patriarchal family and targeting the most vulnerable, the young, at the same time.

What was this Missouri case about? Its core is a ban against all abortions performed in facilities receiving any state aid, and banning the participation of anyone working for the state of Missouri in any abortion-related activity, including counseling. *Ninety-seven percent* of abor-

Der Spiegel



Bush's shock troops for social reaction: "Right to life" bigots terrorize women seeking abortions.

Maple/Woodfin Camp



Labor Must Defend Abortion Clinics!

Spartacists joined 600 clinic defenders in Washington, D.C. on 11 November 1989. Cops ordered NOW/NARAL clinic escorts away from door, allowing "Operation Rescue" fanatics to block access to the Hillcrest Women's Surgi-Center. The large turnout of women's rights activists showed their growing will to defend the clinics. NOW's November 12 rally was designed to defuse this militancy into electioneering for Democratic—and even "pro-choice" Republican—politicians. NOW outrageously tried (but failed) to get the cops to ban the SL and other leftists from distributing socialist literature at the Lincoln Memorial.



Workers Vanguard

tions in Missouri were in such facilities. Now any doctor trained in a public hospital there won't be able to learn how to do an abortion.

Two weeks later a woman carrying a severely deformed fetus was *denied* an abortion in Missouri and had to go to Kansas for the procedure. For the moment, women who can afford to travel, who can afford the medical care, do have options. Before 1973, of course, rich women used to go to New York City or to European countries like Sweden, where abortions were legal. But poor women—disproportionately black, Hispanic and immigrant women—have the so-called "choice" of having an unwanted child they can't care for, going to a back-alley abortionist who's more likely than not a dishonest quack, or trying some self-induced abortion technique. Hospital wards will be full of butchered women, maimed, mutilated, often made sterile or dying of infections or bleeding to death. Around the world today—primarily in Third World countries—200,000 women die each year from the effects of illegal abortion.

Anti-Woman Bigots from the White House to "Operation Rescue"

And if a woman does get to a clinic for her abortion, what will she find there? Last July the bigoted bullies who call themselves Operation Rescue threatened to step up their campaign of harassment and intimidation. According to the National Abortion Federation, between 1977 and 1987 terrorist actions against abortion rights have included 70 bombings and acts of arson, 213 bomb threats, 216 clinic invasions, 41 acts of assault and battery, 2 kidnappings, 191 instances of vandalism, 61 death threats and 624 pickets and blockades against clinics or facilities. And that's not even including the last two years.

The U.S. government made it clear from the beginning what side it was on. While the feds are using "RICO" racketeering laws to frame up everyone from "pornogra-

phers" to unions, the FBI refused to consider the bands of thugs roving around from state to state and city to city to be a "national conspiracy" and washed their hands of any responsibility to investigate or stop them on a national level. The local courts and police departments usually treat the blockaders with uncharacteristic gentleness, carefully removing them one by one so no hair on their heads is hurt.

For years Reagan and now Bush have given the anti-woman forces their blessing. But *the first and so far major restriction on abortion rights came from the U.S. Congress*. That was the 1976 Hyde Amendment, supported by both Republicans and Democrats, which prohibited the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortions for poor women, *even when they are medically necessary*. By the next year federally funded abortions had dropped from 295,000 to 3,000 per year. Thirty-seven states also have state-level bans on abortion funding. When there was an outcry about this, the Democratic president, born-again Christian Jimmy Carter, sneered and said: "There are many things in life which are not fair."

The Missouri law also contains a clause which states that "human life begins at conception." Now, the First Amendment guarantees the separation of church and state—the most important gain of the American Revolution aside from independence from Britain. This is supposed to mean that what you believe about the origin of life, and whether a fertilized egg is a human being, is your own business. But the Supreme Court let this outrageous amendment stand. As historical materialists, we of course have deep philosophical differences with fundamentalism—just as with any other religious worldview. But what we are dealing with here is religion mobilized as a *political program*. Organized religion has for centuries in conjunction with the state witchhunted *other* beliefs. It has always been the position of Marxists to oppose such attempts to use



Joe Rodriguez/Black Star

Genocide, USA:
A mother and her children thrown onto New York City's mean streets. Bipartisan war on the poor means soaring rates of homelessness, malnutrition and disease.

state power for religious persecution.

The fundamentalist view that fetuses should be extended full rights as human beings has led to some unintended hilarious results. There is a young woman who's in jail in Missouri for forging checks. Well, she's pregnant. So she's suing the state for the unlawful imprisonment of her fetus! But unfortunately this is *no joke*. In California the courts have already charged one woman with child neglect because her baby was born with severe brain damage and later died.

The "Right to Life" movement also wants to ban various kinds of birth control—including the pill—because they sometimes work by preventing a fertilized egg from implanting in the wall of the uterus. Anti-abortion forces have successfully threatened the drug companies into refusing to sponsor the new drug, RU 486, which induces abortion chemically. If it were available, it would mean that to get an abortion a woman would simply get a prescription from her doctor. It would make abortion an entirely private act, meaning no abortion clinics to bomb and blockade. This drug could dramatically improve conditions in the impoverished areas of the Third World, where lack of decent medical facilities can make surgical abortion more dangerous.

Now you may be thinking, how could the government outlaw birth control? It was not so long ago that birth control was illegal in this country. Up to 1965 in Connecticut it was illegal for *married* people to use birth control. Up to 1972 it was illegal for single people to use birth control in Massachusetts and many other states as well. Bill Baird, a heroic fighter for women's right to abortion, spent three months in *jail* in Massachusetts for giving a package of contraceptive foam and a condom to a Boston University student as a challenge to the law. According to an article in the July 1989 *Science*, in the past decade scientific research into new contraceptive methods has virtually screeched to a halt. The Reagan administration several years ago slashed funding for family planning internationally, including for abortion and birth control, leaving many

Third World women with not much to turn to.

The government is threatening to dictate to women on one of the most intimate questions of their lives. And this threat to remove an essential control over their decision if and when to bear children—what you're talking about is slavery for women! I mean, look at the imperialist draft for men. It's being forcibly kidnapped, dragged off to labor ceaselessly in some hellhole and subjected to daily threats of a hideous death in imperialist war. Now women face kidnapping of their bodies, shackling them to unwanted motherhood for the rest of their lives, if they aren't killed or mutilated by back-alley butchers.

All-Sided Capitalist Reaction

For the last 10 or 12 years we've seen, along with escalating anti-abortion attacks, the effective destruction of busing for school integration and Reagan's 1980 firing of the air traffic controllers union for the "crime" of daring to go on strike, opening a period of vicious union-busting. We've seen the criminal neglect of the AIDS epidemic, whose victims—because they were at first almost all gay men—were simply left to die by the inhuman bigots who run the country. Cops rampage through the cities beating and shooting, while the Ku Klux Klan spreads its killer race-hate.

Endemic to this reactionary onslaught is a broad-based attack on the right to privacy. The White House welcomed fundamentalist preachers who campaigned to get prayer in the schools and to teach the biblical myth of Genesis in place of Darwin's theory of evolution. Now it's focused on the so-called "war on drugs" which is a blueprint for uncontrolled police terror throughout the country, in particular in the ghettos and barrios. It's also part of a 1980s "neo-Prohibitionism" which extends from alcohol to drugs to tobacco. This summer censors canceled a show at Washington's Corcoran Gallery of the work of Robert Mapplethorpe (who died of AIDS last March) because it contained evocative photographs on homosexual themes.

This was all rather appropriately capped off by the

Supreme Court's last session. The Court ruled that white men claiming reverse discrimination can sue at any time against affirmative action programs—but black women fighting discriminatory demotions are too late because they had to sue *before* they were demoted. The Court upheld confiscation of suspects' assets, thus preventing them from hiring "high-priced lawyers." They even ruled that it's OK for states to put to death *children* and the mentally retarded! And they ruled that massive statistical evidence of discrimination in hiring was irrelevant, because the workers involved had to show that it wasn't just "good business" to discriminate. After all, say our rulers, it isn't the *company's* fault that minority and women workers have little access to education and are prevented from acquiring job skills, right? That's just the way it is! That makes a neat little parallel with the capitalist state's attitude on funding for abortion: just because a woman can't pay for it doesn't mean she's had her "right" to abortion taken away!

This deep-seated domestic reaction arises out of a crisis of U.S. imperialism driven by the devaluation of the dollar in 1971 and the defeat of its imperialist army in Vietnam in 1975. Jimmy Carter kicked off Cold War II with a phony campaign for "human rights" in 1979 when the Soviets entered Afghanistan at the request of the besieged Kabul government after civil war broke out there. Minimal reforms enacted by the left-nationalist regime—restriction of the bride price, elimination of the head-to-toe veil, teaching young girls as well as boys to read—drove the Islamic mullahs and tribal chiefs into military opposition. Over the past ten years the U.S. has funded and supplied the tribal reactionaries in Afghanistan who are fighting to maintain the near slavery of women in that country. Ten years ago *mujahedin* guerrilla leader Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and his thugs threw acid in the faces and shot at the legs of young women who refused to wear the stifling head-to-toe veil.

In this situation, the Spartacist League recognized that it was only the Soviet military intervention of December 1979 which opened the road to the liberation of the Afghan toilers. We said then, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the Gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan Peoples!" We noted that the Kremlin bureaucracy had reluctantly intervened simply to stabilize a strategical-

ly placed client state, and might well do a deal with the imperialists, which they have since done. Nonetheless, the presence of the Soviet troops held off the reactionary holy war of the mullahs and tribal chiefs.

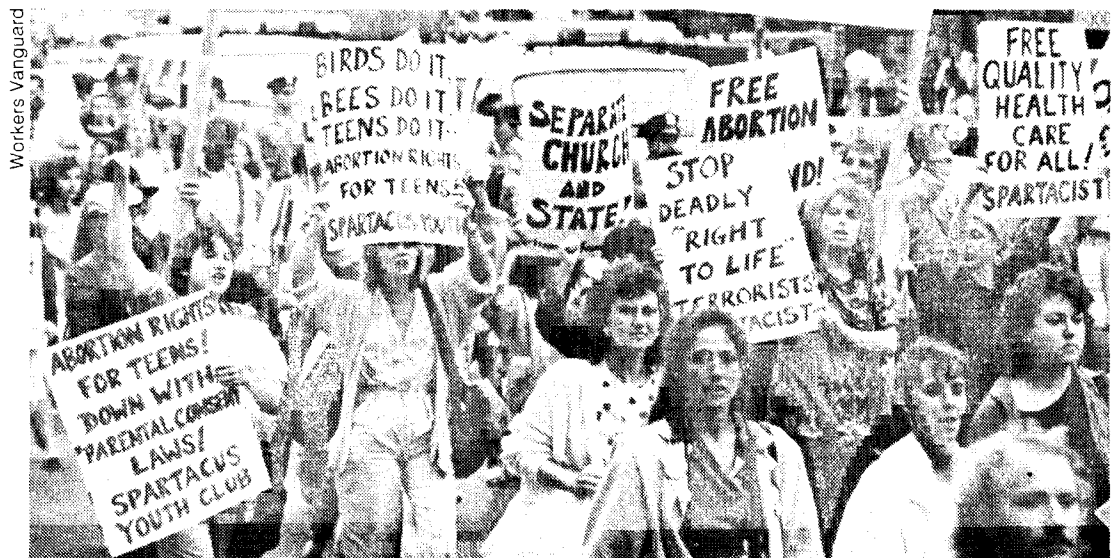
Carter's support to the tribal reactionaries in Afghanistan was part of a U.S. imperialist campaign to re-establish its strength and authority internationally. And it had a domestic corollary. The government wanted to get in position for new bloody imperialist adventures, be they in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, the Middle East. They needed to bleed the working class dry to fund this. So there was a campaign to roll back the unions, to dismantle the token gains of the 1960s civil rights movement and to reinstill "family values," respect for the good old American way, religion, social and sexual conformity. Carter started it, and the Reagan and Bush administrations just grabbed the ball and went on.

The Family

There are lots of lies about what communists really think about the family. I remember being told in junior high school that communists think people should live in army barracks because they're against families. The bourgeoisie presents the monogamous, "one man on one woman for life" family as an "eternal" formation based in nature and blessed by god. But Marxists recognize that it is fundamentally a social institution which has evolved through history into what it is today.

There's a very interesting book by Frederick Engels called *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which was inspired by the research of Lewis Henry Morgan, a 19th-century anthropologist who lived among the Iroquois in the U.S. Morgan studied what were called "systems of consanguinity" because the Iroquois didn't have families as we know them. And what these early anthropologists learned about the evolution of human society puts the lie to the bourgeoisie's sanctification of the family as "the" way human beings live. Engels extrapolated back to a time when we lived not in the small father-mother-children family group, isolated within a much larger society, but as a tribal collective, where people functioned together, sharing food and resources, to survive in a very hostile natural world.

Spartacist contingent in 5 July 1989 New York City protest against Supreme Court decision allowing states to impose restrictions on abortion.



In early societies, kinship systems were entirely different. One system that was fairly widespread among ancient societies was "group marriage"—people organized by clan or gens were married to each other and had sex basically when they wanted to. Nobody knew who the children's fathers were. Descent and blood relationships were determined through the mother alone, which was called "mother right." Some ancient societies didn't even have words to express our idea of "brother" or "sister."

These societies had no classes, private property or state: it's what we call primitive communism. There were different levels of status in society, such as chiefs or shamans, but that was an entirely different matter from the later historical division of society into classes—between the slave owner and the slave, or between the capitalist, the owner of the means of production, and the worker, who has only his labor power to sell, which is what we have today. The only real division of labor that existed in these primitive communist societies was that based on sex—starting from the simple fact of life that women get pregnant and nurse infants. Usually this division of labor extended to hunting and gathering food. While men and women had different roles, both roles were necessary to the society and so they were also equal.

Monogamous marriage arose with private property—that is, with the development of agriculture and the first breakup of society into classes. Then men found that they needed to know which children were really their own, because they had property to pass on. Thus the patriarchal, monogamous family unit came about, which Engels calls the "world-historic defeat of the female sex." Be-

cause what it really meant was monogamy for women—the first double standard.

Today, the right of inheritance of private property is central to the bourgeoisie's maintenance of its class dictatorship. A workers government would indeed abolish the right of inheritance—it's one of Marx's central demands in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). It was a very important measure indeed to the Bolshevik Revolution, which occurred in a country where titles, land and aristocratic privilege were inherited. The Bolsheviks abolished titles and privilege, while the property—the land and the factories—went to the workers state to be used for the needs of all, not profit for a few.

But raising the next generation—that's a function of the family which cannot simply be abolished, but must be replaced. It will still take years to raise a human being. We say that housework and childcare should be socialized through communal kitchens, free, 24-hour childcare, communal laundries—a new way of rearing children and attending to personal care that will enable women to become full participants in social and political life and that will destroy the material basis of anti-woman bigotry. And then personal relationships could be based solely on love and friendship. Economic necessity and stifling moralism would no longer be factors in compelling people to get together or stay together.

Today the bourgeois family serves as a bedrock of social conservatism to ensure the habit of obedience to authority and bourgeois morality, which condemns as "wrong" and "unnatural" anything that deviates—from premarital sex to homosexuality. The whole question of sex and the family is manipulated to make women, and men, fearful, docile, guilt-ridden and conflicted. After all, in the absence of alternatives, the family is all people have to fall back on. And this vulnerability and traditional morality is extremely useful to beat back any struggle for women's rights—indeed, any struggle at all.

The power of the family for social reaction is enormously explosive. In this country you're supposed to identify first with your family. Then it's religion, ethnicity, race—all the categories that the capitalist class uses for the poison of hate, to pit workers against each other: white against black, Christian against Jew, man against woman, *everybody*, it seems, against Asians and non-English-speaking immigrants. This murderous hate reaches its most virulent and explosive tensions when it intersects with sex, as we saw most horribly last August with the vicious killing of Yusuf Hawkins in Bensonhurst in New York City. A young woman, Gina Feliciano, living in a deeply conservative Italian Catholic neighborhood, reportedly had a dark-skinned Caribbean boyfriend and black and Hispanic friends. And because she'd crossed the accepted line about sex and race, because she violated the biggest sexual taboo in America—interracial sex—the local thugs killed Yusuf Hawkins, who just happened to be the first black guy who walked by.

What Strategy to Win?

The Spartacist League has consistently fought for abortion as a basic democratic right. We also recognize that legalizing abortion is a simple reform which can do little to change the material conditions of life for the vast majority of women. Moreover, such reforms can be easily

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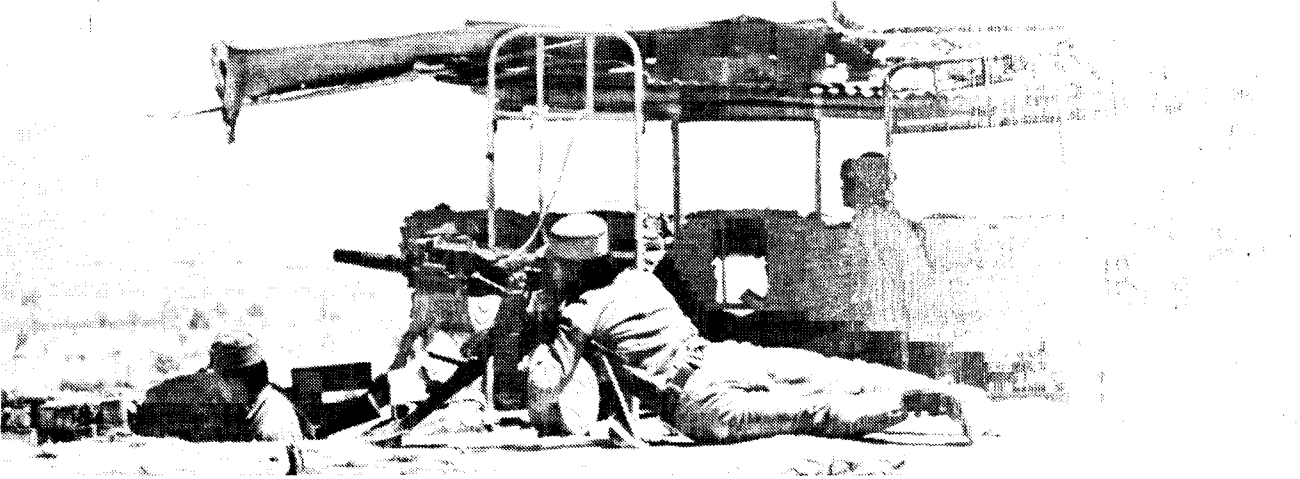


Workers March in Kabul, 1989.

Afghanistan: Scenes of Civil War

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) sent a special correspondent to Afghanistan for four weeks in July 1989. Rights for women was a key question igniting the civil war launched by tribalist reactionaries against the Kabul government. These photographs from our correspondent show the head-to-

toe *chador* which the CIA-backed *mujahedin* wanted women to wear. Women are fighting to defend the right to cast off the veil of oppression (right). Gulistan anti-battalion in Karesimir guards the northern approach to Kabul. "They come, we are ready," one young fighter said, "each one of us to fight against foreign threat."



granted and just as easily taken away. Therefore, we call for "free abortion on demand" and link it to the fight for free, quality health care and free 24-hour childcare, measures which address the profound oppression of working-class and minority women.

When you want to fight for even a straightforward reform like abortion rights, you can't isolate it from its social context. But the politics of bourgeois feminism, like the National Organization for Women, which many women look to for leadership in this fight, cannot address these questions. NOW's strategy was very much in evidence last April 9 at the women's march in Washington.

They paraded a string of Congressmen across the street and tried to fire the crowd with enthusiasm in "lobby your Congressmen" campaigns.

The question of legal abortion is one which has produced some differences within the American anti-feminist and its two parties. It is not insignificant that the *New York Times* has been campaigning for abortion reform while the "Right to Life" movement has never managed to get the "human life" amendment to a vote in Congress.

Since last July there's been a change in the political climate in the halls of government. The anti-feminists are quickly backtracking from abortion reform and the

They are getting nervous as polls continue to show Americans' broad support for legal abortion. In the last presidential elections, Democratic candidate Dukakis only halfheartedly mouthed support for legal abortion while he was under attack from the "Operation Rescue" squads. Now anti-abortion governors like Bob Martinez in Florida are losing votes on the question, so candidates are dusting off and refurbishing their pro-choice credentials.

But bourgeois politicians waffling back and forth on this question is nothing new—many of the most virulent anti-abortion fanatics weren't always that way, either. George Bush used to support limited abortion rights; he changed his line to get on the Republican ticket with Reagan in 1980. And even Reagan, as governor of California, signed into law a bill allowing some restricted access to abortion in that state, which was one of the most liberal in the nation at the time. These capitalist politicians know their own daughters, wives and mistresses will always get safe, quality abortions, whatever the laws.

At the April 9 march, Jesse Jackson said something which fired the NOW leaders with enthusiasm but which to me symbolized all the dead-end, do-nothing treachery of feminism. He said, "If Margaret Thatcher can be prime minister of Britain, if Indira Gandhi can run India, if Benazir Bhutto can be prime minister of Pakistan, then a woman can be president of the United States!" That's what NOW wants: a woman to run the U.S.—just like Margaret Thatcher, who can smash strikes, destroy workers' living standards, and unleash race-hate as good as any man!

As for Benazir Bhutto, as prime minister of Pakistan she works hand in glove with the CIA to support the bloody *mujahedin* in Afghanistan! A fine leaflet put out by the Spartacus Youth Club to protest Bhutto's appearance at Harvard University commencement last June described what this first female leader of an Islamic state has done

for the women of Pakistan:

"She betrayed the hopes of thousands of women who expected her to do away with the hated Haddood Ordinance against 'moral offenses,' under which women are condemned to death by public stoning for 'adultery' and even prohibited from testifying at their own 'trials.' Over 3,000 women still languish in Pakistan's prisons and more are dragged in each day. Bhutto issued a *directive* that all Pakistani women should...submit to arranged marriages, wear head scarves, and not soil a man's hand with a female handshake in public.

"...one of Bhutto's first acts as prime minister was to outdo her domestic Islamic fundamentalist opponents in whipping up a murderous frenzy over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*: 'We banned the book because...it was in the interests of the state because it is important not to promote blasphemy'."

Salman Rushdie, by the way, has his revenge already in print. If you want to know more about Bhutto and the hellish life of women in Pakistan, read Rushdie's book *Shame* (1983), in which she features as a character nicknamed the "virgin Ironpants."

On April 9 the Spartacist League marched under the banner of the Partisan Defense Committee—which read "No to the Veil! Defend Afghan Women! Support Jalalabad Victims of CIA Cutthroats!"—as the kickoff of an international campaign organized by the PDC to raise money for the aid of the victims of the reactionary *mujahedin*. Last February Gorbachev, to appease the U.S. imperialists, withdrew the Red Army from Afghanistan. The *mujahedin*, backed by the U.S. and its ally Pakistan, began a drive on the strategic city of Jalalabad, whose fall would open the road to Kabul. At the request of the Kabul government, the PDC waged an international campaign of humanitarian aid. We passed out over 200,000 leaflets, in six languages, all over the world, and raised \$44,000.

The fall of Afghanistan to the reactionary *mujahedin* would mean not only re-enslavement and mass slaughter for the people of Afghanistan, but a strengthening of counterrevolution across the world. Imperialism would have a dagger pointed at the heart of the Soviet Union. Thus the battle of Afghanistan raises the crucial question of defense of the USSR, which remains a workers state, however degenerated. A victory for U.S. imperialism would also greatly strengthen the forces of domestic reaction here. It would certainly make it all the harder to do what's needed to even begin to defend abortion rights in this country.

We also marched under the banner: "Labor: Defend Abortion Clinics!" Because decisive action can really only be taken by the one force in this country that can make the capitalists sit up and listen: the working class. The workers have enormous social power because by withholding their labor power they deprive capitalism of its reason for existence: profits. They can and must be mobilized in defense of abortion rights. For example, the Spartacist League calls for a massive mobilization of labor, together with women and minorities, to keep the clinics open—a show of strength that could bring out many others in support of women's rights.

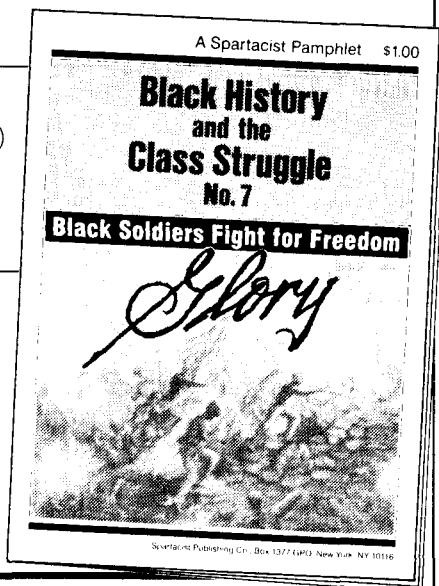
Such struggles must be part of the building of a new party, a multiracial workers party opposed to the Democrats and Republicans, the parties of capitalism. A class-struggle strategy to fight for women's rights, against racist terror, against *all* capitalist attacks, can win. Last fall we

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Workers Vanguard

Striking Eastern, NYNEX and Local 1199 hospital workers march in New York City, 14 August 1989. Social power of labor must be mobilized to fight for "Free Quality Health Care for All!"

saw it in action, at the November 5 Mobilization to Stop the Klan in Philadelphia. Massive support for the Partisan Defense Committee's call for mobilizing labor/black power kept the killer Klansmen off the streets of Philadelphia.

At root, all the exploited and oppressed have a *common interest* to fight against capitalist reaction, and we base our strategy on this truth. Feminism and black nationalism, as ideologies which proceed from the concerns of one sector of the oppressed *counterposed* to the whole, must come into conflict as they each pursue upward mobility within the confines of the capitalist system. Thus the grotesque whining of the feminists several years back that blacks were getting more out of affirmative action programs than women were! We say, we've got to fight together; jobs for all!

This is no abstract point, but hits us all in our daily lives. It's purely artificial to divorce abortion from the question of access to health care, as NOW does. Over the past ten years all of us have faced astronomical increases in the cost of medical care. The American system of medicine for profit has spawned a deep-going crisis in health care. Hospitals close, they groan with debt, people pay hundreds, thousands more out of pocket or simply go without needed care, as insurance plans vanish or cover less and less.

This is happening in the middle of a raging epidemic: AIDS. Medical research has now developed a number of treatments for this horrible disease which while they are not cures do offer some hope—at least the possibility of a few more years of life—to those infected with the virus. Now there appears to be a compelling medical reason for individuals who are not yet sick to get tested to find out if they are infected (the Spartacist League supports voluntary, *anonymous* testing for AIDS and is adamantly opposed to any government-enforced mandatory testing). But most of the infected people simply won't be able to afford the treatments! It's \$6-8,000 a year for AZT,

and even the medical establishment has been complaining of the unconscionable profits reaped by Burroughs Wellcome, the manufacturer. Right now the virus is spreading most rapidly through the poorest, most ravaged sections of the ghettos and barrios, among drug users and their families—people who have nothing. They are without any social power whatsoever.

It is no coincidence that the strikes going on in this country—the miners in Pittston, the telephone workers—are largely against attempts to further cut or eliminate health care benefits. If you tap the power of the labor movement for "free quality health care for all" you have a link between the most oppressed and the social might of the working class. So there is an alternative to this passive do-nothing strategy of relying on the politicians, cops and courts.

The bourgeois feminist NOW won't fight for working-class and minority women. But there is another women's movement: the women who have joined in the front ranks of every revolutionary struggle on this planet, the women workers who sparked the Russian Revolution when they marched on International Women's Day in 1917. When the October Revolution smashed the old tsarist society in Russia, militant women were among the first recruits to communism in dozens of countries where women were oppressed by semi-feudal conditions and "customs." They recognized a road forward to uprooting social reaction and building a society freed from sexual, racial and class inequality.

We need an international revolutionary party—a reborn Trotskyist Fourth International, a tribune of the people which fights for all the oppressed and exploited, and against all reaction. We must carry the struggles of the other women's movement forward to international socialist revolution. Then the trinity of reaction—the family, organized religion and the state—will let go its grip on us as we build a new social order free from exploitation and oppression. ■

Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!



Spartacist banners at 9 April 1989 abortion rights march in Washington, D.C.

Workers Vanguard

USA: The Battle for Abortion Rights

After the massive 9 April 1989 march in Washington for abortion rights, the bourgeois reformist NOW geared up for endless lobbying campaigns and voter registration drives around their November 12 mobilization. Counterposed to this dead-end strategy of relying on the bourgeois politicians and courts, the Spartacist League participated in the marches with our revolutionary slogans seeking to pose a perspective of mobilizing the working class, together with women and minorities, in defense of women's rights.

In September and October 1989, the Spartacist League held a series of forums, "Women's Liberation: What Strategy to Win?" at Columbia University, Harvard University and the University of Chicago. The talk, by Amy Rath, associate editor of *Women and Revolution*, is here edited for publication. A shorter version was published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 489, 10 November 1989.

Seventy-two years ago there was a revolution in Russia. It started on International Women's Day in 1917, when women workers in Petrograd took to the streets to

demand higher wages, bread for their starving families, and peace. It was the third year of the devastation and horror of imperialist World War I. This was the beginning of the most important victory for the emancipation of women, and of all humanity, in history—the victory of proletarian revolution in Russia under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. It's this heritage that the Spartacist League, as a Trotskyist organization, defends and looks to in the struggle to achieve the emancipation of women.

The Bolsheviks put into practice a number of crucial measures moving toward the liberation of women. They made marriage and divorce simple matters of civil registration, entirely independent of the reactionary Russian Orthodox church, as part of an early decree giving women equal rights with men. Insofar as the poverty of the country allowed, they established communal kitchens, laundries and childcare centers to free up women from the overwhelming burdens of housework—measures which sought to bring women into

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