SPARTACIST

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Class Opposition to Popular Fronts—Key to Revolutionary Regroupment

Chilean OTR Fuses with Spartacist Tendency

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The 1977 European summer camp of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) witnessed a fusion which is unique in the history of the iSt and of considerable interest and significance to would-be revolutionists throughout the world. The Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria (OTR) of Chile united with the iSt, and is now the Chilean sympathizing section of our common tendency. While the proportions on both sides are modest, this fusion represents a ringing affirmation and confirmation of Trotsky's 1935 remark that: "In reality, the Popular Front is *the main question of Proletarian class strategy* for this epoch." The OTR and iSt met on the common terrain of militant class opposition to bourgeois popular frontism, and it was by generalizing this position of proletarian independence to all major international questions that a joining of our forces became possible and necessary.

For the iSt this fusion marks a significant extension of our tendency, as it is the first Latin American section. It thus represents the addition of an important body of revolutionary experience to a movement previously limited to sections in North America, Europe and Australasia. For the OTR it signifies the overcoming of national isolation and the culmination of its break with Pabloism begun some years before. While holding firm to their opposition to popular frontism, the Chilean comrades have proven capable of uncompromisingly reevaluating their past views in the light of international experience, the indispensable precondition for assimilating authentic Leninism. For anyone familiar with the continental parochialism and rampant revisionism of Latin American "Trotskyism," this is a tremendous achievement.

But the central significance of the OTR/iSt fusion is to underline the Trotskyist analysis of the popular front, the tying of the working masses to "progressive" capitalists—or even "phantom" capitalists (provincial lawyers and the like) when the real bourgeoisie in its entirety has staked its existence on the triumph of naked reaction—with the purpose of preventing a proletarian uprising against all wings of the bourgeois class enemy. A tragically prophetic article in *Spartacist* in the fall of 1970 warned that the Allende coalition, the Unidad Popular (UP), was a popular front such as in France, Spain and Chile during the 1930's, and must be resolutely opposed by proletarian revolutionists. At a time when millions of Chileans and leftists throughout the world were hailing the "*compañero presidente*" and talking of a second Cuba, we wrote: "Any 'critical support' to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean working people when domestic reaction, abetted by international imperialism, is ready."

In reality, this seemingly prescient statement was neither especially original nor did it require a crystal ball. We were simply repeating the lesson of Spain, acting as any Leninist party should, as the memory of the working class. It would seem to be the ABC of Trotskyism, yet every other international tendency which claims that heritage managed to obscure or directly deny the popular-front character of the Allende regime.

Within Chile, the groups to the left of the Communist and Socialist parties were disoriented by the 1970 UP election victory. The most notorious case was that of the Castroite MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria—Movement of the Revolutionary Left) which flip-flopped from guerrillaist opposition to participation in

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elections on principle ("¡fusil, no elecciones!") to "critically" supporting Allende. Even those who made a claim to represent Trotskyism conciliated the UP, terming the new government "reformist." But there was a small group within the Chilean "Trotskyist" orbit, principally made up of trade unionists, which was driven by its unbending defense of the workers' interests to the understanding that the UP was a popular front that must be directly opposed. It was this nucleus which later became the Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria, and which in 1974 summed up the lessons of the Unidad Popular as follows:

> "To say that the character of the UP was reformist means being an accomplice to the betrayals committed.... Thus the UP must be included in the list of the old popular fronts, the model designed to betray the working class."
>
> —"Una derrota política y la necesidad de un balance"

In short, the fusion of the international Spartacist tendency and the Chilean OTR represents the joining of the current which from afar uniquely predicted and warned against the tragic course of the Allende government, with those who directly confronted with the popularity of the UP (and experiencing its deadly consequences) refused to compromise or abandon their defense of their class. As the popular front is indeed the central issue facing Leninists in our times, and Chile is *the* recent burning example of the consequences of popular frontism, the unification of our organizations should be studied by all serious Marxists.

The Evolution of the OTR

Unlike the other fusions entered into by the international Spartacist tendency, this was a case of the coming together of two tendencies that already had the same decisive programmatic postulates rather than of some centrist current breaking loose and being won over to the positions of the iSt. The proletarian revolutionary opposition of the Chilean OTR to the deadly Allende popular front was already decisive. But the OTR, operating in a much more local political/cultural milieu than the iSt, needed to undertake a great deal of testing of the international waters to verify that the treacherous activities of the local representatives of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat" (USec) and the "Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" (OCRFI) of the French OCI and the Bolivian POR were representative. The fusion was not easy to arrive at; rather, it was one in which key prerequisites already existed, yet it was difficult in consummation as the two parties, testing each other out in many ways and repetitively, came from very different particular terrains.

To understand the fusion process it is necessary first to see the OTR as it was in Chile prior to the coup. The group, which had formed within the USec sympathizing organization, the TRO (Revolutionary October Tendency), began essentially as a "workerist" opposition to the popular front. It also objected, although in an empirical fashion, to the TRO's longstanding policy of "deep entrism" in the Socialist Party (PS), and subsequently withdrew its supporters from the PS. The final break came over an unprincipled fusion of the TRO with the group of L. Vitale to form the PSR (Revolutionary Socialist Party, the "official"—for a while—USec sympathizing section). For submitting a document against the fusion the future OTR tendency was expelled from the new organization (and its document suppressed).

With members who had been leaders of the National Copper Workers Federation and the support of other miners' leaders, the tendency which became the OTR consistently opposed the Allende government's criminal policy of the "battle for production"—a cynical slogan for speed-up—because the self-proclaimed "people's government" did not change the fact that Chile remained a capitalist country. When Allende launched bombastic campaigns for "worker participation"—a scheme to induce the proletariat to acquiesce in its own exploitation—leaders of the OTR in the nationalized copper mining sector counterposed the slogan of workers control, whose aim was to destroy, not reform, the bourgeois state. In contrast, the MIR and the left wing of the PS, including especially sectors with a certain "Trotskyoid" aura as well as Castro himself, supported the UP's "participation" projects. (Michel Pablo himself made a special trip to Chile to laud this hoax, and dedicated a book about it to his friend, Socialist economics minister Pedro Vuskovic.)

After the bloody Pinochet coup, when the comrades of the OTR were forced to flee into exile in Europe or into neighboring countries, they sought to deepen their understanding of the Chilean fiasco and broaden their international understanding in discussions first with the USec and then the OCRFI. However, they soon discovered that the Trotskyist credentials of these self-proclaimed "Fourth Internationals" were false. The USec, which posthumously declared that the UP was explicitly *not* a popular front, and now had *two* Chilean sympathizing groups, refused to allow discussion of the Allende regime at its Tenth World Congress, since both international factions saw no reason to expose the bankruptcy of their local supporters. While the OCRFI had called the UP a popular front, on the other hand, its Chilean groups (it also had two!) either did not make this characterization or accused

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the Allende government, rather than the workers parties in it, of "reformism" and betraying. Meanwhile, in France the OCI was calling for a vote to the presidential candidate of the popular-front Union of the Left.

The OTR first came into contact with the international Spartacist tendency at a September 11 protest meeting on the first anniversary of the coup. They read *Cuadernos Marxistas* No. 3 (a collection of articles from *Spartacist* and *WV* on "Chile: Lessons of the Popular Front," which was published for the express purpose of seeking out Chilean exile groups attempting to draw a balance sheet on the UP), and one week later declared their fundamental agreement with the iSt analysis and programmatic conclusions. But as internationalists, both parties agreed on the need for discussion of all fundamental questions facing revolutionary Marxists. In addition to rejecting the USec and OCRFI, agreement was quickly reached that the Bolivian POR of Guillermo Lora had acted as centrists in both 1952 and 1971, bearing a fundamental responsibility for derailing a revolution; and that Argentina's veteran pseudo-Trotskyist chameleon Nahuel Moreno (who has gone from Peronism to Guevarism to social democracy) had definitively become reformist, committed to the maintenance of bourgeois rule.

From Guevarism to Trotskyism

Several questions became the subject of continuing discussion between the iSt and the OTR, including Cuba, guerrillaism and social democracy in particular. On the first question, after studying *Cuadernos Marxistas* No. 2 on "Cuba and Marxist Theory" (*Marxist Bulletin* No. 8 in English), the OTR comrades reached agreement with the Spartacist analysis of this key application of Trotskyism on the Russian question, as reflected in Part IV of the "Declaration of Fraternal Relations Between the international Spartacist tendency and the Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria of Chile" (see article this issue).

The OTR's position that the social-democratic parties were qualitatively more bourgeois than the Stalinists proved more difficult to resolve. The national/continental isolation of the Chilean ostensible Trotskyist movement—which was the responsibility of the fake "Internationals," who did little or nothing to integrate or politically educate their various "sections"—played an important role. It is a fact that in Latin America all of the parties associated with the Second International are in fact *bourgeois* parties (Chilean Radicals, Venezuelan Acción Democrática, Peruvian APRA, Puerto Rican PPD, etc.), with mildly populist traits and generally strongly pro-American foreign policy. However, after becoming familiar with the social-democratic and labor parties of western Europe and in discussions on the tactical implications of characterizing social democracy as "bourgeois, with a working-class base," the OTR agreed upon the description of the mass social-democratic parties of the advanced capitalist countries as reformist, i.e., "bourgeois workers parties," to use Lenin's words.

The most important and difficult area of disagreement was the question of guerrillaism, for here there were at first sharp differences, and it was a question directly related to the OTR's origins. One of the first accusations raised against the leadership of the Chilean USec section by the tendency which later became the OTR was that of failing to implement the guerrillaist policies of the Ninth World Congress resolution on armed struggle. Like many Pabloists, they thought that Guevara himself had broken or would break, albeit empirically, from Stalinism. Although the OTR rejected Guevarist focoism and Tupamaro-style urban guerrilla warfare, it nevertheless insisted on the necessity of "irregular war" carried out by the working class—in other words, the application of guerrillaism to the particular milieu in which the OTR was working. The question was not abstract, for the OTR counted in its ranks leaders of miners for whom "irregular" skirmishes with the police and army were a periodic occurrence, as well as former Miristas and Tupamaros.

In contrast, *Spartacist* had written as early as 1967 that "Guerrillaism today is a petty-bourgeois reaction to the absence and delay of proletarian revolution."

Beginning from these two sharply divergent positions, several lengthy discussions were held over a period of months, in the course of which the OTR came to reject its previous position. Talk of irregular warfare carried out by the working class as a strategic perspective was an adaptation to the "trade-unionist" conceptions of a semi-proletarian layer; the key sectors of the industrial working class cannot abandon the factories and large mines and take to the hills without losing their base of social power and ultimately risking the loss of their proletarian class character, degenerating into banditry and/or blending into the peasantry (this actually happened to the Communist workers and party cadre in China who fled from the coastal cities to initiate rural guerrilla warfare in 1927-31). Thus Lenin's support for partisan tactics in 1906-07 came in the context of what he believed to be a temporary defeat of the 1905 Revolution; he never considered guerrilla warfare as anything more than a defensive measure—a form of strategic retreat—or an adjunct to regular military warfare, and certainly not a strategy for socialist revolution.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks always sought to organize military struggle through the mass organizations of the working class (soviets, factory committees), in which the party played or sought to play a leading role, in contrast to the Guevarist conception of waging guerrilla struggle through a "professional" party/army—e.g., the Argentine ERP (People's Revolutionary Army, an arm of the Guevarist PRT).

Guerrillaist conceptions had a real social importance in the Chilean "far left," above all via the MIR but also among pseudo-Trotskyist groups which tailed after them. The MIR, for example, did *not* call on the trade unions or later the *cordones industriales* (district coordinating bodies of factory committees) to arm the workers; instead it created artificial "*comandos comunales*," in practice subordinated to the MIR, which were supposed to train selected workers in the use of arms.

Consequently, when the September 11 coup came, the industrial proletariat was left without weapons. Many gathered in their factories to await arms long promised by the Communist and Socialist union bureaucrats, which never arrived. And despite a few acts of bravado by MIR leaders, which simply drew heavier attacks against some of the more combative sectors of the working class, their basic attitude was to treat the military takeover as an inevitable step paving the way to guerrilla war. The OTR, like all the guerrillaist tendencies, saw no possibility of resisting the

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Pinochet coup; but unlike those who seek to reconstruct the decimated MIR, or the USec majority which is mainly concerned to cover its own tracks of total support to Guevarist guerrillaism, the OTR has drawn the lessons of the terrible defeat represented by September 11 and proclaimed the bankruptcy of guerrillaism in all its varieties.

Leninism on the Organization Question

In Chile the OTR lacked Leninist organizational norms: the definition of membership was fluid, it never had a party press, etc. This organizational practice was naturally maintained in exile, where the pressures toward a "circle spirit" among a small band of survivors are enormous. Nevertheless, as the OTR evolved toward the Spartacist tendency this, equally naturally, led to internal struggles and splits. These are, however, difficult to resolve without assimilating and applying the Leninist norms of democratic centralism. It was problems centering around the organization question that for some months held up the fusion perspective that had been voted in May 1976 and which dominated the activity of the OTR in the last year. As Cde. Ivan of the OTR put it in a presentation to a meeting of the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the iSt at the 1977 European summer camp:

> "The OTR was an organization in exile and dispersed over various continents. Basically there were two questions which impeded fusion last year. One was the organizational weakness of the OTR, which as a result led us to a federative concept of the party. But behind this was an important political point, and that is that the OTR hoped to unite its central cadre in Europe. We had difficulties in bringing about a joint development of all our cadre, and the European nucleus did not have a Leninist methodology to overcome this problem."

The difficulties centered on the struggle to win over an important member of the leadership who had only recently arrived from Latin America. Finding himself cut off from a base and confined to the limitations of a small Trotskyist propaganda nucleus, this comrade began elaborating plans behind the backs of the leadership; acts of organizational indiscipline soon led to an open political break, as he failed to defend the OTR program publicly, breaking explicit instructions. As the OTR reporter noted in his presentation to the IEC:

> "...in the final analysis Cde. Blas presented a perspective which was counterposed to Trotskyism and to Lenin's concept of the party, basing himself on the argument that we can't break our ties with the masses.... Thus in practice he was incapable of defending the entirety of the communist program....
>
> "A few days ago this process came to an end, and in a task carried out in full consultation with the comrades from the International we formalized Blas' split from the Trotskyist program.... For the OTR, the most important thing in this process was that the break with our past methodology opened the path to genuine Leninism."

An Iskra Perspective

The OTR now faces tremendous opportunities and responsibilities. The Chilean bonapartist junta, lacking a significant social base of support and having been unable to atomize the proletariat and wipe out its leadership, will not last even as long as the Brazilian military dictatorship. In the meantime, those leftists who survived the bloodbath have been concentrated in large numbers in exile centers in Europe and Latin America. Here there is an extraordinary opportunity to reach tens of thousands of committed militants and to challenge the left to seriously draw a balance sheet of the Allende regime. This is by no means limited to Chilean militants, for the Chilean experience has global importance and is *decisive* for the formation of revolutionary nuclei in the key countries of Latin America.

Among those who reject the popular front, Stalinism, social democracy and guerrillaism a dialogue could be initiated. Through polemical combat the superiority of the Trotskyist analysis and program can be demonstrated, and the core of an authentic Leninist propaganda group forged and politically prepared for the tasks which will face it when the bloody Pinochet dictatorship falls and the crucial battle to break the working class from the reformists begins in earnest.

Key to this perspective is the question of the press. In the coming period the principal voice for the OTR will be the Spanish edition of *Spartacist*, to be published three times a

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year, whose editorial board now includes members of the OTR. This is intended to be an *Iskra*-type publication, including polemics and analyses directed primarily at the Latin American exile milieu and to leftists in the Iberian peninsula. In addition the OTR will work toward the initiation of its own press, beginning in a modest format and with irregular frequency. Along with the struggle to build a solid, programmatically united and politically homogeneous organization in exile will naturally come the difficult task of attempting to get this press into the hands of the militants of the Chilean working class wherever they are.

In all this, as a member of a democratic-centralist international tendency, the OTR will count on the full political support and all possible material assistance of the iSt. But there is no denying that the demands are enormous and our total resources qualitatively inadequate. However, the OTR has an important political capital which cannot be minimized: unlike the pseudo-Trotskyists, it represents a coherent and powerful political line which was, tragically, proven correct by the demise of the deadly popular front. Chile 1970-73 has had an impact on the political development of the current revolutionary generation similar to that of the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930's. The Trotskyists who warned that the popular front was leading to a bloody massacre should recall their warnings to educate those who did not heed them at the time but desire to avoid a repeat of the holocaust. Yet Mandel's USec and the OCI's "Organizing Committee" *hide* their Chilean groups rather than highlighting them—and for good reason: *they did not issue such warnings but instead apologized for the popular front.*

We are still weak as a political force, but the strength and promise of the OTR/iSt fusion—what enabled these militants to cross the tremendous gulf from Pabloism, workerism, Guevarism to Trotskyism—comes from the fact that it is built on fundamental Marxist principles:

> "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International." ■

Declaration of Fraternal Relations

between the international Spartacist tendency and the Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria of Chile

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 111, 28 May 1976

I

The events of 1970 to 1973 in Chile posed, and continue to pose, a fundamental test of the revolutionary capacity of all who claim to speak in the historic interests of the working class. The self-proclaimed socialists who bound the exploited masses to the "constitutionalist" officers and "anti-imperialist" bourgeoisie through the Popular Unity (UP) coalition acted as a roadblock to revolution, and therefore an accomplice of counterrevolution. The first task of those who would prepare a proletarian insurrection to sweep away the bourgeois state, today in the hands of the blood-drenched Pinochet dictatorship, must be to draw the lessons of the Allende popular front. Only in this manner can the masses be broken from their treacherous reformist and centrist misleaders who paved the way for the coup of 11 September 1973. At that time the bourgeois popular front was replaced by another form of capitalist rule, the bonapartist military junta, which balances between the fractions and cliques of the middle and big bourgeoisie, reflecting the pressure of the major imperialist powers.

Already in late 1970 the Spartacist tendency warned:

> "It is the most elementary duty for revolutionary Marxists to irreconcilably oppose the Popular Front in the election and to place absolutely no confidence in it in power. Any 'critical support' to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean working people when domestic reaction, abetted by international imperialism, is ready."

Tragically, there was no Trotskyist party in Chile to galvanize the workers around the Marxist program of class independence, and the *Spartacist* warning proved all too accurate.

II

As Trotsky remarked in 1935: "In reality, the Popular Front is *the main question of Proletarian class strategy* for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism."

The largest purportedly revolutionary organization formally outside the UP coalition, the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement), was incapable of presenting a class opposition to the popular front. While attracting a layer of militant youth fundamentally from the petty bourgeoisie, and periodically criticizing the Communist Party (CP), the MIR never broke from the Popular Unity. Following the September 1970 elections it called on the masses to support Allende; today the MIR is part of the popular front in exile, seeking to "broaden" the class-collaborationist coalition by including even Christian Democrats. The individual heroism of many MIR militants cannot hide the political bankruptcy of these Chilean Castroites, the left cover of the popular front.

Nor did the Chilean disciples of the several self-

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proclaimed "Fourth Internationals" present a Trotskyist policy of irreconcilable hostility to popular frontism. The sympathizers of the "United" Secretariat (USec) were either mired in perpetual "deep entry" in the Socialist Party (the traditional graveyard for pseudo-Trotskyists in Chile) or fawningly crawling after the MIR. (In fact, the USec played a central role in creating the MIR, but this did not prevent the Castroites from summarily expelling them two years later for "Trotskyism." Such are the rewards of opportunism!) The USec supporters labeled the bourgeois elements of the UP irrelevant, alibiing the Allende regime with the label "reformist" and calling on it to carry out its own bourgeois program.

As for the two Chile groups adhering to the "Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" led by the French OCI, neither of them characterized the UP as a popular front until after the Pinochet coup; and the minuscule Posadista group considered the Allende regime as a "revolutionary government," a category in which it also includes the military juntas of Peru and Panama.

III

However, some militants in Chile did seek to oppose the class collaboration of the two dominant reformist, or as Lenin said, bourgeois workers parties (Communist and Socialist). In late 1972, elements of the TRO (Revolutionary October Tendency, allied with the reformist international minority of the USec) refused to go along with a fusion with the FRT (Revolutionary Trotskyist Front, led by L. Vitale and allied with the centrist USec majority) because of the failure to resolve (or even discuss) differences on Cuba and guerrillaism, and the lack of a revolutionary policy toward the UP. Consequently, this grouping was immediately expelled by the central committee elected at the founding congress of the PSR (Revolutionary Socialist Party) amid charges of "ultra-leftism."

The expelled tendency, which became the Revolutionary Trotskyist Organization (OTR), includes among its central leadership trade unionists with many years of experience leading struggles of the Chilean miners, both against the U.S. monopolies and state agencies of the Chilean bourgeoisie. Having broken with the SP, in the March 1973 legislative elections they called for votes to the Popular Socialist Union (USOPO), a split-off from the SP, while giving it no political confidence. Although the USOPO leaders were reformists, they had been forced to break with the popular front because of leftist opposition among copper miners (its base) to the UP. Shortly before the Pinochet coup leaders of the OTR were at the head of a workers march in Santiago demanding "break with the bourgeoisie."

Subsequently, in a document approved by its congress in October 1974, "A Political Defeat and the Need for a Balance Sheet," the OTR wrote:

> "To say that the character of the UP was reformist means being an accomplice to the betrayals committed.... Thus the UP must be included in the list of the old popular fronts, the model designed to betray the working class."

IV

At the time of the shotgun wedding which formed the PSR in November 1972, the tendency which became the Revolutionary Trotskyist Organization of Chile had already experienced the unprincipled maneuvering of the competing factions of the USec. In exile, the OTR came into direct contact with the United Secretariat leadership. Although invited to the USec's "Tenth World Congress," it was informed that there would be no discussion on Chile! This was only logical for a fake-International which had formally declared the Allende regime a popular front in 1971, while none of its sympathizing groups in Chile ever held this position; and then, following the 1973 coup, posthumously rehabilitated the UP to the status of "reformist." Clearly any honest balance sheet of the Chilean events could only be a condemnation of the USec's own opportunism and failure to present a revolutionary opposition to class collaboration.

The OCI, like the USec, had termed the Allende regime a popular front (although not taking the decisive step of calling for electoral opposition to *all* the parties of the UP coalition) while its Chilean supporters failed to make this characterization. In discussions with the OCI, the OTR sharply rejected the former's call for a vote for Mitterrand (candidate of the popular-front Union of the Left in the 1974 French presidential elections) and opposed the OCI policy of tailing after the Portuguese Socialist Party. In 1971, after playing a fundamental role in frustrating chances for a Bolivian revolution by its capitulatory centrist policies, the OCI's main Latin American ally, the POR of G. Lora, concluded a political pact with the ousted Bolivian ex-president, General Torres. Subsequently the OCI has called for extending this alliance with the "anti-imperialist" bourgeoisie to a continental scale—a Latin American super-Kuomintang. Such treacherous policies demonstrate the appetites of these pseudo-Trotskyists to commit betrayals as monstrous as those of the Chilean SP and CP.

Coming into contact with the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), the OTR found itself in fundamental agreement with the iSt's consistent class opposition to the popular front, put forward in positions taken even at the height of Allende's popularity and expressed in the articles collected in *Cuadernos Marxistas* No. 3 ("Chile: Lecciones del Frente Popular"). This initial agreement was extended to include the understanding of the nature of Cuba as a bureaucratically deformed workers state. The opportunists of the United Secretariat formed their pseudo-International on the basis of capitulating to Castro's popularity among petty-bourgeois radicals, terming Cuba a healthy workers state that merely "lack[ed] the forms" of proletarian democracy. In contrast, the forerunner of the Spartacist League/U.S., the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP), insisted that Cuba was a deformed workers state, and that workers democracy could only be achieved through political revolution led by a Trotskyist party. It was for defending this Marxist program that the RT was expelled by the SWP, as part of the latter's rapid degeneration through centrism to cringing social-democratic reformism.

Through a discussion of the history of the international Trotskyist movement, the USec capitulation to Castroism was traced to the Pabloist liquidationism which had destroyed the Fourth International in 1951-53.

V

Among the earlier political positions, inherited from Paloism, which the OTR had to reevaluate, the question of guerrillaism was the most difficult. While in the TRO, the tendency which became the OTR had been strongly guerrillaist, accusing the TRO leadership of failure to carry out the decision of the USec's "Ninth World Congress" on "armed struggle" in Latin America. While the OTR had rejected peasant-based "foco" guerrilla war, it stood for guerrilla struggle by the workers.

In discussions with the iSt, the OTR came to the conclusion that Marxists must oppose guerrillaism. As the Revolutionary Tendency stated in 1963, "Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerrilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working class bureaucratic regime" ("Toward the Rebirth of the Fourth International"). Moreover, whether in rural or urban (Tupamaros) forms, whether as Guevarism, Maoist "people's war" or in a "Trotskyist" disguise (as in the case of the Argentine PRT/ERP), guerrillaism is hostile to proletarian revolution and inevitably leads to—or is the reflection of—Stalinist "two-stage" conceptions if not outright petty-bourgeois nationalism.

The proletariat *cannot* sustain guerrilla war, for the very concept implies the absence of a revolutionary situation and the kind of irregular fighting which requires an ability to retreat rapidly. In addition to its clear class interest, it is the *organization* of the proletariat which gives it political superiority over the atomized peasantry. This organization is the result of the position of the working class in the structure of capitalist society; to retreat into the hills would eventually destroy the class or the class character of its vanguard.

There is no better illustration of the impotence of guerrillaism in the face of a concerted offensive by the bourgeoisie than the recent debacle in Argentina. Even though guerrillaism (both urban and rural) is more widespread, better financed and equipped, of longer duration and of more different varieties than anywhere else in Latin America, none of the guerrilla groups could lift a finger against the Videla coup or even stop the notorious AAA death squads which have assassinated thousands of leftists and workers leaders with impunity over the last three years.

The revolutionary party must, of course, take an active role in organizing the self-defense of the working masses, and the use of guerrilla tactics is often vital as a subordinate civil war tactic. However, the road to power for the proletariat is through mass insurrection against the bourgeois state; the central military organization of the uprising must be an arm of and directed by the mass organization of the working class, led by the Leninist vanguard party.

VI

In Latin America, Castroist-inspired guerrillaism has led a generation of subjectively revolutionary militants from one defeat to another, resulting in the useless slaughter of many of the most dedicated and courageous fighters. In numerous countries, thousands of militants have been grievously misled by the Trotskyist pretensions of the Pabloists and other revisionists into capitulation before non-proletarian leaderships.

We reject the claims of the several international groupings posturing as the Fourth International to be the continuity, either organizationally or politically, of the revolutionary organization founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938. The Chilean experience has again demonstrated the bankruptcy of these pseudo-Trotskyist impostors. Those who in 1970-73 were giving a left cover to Allende's Popular Unity, only a year later were creating illusions in the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement and/or its SP and CP collaborators. After playing a central role in creating the MIR, only to be expelled from its creature shortly after, the USec repeated this disastrous course with the debacle of the guerrillaist Argentine PRT/ERP, at the same time sustaining the social-democratic PST, which politically supported the Peronist government. Only an authentically Trotskyist International, firmly based on the theory of permanent revolution and committed to destroying the authority of all the reformist and centrist misleaders of the working class, can resolve the crisis of proletarian leadership.

In view of the large number of subjectively revolutionary militants presently within the ranks of various ostensibly revolutionary organizations and the central importance of politically destroying Pabloism on a world scale, the Revolutionary Trotskyist Organization and the international Spartacist tendency, in this declaration of fraternal relations, agree to undertake joint work toward the rebirth of the Fourth International. We seek to reforge the Fourth International by winning the best cadre and militants through a process of revolutionary regroupment. On the basis of the above points and agreement with the Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League/U.S., subsequently adopted by the iSt, the parties to this declaration aim at achieving the unity of the Revolutionary Trotskyist Organization of Chile with the international Spartacist tendency, and in turn this will be a great step toward the formation of the International Trotskyist League, worldwide in scope.

17 May 1976

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British Troops Out of Northern Ireland

Workers Must Crush Sectarian Terror

by David Strachan

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We print below the edited text of a talk by Comrade Strachan of the London Spartacist Group, delivered at a Spartacist League forum in New York on March 14.

Our topic tonight is "Leninism, the National Question and Ireland." Why Ireland? It's a fairly small place, only about four million people. The death rate is very low—much, much lower than Lebanon or Cyprus recently. In fact the murder rate in Glasgow presently is much higher than in Northern Ireland, and I imagine it's much higher still in New York. So why Ireland?

Well, first of all, the fact that things are very quiet there at the moment does not indicate relative social peace. There are between 15,000 and 20,000 British troops in Northern Ireland. It is a very fragile social peace imposed by the brute force of the British army. And if the British army were removed immediately, the prospect would be one of massive bloodshed.

There is a more important reason which we've had to deal with in London, and that is the impact in Britain. The question of Ireland is a crucial test of the revolutionary integrity of the British left-wing groups, and the ability to analyze Ireland is a touchstone for self-proclaimed Marxists everywhere. Currently the question of Ireland provides a crucial test, and I believe a confirmation, of the unique position of the international Spartacist tendency in upholding Leninism on the national question.

For internationalist communists who reject the simple, ultimately genocidal logic of the nationalists, the complex situation in Ireland may seem to be utterly intractable. There have been 800 years of English oppression in Ireland and we have a situation there today which combines

Donald McCullin/Magnum

British occupation forces: mission "pacification."

features which have been classically associated with a variety of types of colonial and imperial oppression. The situation in Northern Ireland resembles in some ways the classic colonial situation, in which a colonial administration administers, oppresses and exploits the native population. But it also resembles the situation where you have a colonial settler people who wipe out or expel the original native population. And, as well, it resembles the features which are classically associated with the multinational empires in eastern Europe.

However, tonight, rather than giving a run-down of the history of Ireland and an up-to-date account of the current events there, I want to concentrate on the programmatic questions.

British Troops Out!

Toward the middle of last year the eminent British historian A.J.P. Taylor was interviewed on the BBC. He had a number of things to say that considerably disturbed bourgeois opinion in Britain. He said quite simply and bluntly that the British should get the hell out of Ireland. He said that the presence of the British army fundamentally oppresses the Catholic Irish people and that nothing progressive can come through the presence of the British army. So I want to start by asserting that an essential plank for any revolutionary analysis and program for Ireland must be the demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army.

That should be obvious to revolutionists, but unfortunately it isn't very widely held. In the British Labour Party, with all its "lefts," who are forever willing to sign this and that petition and to take up this and that socialist cause which is as remote as possible from their immediate interests, there is not one MP [Member of Parliament], no matter how left he claims to be, who is clearly for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army. The Communist Party of Great Britain [CPGB] has a position that the British army should withdraw to the barracks. The "Official" wing of the IRA has a position that the British army should withdraw from working-class areas; and a number of other organizations, including the "Provisional" IRA, have a position that the British army should set a date for its withdrawal.

Even among the organizations of the far left, the ostensibly Trotskyist organizations, there is a readiness to abandon this essential plank. For example the International Marxist Group [IMG], the fraternal organization of the American Socialist Workers Party [SWP], which was formerly on the extreme left of the United Secretariat, is currently moving more and more rightward. At the time of the Bloody Sunday commemoration marches last year it had a position not for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal but for "End British Involvement," a nice vague plank. They hoped through this to attract some sympathy from the Communist Party. They didn't, but their willingness to take up some vague slogan like this in order to get a little bit closer to the Communist Party is indicative not only of their opportunism but of their inability to confront and stand up against British imperialism.

It should also be obvious that the "Troops Out" demand by itself will not solve the problem. The historian Taylor recognizes this to his credit. He says that, of course, there will be some sort of settlement reached after the troops get out; but then he was asked if he thought there would be unity of the people on the island. His answer was that this is a matter of relative strength. He acknowledges that the solution may be imposed by one party or another. He acknowledges that civil wars and bloodshed can solve these questions.

Now almost all the British groups of the far left present the "Troops Out" demand either as having some inherently revolutionary connotations or else as an application of the demand for self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. The assumption that if you just demand "Troops Out" everything will go fine is tied to their understanding of the applicability of the demand for self-determination in Ireland.

I want to take as an example the International Marxist Group again. It says in one of the IMG newspapers, "The right of Ireland to national freedom is merely the basic democratic right of all oppressed peoples to determine their own destiny, free from all outside interference and control. It means the right to control their own economy, decide on their own political system in relation with other countries and the right to develop their own national culture."

That is not the Leninist position on self-determination. Leninists are opposed to all forms of national oppression and to all national privileges. The right of self-determination means simply the right to establish your own political state. It does not say anything about economic independence, or about some conception of utopian freedom from outside interference.

In the general sense the demand for self-determination is unconditional. That is, we do not when we raise it place conditions with regard to the question of the class nature of the state that emerges or of the leadership. However, the demand is not a categorical imperative to be raised everywhere and at all times, even for oppressed nations. It is a subordinate part of the whole revolutionary program. It is one of a range of bourgeois-democratic demands which must be a part, but only a part, of the revolutionary program.

So we can recognize the right of self-determination for a nation and then argue against its exercise. For instance, that is the position of the international Spartacist tendency at this time with regard to Quebec. The demand must be subordinate to the overall considerations of the class struggle.

No to Sectarian Slaughter!

I wanted to make these points to establish that the demand for self-determination is not something that must always be raised. It has to be evaluated in terms of the general considerations of the class struggle. And, in particular, where the exercise of self-determination for one people means that they will, in fact, deny that right to another people, then it ceases to be a democratic demand. This arises with interpenetrated peoples, where two peoples are living intermingled on the same territory.

I want to argue that this is the case in Ireland, that if you simply demand self-determination (a demand which does not transcend the bounds of capitalism), you are condemning the working masses to further rounds of communal bloodshed, massive population transfers and genocide.

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Those who want to argue that in Ireland the crucial demand is "self-determination for the Irish nation" must face the implications of what they are saying. That is, they are for the forcible reunification of the island under a bourgeois regime, irrespective of the wishes of the Protestants.

Many of the British left-wing groups don't want to face up to this, so they argue that there's some transcendental dynamic that will make everything work out fine. Sixty percent of the population of Northern Ireland—a quarter of the population of the whole island—will just give up or get caught up in this revolutionary dynamic and, as the IMG claims, "The working class will have the opportunity to unite for socialism and peace." Just like that!

It ought to be obvious to everyone but the most myopic and the most nationalist that getting the troops out will not by itself solve things. There are more than 100,000 *registered* guns in Ulster. The vast majority of them are in the hands of the Protestants who are well-trained, well-organized and quite determined. As the "Unionist" slogan goes, "Ulster will fight. Ulster will be right." And they very well might win, certainly against the IRA and even against the Irish regular army.

The reality of the situation is that a number of possibilities are posed if the British troops get out. There can be the consolidation of a Protestant "Zionist" state, accompanied by forcible population transfers, genocide, etc. There could be a reversal of the terms of oppression. That is, the Irish Catholic state consolidated on the whole island, with the Protestants becoming the new Palestinians. There could be a situation like Cyprus, a new boundary change.

We should also keep in mind what happened in Lebanon, where the most "progressive" Arab state, Syria, the supposed best friends of the Palestinian liberation movement, intervened and blocked with the Christians to smash the Moslem forces. No doubt it will turn around and smash the Christian forces as well. The Irish Catholic state might act in the very same way: intervene in Northern Ireland (with, of course, the support of British imperialism), smash the radical Irish nationalists and then turn on the Protestants. After all, the Irish bourgeoisie has already fought a civil war with the more radical nationalists, so why shouldn't that happen?

Now I don't want to speculate on what is the most likely possibility. *All* these possibilities pose the likelihood of massive communal bloodshed. So I want to stress that the "Troops Out" demand must be linked to a revolutionary, communist program that can set the basis for working-class unity.

Britain Playing the Orange Card?

In association with the call for "Troops Out" and the false assumption that this will lead to the collapse of Protestant opposition, there is an argument that maintenance of the artificial Orange statelet, the six counties of Ulster, is absolutely essential to the interests of British imperialism in Ireland. So I want to look briefly at the motivations of (and tensions within) British imperialism. It's clear, at this point, that the Northern Ireland statelet is not necessarily part of the British strategy in Ireland. They have used the Orange card in the past but it's a nuisance today.

British imperialism's approach to Ireland has always been much more complicated than the simplistic analyses that are often put forward. Up to 1912 the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie was aiming for a near-colonial "independent" state. This was stopped and opposed by a block of the Protestants, the officer corps of the British army and the landed aristocracy. Nowadays the border is anachronistic to the general intentions of British imperialism. It gets in the way of business: the desire to invest in the south and the fact that the industry in the north is decaying, run down.

They have a problem. If they try to hand over Northern Ireland to the southern Republic they are going to run into a civil war, because the Irish Catholic bourgeoisie is not strong enough to control the situation. And given the hostility of the Protestants there will be one. So what British imperialism is trying to do is continue business as usual, invest as much as possible and try and keep the lid on things.

They made a big attempt last year at power-sharing, to get the moderate Catholics and the moderate Protestants together, that failed due to opposition from the Protestant hard-liners. So they are now trying a mixture of economic pressure, increasing the power of the police forces and agencies in Northern Ireland (for instance, rearming the Royal Ulster Constabulary) and calculated use of the British army. The result is that Ian Paisley, the most prominent mass leader of the Ulster Unionists, currently accuses the British government of conducting psychological warfare against the Protestants. Just to give you an idea of the discrepancy between the interests of British imperialism and the Ulster Protestants, if you look at the figures of March last year for political prisoners in Northern Ireland, there were 900 Roman Catholics and 600 Protestants. It indicates that there's not exactly agreement between the militant Ulstermen and British imperialism at this time.

What Are the Protestants?

The key question is what are the Protestants. There are a number of ways to avoid this question, and you will find that they have all been tried by various left-wing organizations. One way is to say that the Protestants are just backward workers, and then follow this up with lots of "unite and fight" talk and vague rhetoric about how the dynamic of the class struggle will solve everything. That is, you don't address the communal and national divisions at all. Another way is to adopt the real position of the extreme Irish nationalists and to say, in effect, they are just agents of British imperialism, so drive them into the sea. Or if you're a little bit shamefaced about it you say something along the lines of, "I can't tell the Irish people what to do."

There's a variety of other excuses put forward for plumping for the Catholic nationalists, the Republicans, and I would like to run through them briefly. There's the argument, for example, that only oppressed people have the right to self-determination. Now that is not so at all. For Marxists all nations have the right to self-determination. But the problem with raising the demand for self-determination in Ireland is that it doesn't resolve the Catholic-Protestant conflict in a democratic manner.

Obviously, when India was fighting to separate from Britain, British self-determination wasn't in question. In that situation it would be a reactionary slogan, just as it would be if the Germans and the British each argued that they were fighting WWII on the basis of their right of self-determination.

But in the case of interpenetrated peoples, where one or the other is likely to be immediately either the oppressed nation or else the privileged nation under imperialism, it's a lot more complicated. There are two peoples here and whatever way you work it, if the oppressed gets its self-determination under capitalism, then it will simply become the new oppressor. There's no equitable solution within that framework. And if you want to say that only the oppressed people have the right to self-determination, then you're really saying that what happens to the Protestants after self-determination in Ireland doesn't matter at all, because after all right now the Irish nationalists are progressive and the Protestants are reactionary and that's the end of it. Too bad, Protestants!

There's another argument, to the effect that Loyalism (which is the common term to describe the Protestant communalist ideology) is simply an imperialist ideology. That is, it's just really British chauvinism given a little slightly different tinge in order to attract a mass following amongst a certain misled section of the Irish workers.

I don't think any of these arguments I just dealt with deserve serious attention from Marxists. But there are some other arguments which attempt to present a more sophisticated Marxoid type of analysis. The one that's most frequently heard is that the Protestants are a labor aristocracy. This theory is essentially the same one as the New Left guilt theories about the American white working class being bought off because of "white skin privilege."

To begin with it ignores the fact that, with or without the Catholic population, in Northern Ireland you have one of the highest unemployment rates in Britain, and the fact that housing for the whole of the working-class population in Northern Ireland is the worst in Britain and amongst the worst in Europe. It also grievously distorts Marxism. The term "labor aristocracy" was used by Lenin in a very precise way, to indicate a layer of the working class, largely trade-union bureaucrats, that had sold out. To describe the whole of the Protestant working class, including the large percentage unemployed, as a labor aristocracy is obviously not just an extension but a gross distortion of the meaning of that Marxist term.

Thirdly, it suggests that the Protestants are nothing else but a stratum of one class, ignoring the fact that the Protestants are a trans-class grouping. With that methodology you would have to look at the tsarist empire before the Russian Revolution and argue that the Great Russians and the Poles were labor aristocracies. After all they enjoyed relative privileges if you want to put it that way. They were better off they were more advanced sections of the society. You'd have to say on those grounds that, because the Poles were amongst the most advanced and had privileges compared to so many other peoples in the tsarist Empire, they didn't have a right to self-determination! But of course, the people who have such arguments like to avoid these little problems.

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New Left Moralism

In association with these attempts to explain why we don't have to worry about the fate of the Protestants, there are two other things I want to look at. One is the argument that the Ulster state is an artificial imperialist creation, that its borders were designed to ensure a Protestant majority. Now that's true, and prior to the partition, revolutionists in Ireland would have fought for a unified independent Ireland and to transcend the sectional differences that existed at the time.

But with the partition and the communal bloodshed that accompanied it, with the establishment of a bourgeois Irish republic and the state boundaries, to argue for unification after that point is to ignore what had clearly become consolidated communal differences. This argument often goes with the position that not only was it an imperialist partition but, as well, the Protestants are a colonial-settler people. You know, they threw out the native people, they don't really have a right to be there. So, the American people don't have a right to be here now; you've all got to go home. The Australian people don't have a right to be there; they've all got to go home, too.

But if the colonial settlers have no rights, then you've got to argue that the Vietnamese people have no rights. Do you know what the Vietnamese did in the nineteenth century? There're only two villages left now in Vietnam of the Champa kingdom. The Vietnamese were slaughtering them in the nineteenth century; they were throwing out the Cambodians. The Cambodians' national existence was saved by the arrival of French imperialism. So why not give back most of South Vietnam to the Cambodians, too? The point is that almost every modern nation has been consolidated on the basis of slaughtering and wiping out and throwing out other communities and peoples. If you want to argue in these terms, it's simply a form of nationalist, liberal moralism, and leads straight into the typical irredentist arguments about our "holy" land which we've got to save or get back.

Now while I'm on the subject of the New Left and New Left moralism, there's another argument, which is presented as anti-economism. That is, the Protestants are so bound up in their reactionary ideas that they can *never* be part of a proletarian revolutionary mobilization. There is a small British group, called the Revolutionary Communist Group [RCG], which puts forward this argument and prides itself on having a Marxist understanding. It recently split, largely because, while it claimed to have a Marxist understanding, it never had any programmatic conclusions. The RCG says:

> "It is the height of naiveté to expect the two sections of the northern working class to unite on economic issues, when it is precisely these that divide them. As the crisis begins to bite,

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> the Protestant workers will pursue the traditional way out the expulsion of Catholics from employment. Only later, when the Unionist regime is visibly unable to preserve the position of the Protestant workers, will the possibility exist of breaking the Protestant workers from Loyalism and drawing them around the programme which emphasises economic issues."

Now that ought to be absurd for Marxists.

That's full of back-handed support to Irish Catholic nationalism, because what you're saying is that the workers can never transcend their sectional interests; they'll always be narrow and selfish and they'll always want to throw their non-communal class brothers out of employment. So rather than attempting to transcend that type of attitude with a system of transitional demands, you come up with a position which says: narrow trade-union consciousness plus nationalism is revolutionary consciousness. And what that leads to inevitably is a two-stage Stalinist theory of revolution. Because in order for the workers to have revolutionary consciousness, first of all, as a precondition, they must fight for national liberation.

Protestant Communalism and the Union Jack

The Protestants have their origins as a settler colonization. They've generally fought for the British connection with one important historic exception: the 1798 United Irishmen uprising, which was led by Protestant Presbyterians – in particular clergymen and merchants – and was defeated by mobilization of the peasantry by the Catholic priests and the growth of the Orange Order stimulated by the landed aristocracy and British interests. That was effectively *the* opportunity for the establishment of a united nation in Ireland and it failed. Since that time, there have been these deep communal divisions.

I want to make the point that Unionism and Loyalism—i.e., Protestant communalism—should be understood as a means and not an end. That is, the Protestants are acting in what they perceive as their own interests; they're not just agents of British imperialism. This can be graphically shown by looking at quite a number of examples. I only want to give one—Sir Edward Carson who was the first prominent leader of the Protestants in this century. He was actually a representative—to be more precise—of the old landed aristocracy, and he differs significantly from later people like Craig and Paisley in terms of his origins. But he, as a leader of the Protestant interest in Ireland, was willing to threaten British imperialism and to say that he would seek German aid. So he saw the connection in a way that wasn't just acting on British imperialism's behalf.

And you can see a series of other things happening, which I've mentioned already—the 1912 opposition to British plans for Irish home rule, the Ulster Protestant workers' strike in 1974, the number of Protestant political prisoners—which all indicate that Protestant communalism in Northern Ireland is not identical with support for British imperialism.

So the Protestants have a separate identity. It's defined largely negatively, as against the Irish Catholic nation. Religion plays an important part; you've noticed I've been using the term Irish Catholic nation to make the distinction. It's not so much that everyone goes to different churches, but the religious question provides an ideological form for the dispute between the communities. And it's deeply involved in the cultures and the nationalism of both communities.

Let me make one thing clear: the Protestant bigotry (and its religious qualities) necessarily excedes the worst excesses of Green nationalism, of Irish Catholic nationalism. Take Rev. Ian Paisley this is from one of his speeches:

> "Watch the Jews. Israel is on the way back to favour. Watch the papist Rome rising to a grand crescendo with the Communists. The Reds are on the march; they are heading for an alliance against the return of Lord Jesus Christ."

And these are headings from his paper:

> "The Love Affairs of the Vatican."
> "Priestly Murders Exposed!"
> "Children Tortured, Monks Turned Out as Sadists!"

Now Paisley is not some sort of fringe crackpot religious fanatic. He's a mass leader of the Protestants. He expresses and is a manifestation of the attitudes amongst the Protestants.

The Protestants have a self-image as being hardy and self-reliant while the Catholics they see as being dirty, indisciplined, lazy and breeding like rabbits. The Orange Order, which is a sort of Masonic formation amongst the Protestants, is the epitome of the Ulster Protestant culture. It was created as an instrument of counterrevolution around the time of the United Irishmen's uprising and has been used ever since as such. Its rituals, its exclusion of women, its marches represent a way of life and a social focus for the Protestants.

No to Forced Reunification!

At the same time we look at the Republic and we find a reactionary, clericalist regime. You don't need to go very far to notice that. Take the best of the bourgeois papers in Ireland – and none of them are very good – the *Irish Times*. You find that on every single issue, no matter how insignificant, the thing that is absolutely necessary is the opinion of a priest. The Protestants see themselves as getting nothing from a unified bourgeois Ireland. And they make a great deal about the clerical nature of the state.

There's a whole series of things that are not very attractive about the southern Irish bourgeois state: the prohibition on divorce and contraception, the role of the Catholic church in education, its influence in the higher circles of government. Its influence is not limited solely to the most reactionary circles, but is found in the more plebeian organizations as well. For example, in 1969 during the height of the civil rights movement, when there were some layers of Protestants willing to support it at that time, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association refused to dissociate itself from the Irish Republic's constitution, which contains provisions guaranteeing rights to the Catholic church, and from Irish government policies vis-à-vis the church and contraception.

Leaving aside the empirical facts of the nature of the Irish Republic, apologists for unification argue that presently and in general the Protestants have been treated better in the South than the Irish Catholics in the North. Now in the quantitative sense this is certainly true. Presently, the Irish Catholic state is obviously much more reasonable and liberal than the Protestants in Northern Ireland.

However, there's a more basic point involved here. It's not a matter of looking at the present relative reaction of each nationalism, but seeing that religion is a core component of the nationalism of both groups, and understanding an elementary Marxist principle: that all nationalism is reactionary. To suggest that the Irish Catholic bourgeoisie will treat the Protestants well is to argue that somehow this particular nationalism is progressive, because it's going to be *good* to people who are not of the Irish Catholic nation. There're no historical examples of nationalist regimes doing that, so why should the Irish be the exception?

The Protestant communalists are not any better, and in the Northern state there is systematic discrimination in housing, hiring and education. That's all well-known. The majority of the sectarian murders that have taken place in Northern Ireland in the recent period have been carried out by Protestant gangs. Let me give you one example of the bigotry in this situation. A gang kicked in the door of a house, lined up a family and shot them—kids and parents alike. Before they shot the woman, one of them raped her. This particular man was subsequently arrested by the British army and received a long jail sentence. When he arrived in jail, he was viciously beaten up by his own comrades and almost killed. The reason he was beaten up was not that he'd shot the Catholics, but because he'd had sexual contact with a Catholic.

So there is obviously a series of urgent democratic demands with regard to the Catholics in the Northern Ireland statelet. In particular I want to mention housing and employment, because just by arguing that it should be more equitably shared, you say to the Protestant workers: you should suffer some more. That's obviously not going to solve the problem, so even in terms of immediate urgent democratic tasks, these will have to be linked to demands that have been classically associated with the Trotskyist Transitional Program. For example, for a sliding scale of hours and work-sharing on full pay.

There's a problem of distinct communities. We recognize that there are distinctions, and we don't want to just ignore them but seek to transcend them, and to offer some way out of the vicious communal cycle. The one million Protestants can be defined largely negatively, as against the Irish Catholic nation, as being not part of the English and Scottish nations any more, and not in a strict sense being a nation either. But they do have a separate identity, and the concerns of this community must be taken into account.

The definite resolution of what the Protestants are exactly is most likely to occur at the time that the British Army gets out, and will depend on the circumstances accompanying that. That is, there could be the consolidation of a real Protestant nation, based on a sectarian, communalist bloodbath in the Irish Catholic community; or they could be wiped out; or else they could, in the context of a revolutionary working-class mobilization, transcend these divisions.

We want to oppose the forcible reunification of the island and reject the call for the "self-determination of the Irish nation," demands which give preference to the claims of one of the interpenetrated peoples. We call instead for an Irish workers republic within a socialist federation of the British Isles, which at this point leaves open exactly where the Protestants will fall.

We counterpose the algebraic formulation of an Irish workers republic to the common left-nationalist slogan (e.g., of the IRA officials) of a "united socialist Ireland." We do not insist that the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland must be part of an all-Ireland workers state. Furthermore, the slogan of a "united socialist Ireland" has become a left cover for Green nationalism implying forced reunification under bourgeois rule and a two-stage revolution—first unity, then socialism.

For Anti-Sectarian Workers Militias!

There's another important plank in our program which I want to emphasize, and that is the demand for an anti-sectarian workers militia to combat indiscriminate terror, both Green and Orange. Now this has to be seen in its proper context. There's a group in Britain called the Militant group—a deeply opportunist organization inside the Labour Party—which has a call for a trade-union militia. Unfortunately, our slogan is sometimes confused with this. Their slogan is coupled with the demand for withdrawal of British troops, but they say that until there's a trade-union militia the British Army should stay. And they see this trade-union militia as growing out of some sort of organic unity of the working class based on trade-union economism.

If you take a look at the Armagh shootings last year, where you had five Catholics shot in one night and, I think, two nights later ten Protestant workers shot up in a mini-bus, you can see a problem. Suppose the Protestant workers had been an armed self-defense group. What you would have had was simply a sectarian shoot-out between Catholics and Protestants. So obviously in each defense squad you must have at least one member of both communities.

But the question of an anti-sectarian workers militia is also very much tied in with the rest of your program. It's not just a matter of disliking the killings; what about the British Army, what about indiscriminate terror? It has to be linked to the revolutionary mobilization because otherwise the trade-union militias would simply become the armed adjunct of the peace movement, which doesn't have a position on the key question of whether the British Army should stay. Effectively the Militant group's demand ends up supporting the status quo—that is, the British Army stays, and capitalist law and order is maintained.

There are objections to the demand for an anti-sectarian workers militia. One is that it's not practical. I think the comrades are probably all familiar with this type of reasoning—I believe it's one of the props of the Socialist Workers Party's position on troops to Boston, that is, labor/black defense is not practical. Really it is a form of reformist methodology used to justify capitulating.

The other argument is that it is wrong to equate the terror of the oppressed and the oppressor. That's true, but what it leads these people into doing is justifying any act by an oppressed group. That is, as long as you say you are fighting against imperialism, it doesn't matter what you do, we give you a blank check. That means you have to justify Grivas in Cyprus, who was a neo-fascist, not only when he fought British imperialism, but when he went out and slaughtered Turks. And you'd have to defend the Stern gang, not only its actions when it fought British imperialism, but when it slaughtered Palestinians. And, of

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course, in Ireland this means taking the side of the IRA, not only when they are fighting the British Army or the Royal Ulster Constabulary, but also when they blow up Protestant pubs.

The two sides are obviously different in Northern Ireland: the Catholic minority is oppressed and you can't ignore this. It's also true that the question of Irish self-determination was not fully resolved by the establishment of the Irish republic. We defend the IRA against the British Army, but we need to distinguish between terrorism directed against the imperialist oppressor and what is purely indiscriminate, indefensible terrorism. We would not want to defend the perpetrators of such barbarous acts. An anti-sectarian workers militia would be interested in stopping pub bombings which just slaughter workers, the tube—subway—bombings and the Armagh shootings.

It's obvious that the analysis of terrorism is crucial to the ability of that anti-sectarian workers militia to act in a way that is supportable by Marxists. So that any anti-sectarian workers militia is not only going to have to attract at least one member from each community into each such formation, but it must also have a strong component of cadre from the revolutionary party.

Opportunities for Class Unity

I touched several times on the argument that it's not practical to mobilise the Protestants. There's a difference between on the one hand recognising the complexity of the situation and the fact that mass consciousness has been poisoned, and on the other hand a view of profound historical pessimism which says that the working class doesn't have the potentiality as a force for revolutionary change.

If you look at the history of Ireland you can see a number of contradictory phenomena. In 1907 there was a series of strikes led by Jim Larkin which managed to keep significant unity of Protestant and Catholic workers. In 1919 there was a Belfast engineers' (metal workers) strike. The bourgeoisie managed to smash it, and in the sequel 12,000 Roman Catholics lost their jobs. But that wasn't all that happened: 3,000 Protestant socialists and militants lost their jobs, too. In 1933 there was massive unemployment, and for a brief period you had joint mass unemployed marches in which it is reported the Green and Orange flags flew together. This fleeting unity was preceded by massive sectarian violence and followed by massive sectarian upsurge, which destroyed the unity.

Things are not going to get better automatically. We made the point in *Workers Vanguard* that in Cyprus there was one period of 48 hours—at the time of the attempted reactionary coup inspired by the Greek colonels' junta—when the question of nationalism was flatly counterposed to democratic issues, and there was a potentiality of uniting the Turkish and Cypriot workers. It was only one short period where the class struggle asserted itself and subordinated these massive communal tensions, but it was an opportunity.

The same is true in Ireland. In the absence of a revolutionary party we might get some transitory unity on pacifist or reformist grounds. The sequel to the Armagh shootings is that there were joint marches of Protestant and Catholic workers, but they were marching on a quite unsupportable plank: they were demanding strengthening of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which we want to see smashed!

In the absence of a revolutionary party the prospects are bleak. But an organization which for many years may remain isolated, generally hated and impotent can seize such opportunities in the class struggle as I've outlined. That means defending a Leninist perspective. It means refusal to capitulate to British chauvinism, to Orange loyalism and to Irish nationalism. If we have that, then we can expect that when the opportunities do come, when the class struggle reasserts itself in some form, such upsurges will not be immediately drowned in communal bloodshed. Nor will the workers have a transitory unity on the basis of waving Green and Orange flags together—there will be an opportunity for revolutionary cadre to see that the flags they're waving are red flags. Such opportunities are a part of the mobilisation towards the only progressive solution for the bloody sectarian/communalist conflict in Northern Ireland—proletarian revolution!

Supplemental Remarks by Reuben Samuels

I just gave a forum on colonial-settler states and the permanent revolution, which I would like to relate to the Irish question. An interesting point about the colonial-settler question in South Africa is that the "great treks" of the Boers and, just a little later, by the Zulus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wiped out a great many peoples whose economic livelihood was at a lower level of development than either the Zulus or the Boers, such as the Hottentots and Bushmen who were almost exterminated.

In fact, this has been the entire course of human progress over the last ten thousand years. The history of class society has been one of the subjugation or extermination of less advanced peoples by a more advanced people—those people who had the bigger hatchet, the longer ax, the ones who developed gunpowder and so on. As Engels said, human progress is indeed a cruel chariot that rides over mountains of corpses.

There are a lot of petty-bourgeois vicarious nationalists, very often at a great distance from the struggle they claim to support, who have picked up the ideology of the "wretched of the earth" from Bakunin to Fanon, and who would like to reverse the chariot of human progress. They dream that the less advanced societies will rise up against the more advanced societies and create another mountain of corpses, but at least the chariot will go downhill this time.

Their politics are basically moralism, so for them what makes the Protestants an oppressor people—or for that matter the Israeli Hebrews, or the South African whites—is their higher standard of living. In the case of the Protestant workers in Northern Ireland, this is not much greater than that of the Irish Catholics, and it's significantly less than the standard of living of anyone in this room.

Let me point out that the average standard of living in Northern Ireland is 25 percent below the standard of living for all of Great Britain, and I assure you that this is a very low standard indeed for northern Europe. Furthermore, if

you compare Protestant to Catholic on the basis of income differentials (which tends to exaggerate the difference), the Protestants have a differential of about 15 percent over the Catholics. Of course, there are percentagewise more poor Catholics in Northern Ireland, but in absolute numbers there are more poor Protestants than poor Catholics.

There is a book by Geoffrey Bell, published by the International Socialists in Great Britain, which claims that the Protestants are a labor aristocracy. He uses the following reasoning: if you look at the labor aristocracy, it's predominantly Protestant; therefore all Protestant workers constitute a labor aristocracy, or are part of the labor aristocracy. If you look at the labor aristocracy in the United States, by comparison, it's predominantly white; therefore supposedly all white workers are part of a labor aristocracy, as the New Leftist Noel Ignatin told us some years ago. This kind of logic, which I call Geoffrey Bell logic, has superseded both Aristotelian and Hegelian logic. It runs as follows: most or all donkeys are animals, therefore all animals are donkeys.

These are the arguments of people who have despaired of a proletarian solution, that is, a solution other than the mounds upon mounds of corpses that the chariot of history has gone up or come down in the past. This solution, which has only been opened up in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is counterposed to the way in which the national question has been resolved historically, namely through genocide, forced population transfers and subjugation of the oppressed peoples.

And if you don't think the terms of oppression can be reversed, just look at Cyprus. Two thousand years ago Cyprus was colonized by the Greeks; five hundred years ago it was colonized by the Turks, who became an oppressor people under the Ottoman Empire. The British imperialists cultivated both peoples at one time or another. So who were the oppressor people after the British left? The Greeks. And who are the oppressor people in Cyprus today? The Turks. The terms of oppression can definitely be reversed.

This is not the Leninist solution to the national question. This is the Bakuninist/Fanonist solution: to reverse the terms of oppression, to call for a unified, necessarily Catholic-dominated Ireland without a proletarian revolution.

The 1973 Ulster general strike, a 14-day general strike that totally shut down Northern Ireland, demonstrated that the social power and the social weight of the proletariat is there, even if in this particular case it was used for reactionary ends. It was also an entirely anti-British strike. The British had set up the Council of Ireland, which was a scheme for a peaceful, if forcible (through economic pressure) reunifying of Ireland and dumping Northern Ireland, which has become a liability for British imperialism.

The strike was entirely reactionary, but that was a demonstration of real social power, social power that can be welded to the chariot of human progress, which in this epoch can only be drawn by the proletariat as an international class. And those people who have posed the proletarian solution as opposed to the nationalist solution have gotten a hearing in spite of the communal hatreds. We stand in their tradition, in the tradition of Jim Larkin and the Palestinan Trotskyists.

Supplemental Remarks by James Robertson

Life is complicated, comrades. In the past generation, in the attempt to defend the just struggles of oppressed peoples, there's been a tendency to lose the context in which, for proletarian revolutionary Marxists, that struggle must be undertaken. What we are seeking to do is to defend the core of revolutionary Marxism, the

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Theses on Ireland

The theses on Ireland printed on the facing page were adopted by the International Executive Committee of the iSt on 5 August 1977. They are a product of the political work which the iSt has devoted to dealing with the complexities of the national question in cases involving geographically interpenetrated peoples. As such, the theses codify the significant extensions and refinements which the iSt has made in its programmatic approach to the Irish question over the last several years.

These theses were initiated on the basis of discussions on the Irish question within the London Spartacist Group during the fall of 1976. Reprinted as a supplementary contribution on the Irish question is the presentation, "Workers Must Crush Sectarian Terror!", which first appeared in Workers Vanguard *No. 156, 6 May 1977.*

Northern Ireland...

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proletarian solution, against those who would simply embrace the "good" nation against the "bad" nation.

I believe that there's very little that can be added to Comrade David's talk in the particular framework of Ireland. I'd like to underline one thing: he spoke of the metal workers' strike in 1919, in which 12,000 Catholics and 3,000 socialist, class-struggle-oriented Protestants were fired, driven out of the industry. Ireland is a very small country, so that is probably *more than half* of the metal workers. Driven out!

What then do you have? We thought we had a bad purge in the late 1940's in the United States where 10,000 communistic elements were driven out. But that's 1/100th of one percent, not over 50 percent. So those who think that the Irish are simply locked into endless sectarian killing should examine the historical record. The metal workers could have been and were trying to be the leadership of the proletariat on the island, but over 50 percent of them were socially annihilated. That's a defeat in a struggle, not the organic chauvinism of the priest-ridden and the arrogant!

That's where the function of the revolutionary party comes in. Every generation there recurs the opportunity and the loopholes where an international Leninist formation that is alert can intervene. You must not take what is at present as the inevitable product of history which cannot be changed, ever. It's necessary to fight, not to be passive.

And in the case of Ireland, it's particularly easy. On the island of Cyprus, a Greek is a Greek and a Turk is a Turk. How many of you have had the same experience that I have had, of working with young militants, either Ulstermen or from the Republic of Ireland? As soon as they're broken from the nationalist ideologies, and you encounter them and work with them as comrades outside that poor island, they are simply components of the English-speaking nation. That's the truth. It is only when locked into this poverty and oppression that they're thrown at each others' throats. They may *become* separate nations, in the defeat of the proletarian goal. But not yet....

Last point: when I talked here last time, some young woman, who I'm sure was entirely well-meaning, said, "Does any people who oppresses others have a right to exist?" That's the only thing that I took away from the discussion that I'd been brooding about. And then I thought, if one wants to be idiosyncratic and make trouble, what's the most chauvinist people on earth, who absolutely have the right to exist? I think it's probably the Chinese. In 2,000 years they developed no other term for foreigners except, "the barbarians." Do you understand the conception behind that? But they have the right to exist. They were just a very powerful people, used to suppressing those on their borders and never running into anybody from a culturally higher standpoint, even if they were occasionally conquered by "barbarians." It's the nature of the world in the framework of a class-divided society.

I have two observations to end with. For many minorities that are powerful—the young woman put it the wrong way around—it is seen as *necessary to oppress in order to exist*. That's one of the lessons of life that we have to shatter, but it does give some insight into the question. Finally, what should be very obvious, something that precedes Marxism but was encompassed within it: we do not believe that any baby born into an ethnic, religious or national group thereby deserves or merits a death sentence. That's the answer to that young woman. ■

1. The current situation and social configuration in Ireland is the result of centuries of brutal British imperialist domination. It contains features characteristically associated with the former multi-national states of Eastern Europe, as well as with both the colonial settler states which established their own political economy by excluding or destroying native populations, and colonies in which the native population is exploited and oppressed by a relatively thin colonial hierarchy.

In the absence of any significant section of the Irish working class historically freed from national/communal insecurity, the result is a seemingly intractable situation in which prospects for the development of a genuine class-struggle axis and for an end to the interminable cycle of imperialist exploitation/repression and inter-communal violence appear remote. The strong possibility remains that a just, democratic, socialist solution to the situation in Ireland will only come under the impact of proletarian revolution elsewhere and concretely may be carried on the bayonets of a Red Army against opposition of a significant section of either or both of the island's communities.

Nevertheless, no matter to what extent a bleak immediate prognosis is justified, the conflict in Ireland presents a crucial test of the capacity of a revolutionary internationalist tendency to provide a clear analysis and program and to confront the national question in the imperialist epoch. For revolutionists, who refuse to deal in the simplicities (ultimately genocidal) of the nationalists, the situation in Ireland can appear to be exceedingly complex and intractable. The "Irish question" provides a strong confirmation of the unique revolutionary potency and relevance of the international Spartacist tendency's understanding of Leninism, particularly in relation to geographically interpenetrated peoples.

2. An essential element of our program is the demand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the British army. British imperialism has brought centuries of exploitation, oppression and bloodshed to the island. No good can come of the British presence; the existing tie between Northern Ireland and the British state can only be oppressive to the Irish Catholic population, an obstacle to a proletarian class mobilisation and solution. We place no preconditions on this demand for the immediate withdrawal of all British military forces or lessen its categorical quality by suggesting "steps" toward its fulfillment (such as simply demanding that the army should withdraw to its barracks or from working-class districts).

At the same time we do not regard the demand as synonymous with or as a concrete application of either the call for Irish self-determination (that is, a unitary state of the whole island) or for an independent Ulster—two solutions which within the framework of capitalism would be anti-democratic, in the first case toward the Protestants and in the second toward the Irish Catholics. Nor is the demand for the withdrawal of British troops sufficient in itself, as though it has some automatic, inherent revolutionary content or outcome. As the eminent British bourgeois historian A.J.P. Taylor observed in an interview:

> "I don't know what the term bloodbath means. If it means people will be killed, they are being killed all the time. The alternative is not between an entirely peaceful Northern Ireland in which nobody's being killed and a Northern Ireland in which a lot of people will be killed. If the British withdraw some sort of settlement would be arrived at. You can't tell what it is because the forces in play can't be judged until they can operate....
>
> "...the presence of the British Army in Ireland prolongs the period of conflict and uncertainty....
>
> "This [possibility of a united Ireland] is a matter of relative strength. Owing to the history of the last thirty years or perhaps longer, owing to history since 1885, when Randolph Churchill—Winston's father—first raised the cry of 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right'—in the past ninety years the Protestants of Northern Ireland have been taught to think of themselves as a separate body, almost separate nationality within Ireland, and have established now a long-term domination of Northern Ireland, partly because of their superior economic strength, partly because of the backing they have received from the British Government, and partly because they are, or up to now have been, the more determined. For them, Protestant domination is the answer to the situation in Northern Ireland."
>
> —*Troops Out*, No. 2

As historically demonstrated by examples such as India, Libya, Cyprus and Palestine, the withdrawal of British imperialism, while a necessary objective of the communist vanguard, in itself does not automatically ensure an advance in a revolutionary direction. Thus, the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British army from Northern Ireland must be linked to and constitute a part of a whole revolutionary program.

3. As Leninists we are opposed to all forms of national oppression and privilege and stand for the equality of nations. Writing in 1913 Lenin succinctly set forth as follows the fundamental principles underlying the revolutionary social-democratic position on the national question:

> "As democrats, we are irreconcilably hostile to any, however slight, oppression of any nationality and to any privileges for any nationality. As democrats, we demand the right of nations to self-determination in the political sense of that term...i.e., the right to secede. We demand unconditional protection of the rights of every national minority. We demand broad self-government and autonomy for regions, which must be demarcated, among other terms of reference, in respect of nationality too."
>
> —"Draft Programme of the 4th Congress of Social Democrats of the Latvian Area," *Collected Works*, Vol. 19

Thus, the right to self-determination means simply the right to establish a separate state, the right to secede. We reject the notion that it means "freedom from all outside interference and control" or entails economic independence. In the general sense the right to self-determination is unconditional, independent of the state that emerges or its leadership.

However, for Leninists this right is not an absolute demand, a categorical imperative, to be implemented at all times and everywhere there is a nation. It is only one of a range of bourgeois-democratic demands; it is a part, subordinate to the whole, of the overall programmatic system. When the particular demand for national self-determination contradicts more crucial demands or the general needs of the class struggle, we oppose its exercise. As Lenin notes:

> "The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) *world* movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected." [emphasis in original]
>
> —"The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," *Collected Works*, Vol. 22

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In particular, in the case of interpenetrated peoples sharing a common territory, we oppose the exercise of self-determination by one nation where this flatly conflicts with the same right for another nation. In this situation the same general considerations apply, namely our opposition to all forms of national oppression and privilege, but in such circumstances the exercise of self-determination by one or the other people in the form of the establishment of their own bourgeois state can only be brought about by the denial of that right to the other. Under capitalism this would simply be a formula for reversing the terms of oppression, for forcible population transfers and expulsions and ultimately genocide. It is a "solution" repeatedly demonstrated in history, for example in the cases of India/Pakistan, Israel/Palestine and Cyprus.

In general, our support for the right to self-determination is negative: intransigent opposition to every manifestation of national oppression as a means toward the unity of the working class, not as the fulfillment of the "manifest destiny" or "heritage" of a nation, nor as support for "progressive" nations or nationalism. We support the right of self-determination and national liberation struggles in order to remove the national question from the historic agenda, not to create another such question. Within the framework of capitalism there can be no purely democratic solution (for example through universal suffrage) to the national question in cases of interpenetrated peoples.

The same general considerations apply not only to "fully formed" nations, but also to nationalities and peoples which may still be something less than fully consolidated nations, for example the Eritreans in their struggle against Amharic domination or the Biafrans at the time of the Nigerian civil war. Indeed, not infrequently the historical formation of nations is tested and completed in the process of struggles for self-determination. Our opposition to the exercise of self-determination by an interpenetrated people would also apply where one or more of the groupings, though not a historically compacted nation, has sufficient relative size and cultural level that the exercise of self-determination could only mean a new form or reversal of the terms of oppression.

4. Concretely, in Ireland the question of Irish national self-determination was not fully resolved by the establishment of the Republic of Eire. But to demand "Irish self-determination" today represents a denial of the Leninist position on the national question. It is incumbent on revolutionists to face up to exactly what the call for "self-determination of the Irish people as a whole" means.

Obviously the call is not one for the simultaneous self-determination of both communities, an impossibility for interpenetrated peoples under capitalism. In another sense the demand is about as meaningful as calling for "self-determination for the Lebanese people as a whole" in the middle of last year's communal bloodletting. In the case of

Gamma

British troops round up "suspected IRA members" in Northern Ireland.

Ireland such a demand utterly fails to come to terms with the question of the Protestant community of Ulster, comprising 60 percent of the statelet's and 25 percent of the whole island's population. Such a demand is a call for the formation of a unitary state of the whole island, including the *forcible unification of the whole island by the Irish bourgeois state irrespective of the wishes of the Protestant community*. It is a call for the Irish Catholics to self-determine at the expense of the Protestants. It is a call for the simple reversal of the terms of oppression, an implicit call for inter-communal slaughter, forced population transfers and ultimately genocide as the way forward to the Irish revolution.

5. The present six-county enclave in Northern Ireland is a "sectarian, Orange statelet," the product of an imperialist partition. Prior to the partition revolutionaries would have opposed partition, striving to cement revolutionary unity in the struggle for independence from British imperialism. However, with the partition, the accompanying communal violence and demographic shifts, and the establishment of a *bourgeois* republic in the south it was necessary to oppose the forcible reunification of the six counties with the rest of Ireland. At the same time the present statelet guarantees the political and economic privileges of the Protestants. We oppose the Orange state and the demand for an independent Ulster as forms of determination for the Protestants which necessarily maintain the oppression of the Irish Catholic population of Ulster, an extension of the Irish Catholic nation. Since they are the local bodies of the British repressive state apparatus and the training ground for the present Protestant paramilitary groups and a future reactionary Protestant army, we demand: Smash the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

6. There is a series of urgent democratic demands that apply to the situation of the oppressed Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. We demand full democratic rights for the Catholic minority and an end to discrimination in housing and hiring. But such demands must be linked to class demands which transcend the bounds of bourgeois democracy. Without the demand for a sliding scale of wages and hours, for example, the call to end discrimination will simply imply leveling in an already economically depressed situation. The relevant partial, negative, democratic and economic demands must be integrated into the revolutionary transitional program which transcends the capitalist framework of economism and democratic reformism.

7. Historically the Protestants of Ulster were an extension of the Scottish and English nations. The 1798 United Irishman uprising was led by the Protestant middle class and reflected the impact of the French and American bourgeois revolutions on the nascent capitalist class (overwhelmingly Protestant) in Ireland. This insurrection against British imperialism, which was defeated in part by the development of the reactionary sectarian Orange Order and the mobilisation of the peasantry by Catholic priests, was the opportunity for the establishment of a modern nation of the whole island. Since that time, though the most modern capitalist sectors remained Protestant for a long period, the Protestants have acted for the most part as loyal and fervent defenders of the union with British imperialism. The bigotry and discrimination among the Protestants toward the Irish Catholic nation necessarily exceeds the worst excesses of Irish Green nationalism, and most of the sectarian murders in the current period have been carried out by Protestant paramilitary groups.

Though not yet a nation, the Protestants are certainly not a part of the Irish nation and are distinct from the Scottish and English nations. Presently their separate existence is defined in large part as against the Irish Catholic nation and at the ideological level is expressed in religious terms. With their own social and cultural fabric (epitomised in the Orange Order) and history of opposition to the Irish nationalist cause, they have therefore acted as the "loyalist" allies of British imperialism. At the same time, in this century the allegiance has been more a means than an end, demonstrated, for example, by the willingness of Sir Edmund Carson to seek German aid if British imperialism would not fulfill the Ulster Protestants' demands and by the 1974 Ulster Workers Strike.

In all likelihood, a definite resolution of the exact character of the Ulster Protestant community will be reached with the withdrawal of the British army and will depend on the circumstances surrounding this. The particular conditions will pose point-blank their future and the "solution" to the Irish question. The solution posed by A.J.P. Taylor is but one possibility:

> "The question is whether the Irish nationalist majority is strong enough to expel the Protestants. If they are, that is the best way out."
>
> —quoted in the *Guardian* [London], 13 April 1976

At the same time the social organisation, weaponry, military expertise and alliances of the Protestants, make a "Zionist" solution entirely conceivable. On the other hand, if the withdrawal of the British army was in the context of massive class mobilisations, opportunities would undoubtedly arise for a class determination of the question.

8. Attempts to ignore or deny the separate identity and interests of the Ulster Protestants through the familiar liberal plea that British or other socialists cannot "tell the Irish how to wage their struggle" or the argument that only oppressed nations have a right to self-determination can be rejected easily on general theoretical grounds. The Protestants are neither a colonial administration (as were the British in India) nor a closed colour caste (as are the whites in South Africa). Arguments that the Protestants have no legitimate claim because they were originally settlers and the present statelet is an artificial imperialist creation are based ultimately on notions of nationalist irredentism and "historical justice." Although sometimes expressed as the demand that the Protestants go "home," such arguments are in the last analysis genocidal. Also inadequate is the explanation of the Protestants as simply a backward sector of the Irish nation, whose loyalism/Orangeism is purely an imperialist ideology given a certain nationalist tinge in order to attract a mass base.

9. Protestant communalism does have a material basis in the marginal privileges enjoyed by the Protestant workers. The most explicit attempt to confront and discount the Protestant community's separate identity in "Marxist" terms is the description of the Protestant working class as a "labor aristocracy." This explanation is similar to the New Left theories about the American white working class and involves an attempt to broaden the term so as to destroy its original meaning, while failing to

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recognise that the Protestant community extends through all classes and strata of society. Even to claim that the entire Protestant working class of Northern Ireland is a labour aristocracy is a gross distortion of the term. The Northern Ireland working class as a wholé has some of the worst wages, unemployment and housing in the British Isles. Moreover, wage differentials between Protestant and Catholic workers are not so marked that the two communities have significantly different living standards.

10. From the point of view of the general interests of British imperialism the border between Ulster and the Republic is now anachronistic:

> "United Kingdom soldiers and officials and money are heavily deployed in Northern Ireland because Westminster has clear obligations there. English Governments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries planted the garrison-colonists whose descendents' presence has been the principal source of Ireland's twentieth century distress; and London is the seat of such authority as the Province knows. To withdraw that authority now would intensify the problem of public order without in the least advancing a settlement of the central political question. The search for an acceptable local administration would simply continue in worsened circumstances. Britain's strategic interest in Northern Ireland is dead, and its economic interest is all on the side of withdrawal; but moral as well as practical considerations demand that British resources should remain engaged until both the political and the public order problems are at least within sight of resolution."
>
> *Observer* [London], 1 February 1976

While historically British imperialism has used the sectarian divisions, played the "Ulster card" to its own advantage, it is not now committed to the preservation of the Orange statelet and would prefer a settlement which would remove its direct political responsibility on the island. With the decline of Ulster industry and the growth of investment opportunities in the south, the border is an obstacle to its overall intentions. But at the same time as it adopts various schemes to this end British imperialism is constrained to maintain capitalist law and order and prevent a complete breakdown in the social order. The increase in independence talk by Ulster Protestants, the Ulster Workers Strike of 1974 and the significant number of Protestants imprisoned for political offences do not reflect mere "tactical" differences between the imperialists and their subordinates, but rather a divergence of interests between genuinely distinct forces.

11. We reject the argument that Protestant workers are so reactionary that only force will convince them and that the *precondition* for winning them is the destruction of the Orange statelet. The understanding that the current partition is inherently oppressive is perverted into a conception of a "two-stage" revolution in which the socialist tasks can only follow the completion of Irish national unity on the whole island. Sometimes linked to this is the claim that it is "naive" to expect the Protestant and Catholic workers to unite on "economic" issues, since it is these that divide them. By analogy, no working class could ever transcend its sectional interests. Economism is the political expression of the failure of the working class in the absence of a revolutionary leadership to reject bourgeois ideology and place its revolutionary class interests above particular, sectional or apparent needs or desires. The above argument is based on the central premise of economism—that the working class cannot transcend its immediate sectional interests and identify with all oppressed and the future of humanity. Such "anti-economism" is in fact a denial of the pertinence of the Transitional Programme in the service of the nationalism of the oppressed.

12. The Protestants feel legitimately threatened by the proposal for a united (bourgeois) Ireland, that is, their forcible absorption into an enlarged version of the reactionary clericalist state of Eire. The communalism/nationalism of the Protestants has a defensive character and is not the chauvinism of a great power. A united bourgeois Ireland would not provide a democratic solution for their claims and we must therefore reject such a solution. Such a state would necessarily be sectarian, and the Protestants will not voluntarily enter such a union.

The difficulties of such a solution are indicated in the earlier experience of the Bolsheviks. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 the Ukrainian delegate Merejin observed in an amendment to the "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions":

> "The attempt made to settle the relationship between the nations of the majority and the minority nationalities in territories of mixed population (Ukraine, Poland, White Russia), has shown that the transfer of the power of government from the hands of the big capitalists to the groups of petty bourgeoisie constituting the democratic republics not only does not diminish but, on the contrary, aggravates the friction among the nationalities. The democratic republics oppose themselves to the proletariat and attempt to convert the class war into a national one. They become rapidly impregnated with nationalistic exclusiveness, and easily adapt themselves to the practices of the previous dominating nations, which fermented discord among the nationalities, and organised pogroms, with the assistance of the government apparatus, to combat the dictatorship of the proletariat...."

The present Irish bourgeois republic is a clerical reactionary state in which the Roman Catholic Church enjoys considerable real and latent powers. An essential aspect of this is not the current level of religious persecution or discrimination (though the current repressive measures directed mostly against the IRA are an indication of the Irish bourgeoisie's intentions), but the relationship of Roman Catholicism to Irish nationalism, especially as it helps to define the divisions between the two communities.

Leninism and nationalism are fundamentally counterposed political viewpoints. Thus, while revolutionists struggle against all forms of national oppression, they are also opposed to all forms of nationalist ideology. It is a revision of Leninism to claim that the "nationalism of the oppressed" is progressive and can be supported by communist internationalists. In one of his major works on the national question Lenin stressed:

> "Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism, be it even of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilised brand. In place of all forms of nationalism Marxism advances internationalism...."
>
> "Critical Remarks on the National Question,"
> *Collected Works*, Vol. 20

To attempt to dismiss the above-mentioned features of Irish nationalism and the Irish Republic, to suggest that somehow these matters are not important, is to imply that Irish nationalism and capitalism are in some way "progressive" and (unlike all other nationalists and capitalists) will not promote racial, sexual and communal

divisions in the working class, in particular will not discriminate and persecute non-members of their national grouping.

13. Ireland, like other situations of interpenetrated peoples as in the Middle East and Cyprus, is a striking confirmation of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. The inevitable conclusion is that while revolutionists must oppose all aspects of national oppression, they must also recognise that the conflicting claims of interpenetrated peoples can only be equitably resolved in the framework of a workers state. We struggle for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. While the establishment of a united workers state of the whole island may be preferable, the above demand is algebraic, leaving open the question of where the Protestants fall. This recognises that the nature of the Protestant community has not yet been determined in history. As such, it is counterposed to calls for a "united workers republic" or for a "united socialist Ireland" (where this demand is not simply an expression for left/nationalist or Stalinist two-stage theories). Placing the demand in the context of a socialist federation has the additional advantage of highlighting the essential relationship of the proletarian revolution in the whole area and the virtual impossibility of the resolution of the Irish question on a working-class basis outside this framework. This, and the strong representation of Irish workers in the working class in Britain, points to the demand for a British Isles-wide trade-union federation as a method of promoting joint struggle and cutting across the divisions in the working class in Ireland.

G. Péress/Magnum

IRA checkpoint in the Bogside in Londonderry, 1972.

14. Particular emphasis must be placed on the demand for programmatically based anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage. The British bourgeois press and the local imperialists' bloodstained henchmen in the British Labour Party responded hysterically to a composite motion at the 1976 BLP Conference demanding the withdrawal of British troops and the formation of a trade-union based militia, despite the fact that the motion was the inadvertent result of right-wing culling of motions expressing ersatz Irish nationalist positions and a mealy-mouthed resolution from the *Militant* grouping. Our demand is not the same as that of the deeply opportunist and BLP-entrist *Militant* group, which links its call for trade-union militias to the call for troop withdrawal in a way that makes the existence of trade-union militias a precondition for troop withdrawal and which sees the militias as growing organically out of economist struggles. In Ulster the problem is not that the workers are not armed. Such militias will need a broad and strong programmatic basis if they are not to be derailed or coopted. They cannot develop just out of trade unionism but fundamentally require the existence of a strong and authoritative revolutionary cadre. Each militia unit would need at least one member of each community and the presence and strong influence of trained revolutionary cadre. Consequently, the demand for an anti-sectarian workers militia is closely linked to the growth of a Leninist party based on a developed revolutionary program. Without being based on the demand for the immediate withdrawal of the British army and without our analysis of terrorism, for example, such workers militias would simply be the armed adjunct of the women's peace movement.

15. In military conflicts between Irish nationalist organisations and the British army/state authorities we defend the actions of the former since this is still a struggle of an oppressed nationality against imperialism, even though their struggle may be associated with a program which, if accomplished, would violate the democratic rights of the Protestants. This stance implies nothing about the program of these groups, which can range from those similar to the Zionist Stern Gang and Grivas' EOKA to more radical "socialist" nationalists.

Outside this military struggle with British imperialism and its direct agents, in the conflict between the Irish Catholic and Protestant communities and their respective organisations, the national/communal aspect transcends any formal left/right differences. Such violence is frequently directed against symbols of non-sectarianism (for example, pubs where both Catholic and Protestant workers socialise) and is an obstacle to any form of integrated class struggle. Terrorist acts directed against the Protestant community by organisations of the oppressed Irish Catholic community are in no way a blow against imperialism, not justifiable as the "violence of the oppressed" and are no more "progressive" or defensible than similar acts by Protestant paramilitary groups. Thus,

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Theses on Ireland...

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while attacks on British army posts or the bombing of Aldershot military barracks are politically defensible acts, the pub bombings (both in Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods), the London underground bombings, the South Armagh shootings and other such acts of indiscriminate terrorism are completely indefensible, in no way representing a blow against imperialism. Such acts, based as they are on nationalist and genocidal premises, can only deepen communal divisions and erect barriers to working-class unity.

In such circumstances we recognise the right of both communities to self-defence. Simply because an organisation claims to be fighting on behalf of the oppressed and against imperialism does not make all its acts defensible. If this were so, then revolutionists would be compelled to defend the actions of both the EOKA in Cyprus and the Zionist Stern Gang in Palestine (organisations to whom the Provisional IRA are akin), not only when they attacked British imperialism but respectively in their attacks on the Turkish community and the Palestinians (at Deir Yassin, for example). Only with this understanding of terrorism can the workers militias in Northern Ireland be armed against capitulating to a blanket approval of the terrorism of the oppressed or becoming a mask for the machinations of imperialism.

16. In the history of the Irish labour movement there have been examples of significant workers' solidarity which have temporarily cut across the sectarian divisions. Invariably, as in the case of the 1919 Belfast engineers' strike and the mass unemployment marches in the 1930's, they have been countered with massive sectarian mobilisations intended to wipe out the fragile proletarian unity. In the absence of a revolutionary party, there can arise examples of transitory unity, albeit on pacifist or reformist grounds. A sequel to the South Armagh shootings was joint marches of Protestant and Catholic workers; but they marched to demand the strengthening of the RUC, which must be smashed.

Even such examples indicate the potentiality for workers unity. The instances of class solidarity are not proof of a deep-seated strain of class unity or that the situation is not poisoned by sectarian hatreds, but indicate that the opportunity can arise for a revolutionary organisation, though perhaps hitherto isolated, weak and small, to intervene, altering the course of the conflict toward a class determination and proletarian revolution.

For the Immediate and Unconditional Withdrawal of the British Army!

Smash the RUC and the UDR!

Down with the Prevention of Terrorism Act and All Other Special Powers Acts in Britain and Ireland!

Full Democratic Rights for the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland!

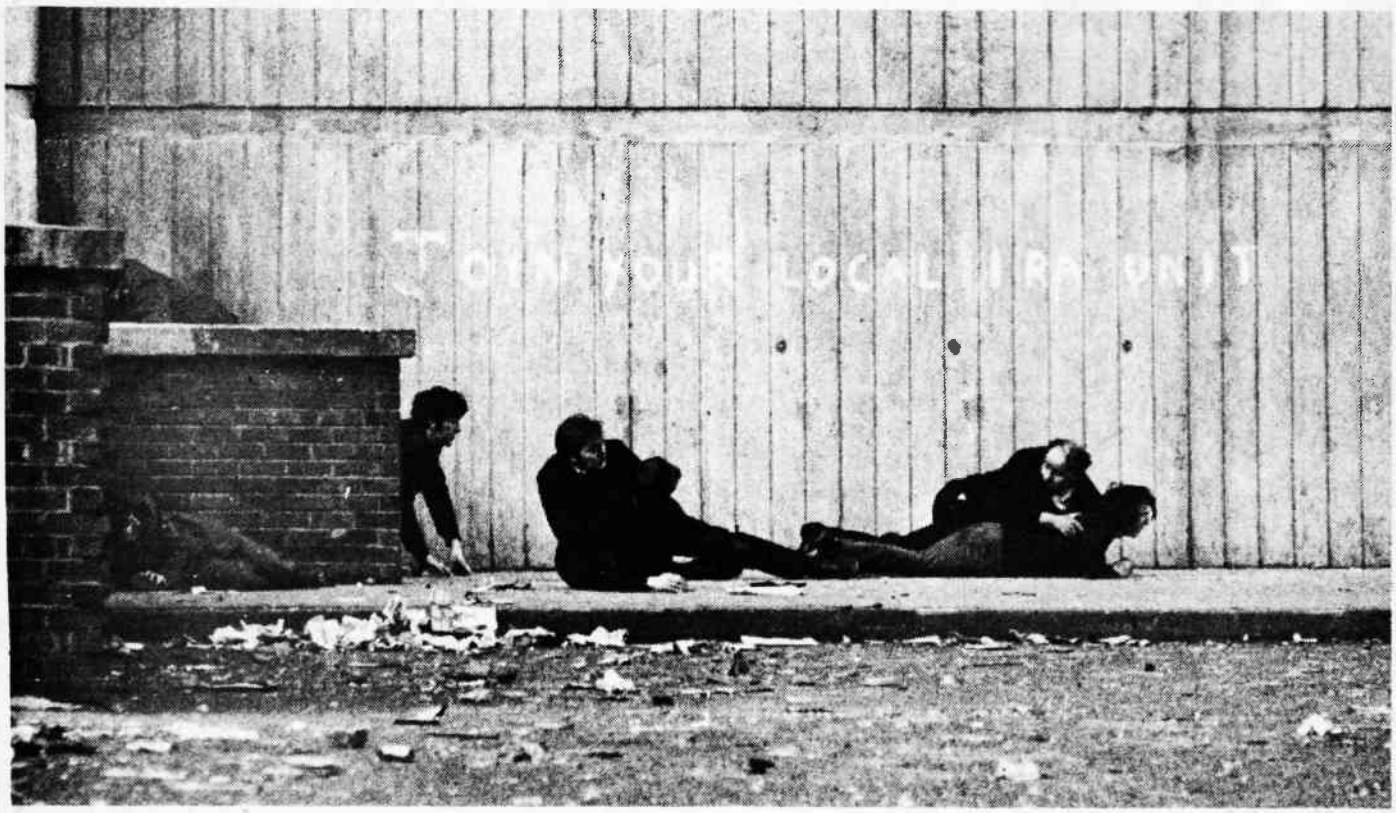
No Discrimination in Hiring and Housing! For a Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours!

For a Programmatically Based Anti-Sectarian Workers Militia To Combat Orange and Green Terror and Imperialist Rampage!

For a British Isles-Wide Trade-Union Federation!

Forward to the Irish Section of the Reborn Fourth International!

No Forcible Reunification! For An Irish Workers Republic Within A Socialist Federation of the British Isles!



G. Peress/Magnum

On Bourgeois Class Consciousness

by Joseph Seymour

The relationship between the institutional structure of capitalism and the conscious policies of the bourgeoisie remains something of a gray area in Marxist theory. At one pole is the purely structural approach of social-democratic revisionism, in which the institutions of capitalism are not associated with nor considered to be defended by definite groups of people. This outlook is central to the social-democratic theory of the state. At the other pole is the conspiracy theory of history, in which a totally self-conscious ruling class manipulates society to remain in power.

Historically, the conspiracy approach has been generally associated with "leftism." However, this is not logically necessary. A purely manipulationist view of capitalism can lead to a completely elastic conception of reformist possibilities, particularly the degree to which unlimited economic concessions can be granted, thus ignoring the law of value. Thus either approach can be compatible with reformist conclusions—either the view that there are only the automatic workings of the system without a definite class enemy, or the view that the bourgeoisie is so conscious that it can forestall any development of a revolutionary situation, making reformism the only feasible approach.

A purely structural approach is compatible with those forms of "leftism" which consist solely in propagandizing that socialism is a superior form of social organization (e.g. DeLeonism). It is, however, incompatible with Leninism. The Leninist theory of the state holds that the ruling class is a definite group of people who have to be replaced in the administration of society by another definite group of people, the core of which is the proletarian vanguard party. Thus the Leninist party is not only an instrument for organizing the revolutionary class for the seizure of power, but is also the nucleus of the administration of a workers state.

> **"Each new class which puts itself in the place of the one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all members of society .... It will give its ideas the form of universality, and present them as the only rational, universally valid ones."**
>
> **—Karl Marx,** *The German Ideology*

"The Best of All Possible Worlds"

Bourgeois class "consciousness" is not Marxist class analysis in reverse. It is necessarily a false consciousness imposed on the bourgeoisie by its need to "represent its interest as the common interest of all members of society" and to "give its ideas the form of universality." Therefore, bourgeois ideology always presents the existing society as the "best of all possible worlds." This is not to say that bourgeois ideology always presents society in an optimistic light. But where a pessimistic outlook is presented, human suffering is attributed to human nature (e.g. Hobbes), scarce natural resources (e.g. Malthus) or god.

Insofar as it does not borrow from Marxism, bourgeois ideology is simply a hypostatization of bourgeois society. The central principle of bourgeois social theory, from Comte through Weber to Talcott Parsons, is the universality and necessity of social stratification. The idea of an egalitarian society based on the enormous raising of the technical and cultural level of mankind is completely foreign to bourgeois sociology. Bourgeois economics, by definition, deals with a society characterized by scarcity in the face of unequal distribution of skills and resources.

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Even where bourgeois ideology appropriates some Marxist concepts, it retains its "best of all possible worlds" aspect. This is most clearly expressed in social-democratic revisionism, represented by George Lichtheim. Post World War II revisionism of the Kautskyan school maintains that capitalism has changed to meet the programmatic goals which nineteenth century Marxism associated only with a socialist regime. Thus, it is claimed that universal suffrage in a parliamentary system has effectively transferred political power to the working class, or that technocratic capitalist planning means production for use and not for profit.

Reactionary Marxists?

The question of bourgeois class consciousness bears a certain relation to the old Austro-Marxist concept of a Marxist who is not a socialist—one who recognizes the historical inevitability of socialism but does not support it, or possibly even opposes it. However, the Marxist analysis of class society leads directly to an understanding of socialism as a just, super-abundant society capable of producing happier human beings. To recognize this and still oppose socialism is to be completely cynical. As Lukacs correctly pointed out, the Austro-Marxist dichotomy between grasping a Marxist class analysis and opting for a socialist society was a pseudo-problem created by divorcing thought from its necessary social consequences—an exercise in rational idealism. It is doubtful if even a single bourgeois politician could be totally cynical yet still effective. It is clearly impossible for the entire ruling class to be cynical—i.e., to despair of the social desirability or even the historical possibility of its remaining in power.

It is significant that bourgeois politics approaches open cynicism only in extreme degeneration—fascism. And even here pure ruling-class power is disguised with nationalist ideology of the most reactionary sort. It is also significant that fascism produced (as much by its ideology as by its actions) a profound moral revulsion on the part of the European working class which was an important element in the revolutionary situation which developed in the wake of World War II. The deep popularity and revolutionary aspect of anti-fascist sentiment threw the European bourgeoisie back to liberal reformist ideology and parliamentary politics.

The falsity of the notion that the ruling class are Marxists who are on the other side of the barricades is demonstrated by ideologues trained in the manipulation of Marxist concepts who go over to the camp of reaction, such as Robert Michels and James Burnham. In their careers as reactionaries, they experience continual frustration at their inability to win the bourgeoisie over to a "counter-Marxist" worldview. Thus most of James Burnham's writings are aimed at demonstrating how traditional bourgeois ideology is an obstacle to understanding the strength and danger of communism and how conflicts within the bourgeoisie are an obstacle to combatting communism. Burnham wrote an entire book designed to prove that the dominant political attitudes of the American ruling class were optimistically false. Burnham felt continually frustrated by national capitalist rivalry, attacking Gaullism as a petty-bourgeois deviation. European conservatives found Burnham's hostility to DeGaulle, a successful right-wing authoritarian, inexplicable or an expression of American chauvinism. Only an ideologue familiar with Marxism could place class unity (bourgeois class unity) higher than national interest. Burnham's attitude is totally unacceptable to the bourgeois worldview, even when it is self-consciously presented in the interest of the bourgeoisie.

Historical vs. Immediate Interest

A common error in analyzing bourgeois class consciousness is a tendency to anthropomorphize class so that the bourgeoisie is seen to act rationally in its long-term interests. To the bourgeois class are attributed all kinds of individual characteristics—volition, foresight, memory, etc. Associated with this is a tendency to overstate the degree to which the state shapes the economy, undervaluing the operations of the market. It is important to realize the essentially atomized nature of the bourgeoisie. The basic motive force of bourgeois behavior is maximization of individual firm profits. The degree to which actual capitalists are willing to, or able to, sacrifice profit maximization to some conception of the historic interest of their class is quite limited. History is replete with examples of individual capitalist appetites undermining the general policy of the ruling class. The classic example is the sale of U.S. scrap metal to Japan during the diplomatic escalation preceding World War II. The sugar beet lobby proved a minor, but real, obstacle to the Eisenhower administration's cutting the Cuban sugar quota in 1959, fearing that a reorganization of the U.S. sugar import system would weaken its own monopolistic position. Even where the majority of capitalists are prepared to work for a certain policy, the mechanisms for doing so are faulty. The institution of private property imposes strict limits on the state, which is the main instrument of collective ruling-class action. This is demonstrated by the relative inefficiency of capitalist war planning even where the overwhelming majority of capitalists are genuinely trying to cooperate.

Is the Bourgeoisie an International Class?

A fundamental question about bourgeois class consciousness is whether the bourgeoisie is capable of transcending national identity and interests for

some conception of international class solidarity. On this question turn both the tendency toward inter-imperialist war and the likelihood and efficacy of international interventions against proletarian revolutions and resulting workers states.

Part of the disorientation of *American* ideologues, radical or otherwise, stemmed from the global appetites of U.S. imperialism in the 1943-71 period (Henry Luce's "American Century" and the U.S. "obligation" to "defend the Free World"). This was taken by some to reflect the American bourgeoisie's transcendence of mere national aspirations. In fact, what it constituted was a national ruling class possessing for a historical moment so much productive power that it aspired to subordinate the entire planet to U.S. domination—a very ordinary appetite writ large.

The issue was first posed sharply in the Marxist movement by Kautsky's theory of ultra-imperialism, which held that competition between imperialist nations could be peacefully mediated in the same manner as competition between domestic monopolies. Lenin countered that the bourgeoisie cannot transcend national interests and that inter-imperialist agreements can only be based on the existing balance of strength which all parties are desperately seeking to change to their advantage.

That the tendency toward inter-imperialist war exists despite its known de-stabilizing effects on the bourgeois order is indicated by the last reported meeting between the French ambassador Coulandre and Hitler before the outbreak of World War II. Both agreed that a prolonged war might well produce proletarian revolutions ("only Trotsky will be the victor," Coulandre is reported to have said). And yet neither the French nor the German ruling class was prepared to sacrifice its aim of national expansion to prevent the revolutionary destruction of the bourgeoisie which both considered a real eventuality.

The national character of the bourgeoisie is demonstrated by the response to the Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet state. While all the imperialist powers intervened against the Bolsheviks, they were incapable of cooperating, since the way in which Bolshevik Russia was defeated would shape the balance of world power. In 1923 the Soviet government effected an agreement with the most reactionary wing of the German ruling class to train the Red Army. During the 1930's, despite talk of an anti-Soviet crusade, when the crunch came all the capitalist powers determined their relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of immediate national interest. Germany effected an alliance with the Soviet Union, then broke it when German leaders believed they had a decisive military advantage. The Western powers entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union when they needed its military support. Japan remained neutral despite its alliance with Germany. This does not mean that unified international reaction against a proletarian revolution is impossible, but the obstacles to it are great, as each imperialist power sees its own aggrandizement as the overriding goal.

While capable of certain acts and attitudes of internationalist solidarity, the bourgeoisie is a nationally limited class. It is capable neither of abolishing national states nor, often, even of subordinating immediate national interests to the historic defense of the bourgeois order.

The class unity of the bourgeoisie is undermined by its atomization into competing firms within each state and by the inevitable conflicts between the national bourgeoisies. The bourgeoisie is moreover partly the creature of its own false consciousness, bourgeois ideology. With its options limited by the operation of the capitalist market and the declining rate of profit, the bourgeoisie maneuvers within circumscribed confines.

The bourgeoisie is not devoid of elemental class instinct and short-term memory, enabling it to maneuver in reaction to an immediate threat. When the working class is disorganized and misled by reformist, class-collaborationist leaderships, the capitalist class can consolidate its position and stave off its downfall even under the most threatening objective conditions. In the 1930's the bourgeoisie seized upon its last resort, fascism, a Bonapartist form of rule which allows the capitalist state a relatively greater degree of autonomy from the particular appetites of sections of the class it represents. Following the 1968 general strike in France, the French bourgeoisie used reformism rather than repression, granting economic concessions significant enough to undermine France's competitive position in the world market for a short period.

Thus the capitalist class is capable of maneuvering to retain power granted one essential factor: the absence of a revolutionary proletarian leadership which seizes the initiative of the objective situation. The lesson to be drawn from the failure of the working class thus far to extend the one victorious socialist revolution in Russia to the world-wide triumph of proletarian power is not to credit the bourgeoisie with omniscience or infinite maneuverability. The conclusion must be Trotsky's conclusion of the crisis of proletarian leadership, which demands the organization of the international Leninist party to lead the working class in the conquest of power. ■

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ostensibly Trotskyist organizations in France and elsewhere to mask its right turn.

But the OCI did not reckon with the iSt. After seven months of repeated requests, the OCI released a part (20 percent, by its own account) of the "Varga archives" in August 1974. Seven months to xerox 200 pages!

Meanwhile, Varga was pursuing his mendicant methods. In the late 1950's he had sought funds from the U.S. State Department. Now his organization was running after the iSt, not in order to engage in political discussion but simply cynically in the naive hope of getting financing for its own "international conference." [See "La LIRQI éconduite en fureur," *Spartacist* (édition française) No. 8, February 1975.]

In February 1975 the Spartacist tendency took the step of publishing a long article entitled "A Workers Commission Must Try Varga." The article's main positions on Varga and the OCI's baseless accusations were eventually confirmed by the deliberations of the Commission of Inquiry; our stand might have been drawn directly from the Commission's conclusions. We wrote:

> "Unfortunately, the irresponsible criminal conduct of the OCI, which refused to present its case against Varga honestly before the workers movement, is surpassed only by the astonishingly light-minded response of the Varga group to accusations which, if they are founded on fact, would define this tendency as a sinister clique."
>
> —*Spartacist* [édition française], February 1975

While denouncing the OCI's Stalinist methods as "foreign to the methodology and morality of Bolshevism," we established that in his letters Varga "showed himself to be anti-Semitic, racist and utterly cynical...a basically dishonest individual [acting] in bad faith." [See box for some characteristic excerpts from Varga's letters.]

From February until November 1975 the iSt, represented by its French sympathizing section, the Ligue Trotskyste de France (LTF), led the battle for an impartial commission, without the participation of the accused LIRQI. The record of this fight is detailed in our "Declaration to the Commission of Inquiry on the Varga Affair" of 3 November 1975. During this entire period the SWP held itself aloof, no doubt hoping the Commission would never see the light of day. Since at least the end of 1974 the SWP had been maneuvering with the OCI to facilitate the latter's entry into the USec, and it was obvious that a condemnation of the OCI's lies by an impartial and authoritative commission of inquiry would damage these maneuvers.

As for the LCR and LO, they never objected in principle to participating in a commission which included the LIRQI. LO went so far as to say that it was prepared to accept the OCI into a commission alongside the LIRQI! The iSt "Declaration" of 3 November was drawn up after a meeting on 30 October 1975 during which the LCR and LO had agreed to participate in a commission on the bases proposed by the LIRQI—i.e., condemning in advance the OCI's accusations. At the meeting where our declaration was read, however, the LCR and LO pulled back from the LIRQI "commission"—not for reasons of principle, but solely for reasons of "efficiency" and "credibility."

Thus the Vargaites were in a position to accuse the LCR and LO of capitulating to the iSt. This accusation was not totally unfounded, as the LCR's and LO's hesitations are to be explained above all by their factionally motivated desire to condemn the OCI. Any means would have sufficed, including the LIRQI's "commission." If these organizations surrendered to the principled arguments of the representative of the LTF—a tiny organization compared to the LCR and LO—it is no doubt because they believed that a condemnation of the OCI by a commission which did not include the LIRQI would have greater authority. The recognized authority of the iSt regarding the "Varga affair" also stemmed from the fact that we were the only organization to check the OCI's translations of Varga's [Hungarian-language] materials.

When its maneuver blew up in its face, the LIRQI set up its own "commission of inquiry," of which it was in fact the only component. Not content with accusing the LCR and LO of capitulating to the iSt, an enraged LIRQI accused the iSt of being agents of the OCI because of our principled refusal to participate in the captive LIRQI commission. As we said in our "Declaration":

> "We cannot take part in a cynical operation totally devoid of the most minimal democratic principles, whose only aim appears to be to whitewash Varga in the hope of factional advantage against the OCI. We are equally against whitewashes and frame-ups."
>
> —*WV* No. 85, 14 November 1975

The Commission Meets

On LO's initiative, a real commission of inquiry was formed in March 1976. From April until December 1976, the Commission gathered testimony, documents, whatever was relevant to the "Varga affair."

At the beginning, the OCI took a very aggressive attitude toward the Commission. It repeatedly stated that the Commission should confine itself to "authenticating" the documents from Varga's archives, and congratulated itself that the members of the Commission "admitted" the documents' authenticity. The OCI suggested over and over in *IO* (in June 1976 and again in October) that the iSt shared its accusations against Varga. To make this amalgam, the OCI quoted our criticisms of Varga (passing over in silence our criticisms of the OCI) in a way calculated to suggest that we shared its characterization of Varga. It was only after the iSt addressed a letter of protest to *IO* that the OCI ceased to put forth this kind of amalgam.

In throwing up this smokescreen, the OCI hoped to obscure the fact that the real question was whether or not the documents confirmed the OCI's accusations. It is now established that they do not confirm the charges, which are therefore revealed as slanders. All the more so since the OCI representatives systematically refused to present other elements which might have aided in "proving" the accusations; it must be concluded that "other" proofs do not exist.

The OCI's attitude toward the Commission came out in its refusal (despite its protestations to the contrary) to make the entire archives available to the Commission or to groups which had requested them. Testifying before the Commission on 22 April 1976, Claude Chisserey of the OCI leadership claimed that the 80 percent of the archives which the OCI kept to itself consisted of bulletins and

documents internal to the OCI and thus he "saw no point" in turning them over to the Commission—which, said Chisserey, alluding disingenuously to the exchange of internal bulletins between the OCI and SWP, the Commission was certainly familiar with already. But the SWP representative later stated that the SWP had never received any such bulletins.

Later, the OCI refused to allow Pierre Broué and Jean-Jacques Marie (who had collaborated with Varga on the journal of his Institute) or Roger Monnier (with whom Varga had left his archives) to testify before the Commission.

Toward the end of the Commission's deliberations, the OCI found itself obliged to testify once more. Unable to reply to the questions posed by Commission members, Pierre Lambert was repeatedly reduced to enraged mutterings such as:

> "Draw whatever conclusion you like, listen, it's your business. I'm not here for that.... You're not here to ask me questions about my organisation."
> —testimony, 16 December 1976

Yet the OCI's utter irresponsibility at the time that Varga joined emerges with perfect clarity from Lambert's testimony. First of all, he admitted that Varga's archives had been accessible to the OCI ever since Varga joined in about 1962: "this was a fellow who kept his archives, at his place everything was well classified, etc." Then Lambert explicitly declared that, prior to Varga's joining, "nobody asked him" for explanations of his political activity and that "if we had asked him, he didn't have to say anything." As for the OCI's attitude toward the Varga archives at that time, Lambert was eloquent: "They were letters in Hungarian mostly, in Russian. Not problems of direct interest to us." As the Spartacist tendency said in our draft conclusions, the OCI had:

> "...a special responsibility to try to examine these archives, given the central importance of a complete and unambiguous break with imperialism on the part of those who claim to have broken with the Stalinist bureaucracies in Eastern Europe and the USSR."

But all these "problems"—including the possibility of agents infiltrating would-be Trotskyists' ranks—did not "interest" the OCI!

Now, there are two possibilities. One, that the OCI is telling the truth: it was not familiar with Varga's past, because "there were no problems of direct interest" to the OCI. In that case, it would seem that the OCI accepted Varga without worrying in the least about possible infiltration by police agents—KGB or CIA—into its organization, without asking him the slightest question about his previous political activity. Or two—and this seems more likely—that the OCI was aware of Varga's character and a good part of his past, but covered it up in

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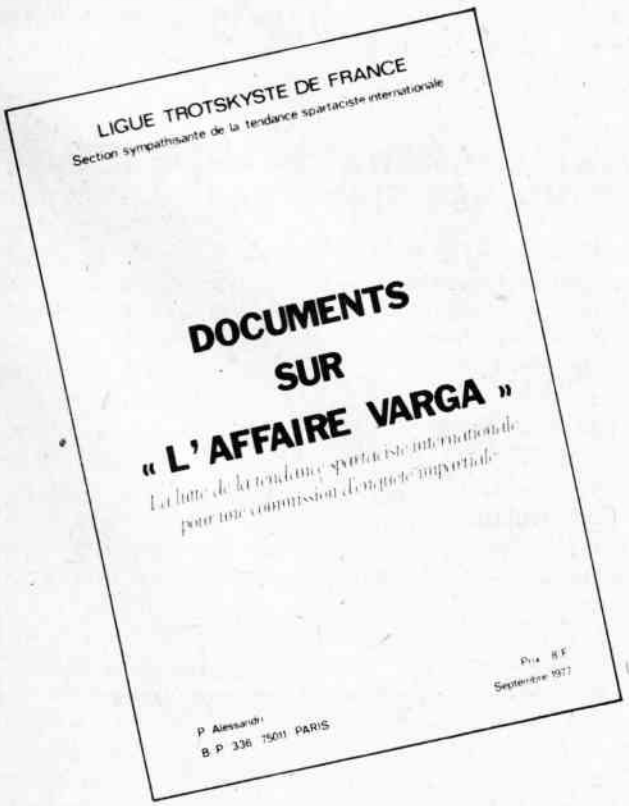
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"The initial mistake was that neither Sanyi nor you oriented to the State Department. In my opinion, we have to do everything to begin to orient so that normal links can be created with the State Department."
—Balazs Nagy [M. Varga] to Sztaray Zoltan, 19 December 1958

"About my characterization of Zinner, I'm not an anti-semite either, but let's look things in the face: the Jewish question exists. I don't hate them, but I'm fed up with their trying to act in our name; they are trying to lead Hungarians without understanding what it's about.... Fortunately the young Oxford Jews, *for the time being*, listen to us more than the old Jews, but for how long?"
—Nagy/Varga to Sztaray Zoltan, 4 June 1958

"In our reply we should give the impression that he is a provocateur... In short, it is time to exclude this dirty yid from the cultural milieu."
—Nagy/Varga to Joska Molnar, 4 March 1959

"In my opinion the Belgians were wrong to grant independence [to the Congo] with no preparation, after a paternalistic colonialism. They had a policy of treating the Blacks like children and suddenly they want to apply the most liberal of policies. That won't work. But that's no reason for the Blacks to be irresponsible."
—letter by Nagy/Varga, 9 August 1960

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order to show off its "Eastern European work." It is certainly no accident that the OCI's noble concern about the character of the main leader of its much-vaunted "Eastern European work" dates from the emergence of political differences with Varga.

For us as Trotskyists, it is essential to verify the total break from any illusions that the Stalinist bureaucracy will reform itself, as well as from Stalinophobia, on the part of militants like Varga who come out of the degenerated and deformed workers states, before accepting them as members.

Still on the defensive, the OCI several months later drew the Commission's attention to an interview with Varga in a Spanish newspaper and, in one final brief, urged the Commission to uphold "at least" the iSt's position:

> "Starting from the documents, Varga cannot be characterized—at the least—differently than did *Spartacist*, as a 'highly dubious' figure; i.e., to the extent that it is not a question of a 'moral' characterization, as an individual who had kept up a certain kind of relations with the imperialist dens."
>
> —letter, 8 March 1977

SWP: OCI's Best Defender

The Commission was also the scene of a factional struggle between the two wings of the USec. In the beginning, the SWP, trying its best to protect the OCI, did not even want testimony taped! More generally, the SWP representative systematically intervened to limit the scope of criticisms against the OCI. In the last analysis, the SWP had to grant that the OCI had proved nothing—and that the OCI employs violence against competing organizations—but still maintained that the main culprit was... Varga! It is the responsibility of the SWP above all that the Commission's conclusions do not state the obvious: the lack of proof of the OCI's accusations against Varga renders them lying and slanderous. It was also the SWP which insisted on weakening the rejection of the accusations, substituting "these accusations have not been proved" for "...have in no way been proved."

As for LO and the LCR, in their common aim of scoring points on the OCI they maintained that Varga's past was of interest only to his own organization and that a condemnation of the OCI would suffice. Thus LO refused to draw the obvious conclusion about Varga, already contained in the draft conclusions submitted by the LTF representative, mandated by the iSt:

> "...although Varga himself publicly admitted having undertaken consciously anti-communist activities in order to 'combat Marxism,' he has never explained—nor has he explicitly renounced—certain formulations found in his letters at that time, which enable us to characterize his attitudes as anti-Semitic and racist. Varga therefore appears as a highly dubious figure."

The LCR and LO wanted to condemn the OCI but refused to characterize Varga's attitude; the SWP, by way of contrast, was more than willing to characterize Varga, but refused to condemn the OCI. Caught in a bind, the Commission rejected the conclusions drafted by the iSt, and called instead on the SWP reformists to write the most innocuous conclusions possible. Though the LCR might have preferred to condemn the OCI, it refused to break with its partner in the USec rotten bloc.

Seizing the pretext that the conclusions did not characterize the OCI's accusations against Varga as false because unproved, LO refused to sign the conclusions. The iSt, on the other hand, agreed to sign the Commission's conclusions on the condition that an appended iSt statement be published with them. While the conclusions represented the absolute minimum of what had been established by the Commission, the iSt signed them in the interest of arriving at clear and authoritative conclusions. LO's refusal to sign—under an obvious pretext—can only undermine the Commission's authority and thus lessen the impact of the very conclusions which LO claims to support.

All these petty and factionally motivated maneuvers stand in complete contradiction with the methods and traditions established by the Dewey Commission. While maintaining a sense of historical proportion, we must recall that Trotsky strongly insisted that—since the Dewey Commission had amassed sufficient proofs to show that Trotsky and Sedov were not guilty—it was both just and necessary to take one step further and accept the moral and political responsibility for drawing the conclusion that the Moscow Trials were frame-ups.

In opposition to all the other organizations participating in the Commission, the iSt assumes this responsibility in drawing a two-sided conclusion: since the OCI has adduced no sufficient proof to back up its accusations against Varga, these accusations must be characterized as false and therefore lying and slanderous. The OCI's practice of violence against the Vargaites is therefore shown to be drawn from the Stalinist arsenal. On the other hand, Varga's refusal to explain himself—his past and the content of his letters—shows him to be a shady character, a "highly dubious" figure. ■

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Conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry into the Varga Affair

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 165, 8 July 1977

Michel Varga (the political pseudonym used by Balasz Nagy) is today the main leader of the Ligue Internationale de Reconstruction de la Quatrième Internationale (International League Reconstructing the Fourth International—LIRQI), which now simply proclaims itself the "Fourth International." After the 1956 uprising in Hungary he emigrated to West Europe and, in the late 1950's, became a founder of the "Imre Nagy Institute of Political Science" and of its journal, *Études*. The purpose of this institute, as Varga presented it in 1958, was to analyze problems of socialism, particularly the problems of Hungary from 1948 to 1956. For these projects Varga entered into contact with various groups and individuals in the workers movement.

In 1961 Michel Varga broke with the Institute and the journal. In 1962 he joined the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI). Toward the end of 1972 a split occurred between a group led by Varga and the OCI. The group founded by Varga first took the name OCI-LIRQI Faction.

In 1973 the OCI published material (translated from Hungarian) excerpted from Varga's archives which it had obtained. This material dealt with the period of 1957-1960, and the excerpts published by the OCI are mostly parts of Varga's correspondence. On the basis of these excerpts, the OCI accused Varga of being an agent of the CIA and the KGB.

On 27 March 1976 the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, Lutte Ouvrière, Socialist Workers Party USA, the international Spartacist tendency and the Workers Socialist League (Great Britain) decided to form a Commission of Inquiry on the basis of the following declaration:

> "Some time ago, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) put forth certain accusations, asserting that Balasz Nagy, known as Michel Varga, was an 'agent paid by the CIA' and 'a GPU provocateur.' The leaders of the LIRQI, the organization of which Michel Varga is a member, have called for a 'workers commission of inquiry' to take a position on 'the campaign of unfounded accusations launched by the OCI leadership' as well as on 'the extension of these accusations to the International League [LIRQI] as such, going as far as repeated physical attacks upon militants of the OCI-LIRQI faction [the French LIRQI group], in particular during the joint demonstrations against Francoism and the leafletting outside the meeting to free Soviet mathematician Leonid Plyushch.'
>
> "We consider that such accusations against a militant or an organization are sufficiently serious that it is incumbent upon the entire revolutionary movement to determine whether or not they are justified. That is why we have decided to constitute ourselves as a Commission of Inquiry for the purpose of inviting the OCI leadership to present all evidence it claims to possess, and in order to request all those who could furnish evidence concerning this matter to come and testify.
>
> "The Commission's goal is a scrupulous verification of the facts and documents, which it will make public. In order for this verification to take place with the greatest possible authority, it invites all organizations claiming adherence to the revolutionary workers movement to participate actively in its deliberations."
>
> —signed by representatives of:
> Lutte Ouvrière
> Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire
> Socialist Workers Party
> international Spartacist tendency
> Workers Socialist League

After a year of proceedings, the Commission of Inquiry now feels that it has come to its end. It has recorded testimony and sought to verify it to the degree possible.

For practical reasons, the representative of the Workers Socialist League was unable to participate regularly in the Commission's work. Five persons participated regularly: André Frys (LO), André Roussel (LO), Gus Horowitz (SWP), Georges Marion (LCR) and Jean Lesueur (iSt). This report is made by the following three participants in the Commission of Inquiry: Gus Horowitz (SWP), Jean Lesueur (iSt), Georges Marion (LCR).

I Preliminary Conclusions

The members of the Commission of Inquiry, at the end of their proceedings, wish to formulate the following preliminary observations dealing with the ongoing development of the inquiry itself.

1) On two occasions members of the OCI—first Claude Chisserey and Gérard Bloch, then Pierre Lambert—agreed to answer the Commission's questions. But numerous letters and requests by the Commission of Inquiry for testimony from other members of the OCI remain unanswered by the OCI. Pierre Lambert, for one, stated concerning this matter: "We will not allow the Commission of Inquiry to investigate inside the OCI. The goal of your Commission is to state whether the documents produced by the OCI are authentic or not." Concerning the use of violence by members of the OCI against the LIRQI, subsequently the LOR [Revolutionary Workers League] (name adopted by the French section of the LIRQI), the OCI representatives denied this, or refused to reply.

2) It was at the request of the LIRQI that the organizations making up the Commission of Inquiry decided to form it. But the LIRQI demanded that the Commission of Inquiry be formed on the basis of an a priori recognition that the OCI's accusations were slanders. Seeing that the organizations in question did not share its point of view, the LIRQI then formed its own commission of inquiry, the "Commission of Inquiry against the Slanders about Michel Varga," of which it is in fact the only member. Subsequently, on one occasion, LIRQI members agreed to testify before the Commission on the question of the [OCI's] use of violence. Rejecting the

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Conclusions on Varga Affair...

(continued from page 29)

Commission in advance as a "maneuver," Michel Varga explicitly refused any collaboration with the Commission.

II Basic Conclusions

Despite the attitude of the OCI and the LOR toward the Commission of Inquiry, the undersigned members of it have arrived at the following conclusions, which they share in common:

1) *Was Varga a KGB agent?*

The OCI has not furnished any evidence proving that Michel Varga had relations with the KGB or the Soviet government. According to the words of the OCI leaders themselves, this accusation is based solely on "political reasoning."

According to the Commission, this accusation is therefore unproved.

2) *Was Varga a CIA agent?*

In order to assert this, the OCI bases itself mainly on the "Varga archives" relating to the period 1957-1960.

These archives show that during this period, after leaving Hungary and before joining the OCI, Michel Varga sought financial support from many sources, including sources close to the American government, the [U.S.] State Department or the Free Europe Committee, in order to finance the Imre Nagy Institute. The archives show that he actively sought this money, knowing full well what he was doing and attempting to hide the source of the money.

But these archives do not prove that at this time Varga was a CIA agent. They do not prove that Varga was a CIA agent after he joined the ranks of the OCI in 1962, nor that he had contact with the CIA during this period.

According to the Commission, the accusation that he belonged to the CIA is therefore unproved.

3) *Did the OCI know of Varga's past before accepting him in its ranks?*

There are no documents which make it possible to answer this question.

- In the LIRQI's publications, Michel Varga has asserted that the OCI was fully informed about his past before he joined its ranks. But Michel Varga refused to give his testimony to the Commission.
- As for the OCI, it has reasserted that it did not know of Varga's past as it appears in light of the archives. Pierre Lambert repeated this in his testimony before the Commission of Inquiry.
- The Commission also heard the testimony of Albi and Kaldy, two Hungarian militants presently members of the LCR and LO respectively, who worked with Varga after 1962 in his Hungarian Trotskyist organization, the LRSH [Revolutionary League of Hungarian Socialists]. According to their statements, the OCI was in possession of sufficient information about Varga's past to have warranted suspicion concerning the source of financing for the Imre Nagy Institute. However, Pierre Lambert testified that in 1962 the OCI had no grounds for such suspicion.
- Two OCI leaders, Pierre Broué and Jean-Jacques Marie, collaborated with the journal edited by the Imre Nagy Institute, *Études*, on several occasions prior to 1962. They therefore at least knew of the Institute's existence. But the Commission was unable to hear their testimony concerning the extent of their knowledge of the Institute in this period, due to the OCI's refusal [to allow them to testify]. For the same reason it was unable to hear testimony from Roger Monnier, the OCI member with whom Varga had deposited his archives.

The Commission is therefore not in a position to know whether the OCI learned about the archives only in 1973.

4) *The use of violence.*

The Commission heard testimony indicating that on several occasions the OCI has used violence against LIRQI members in order to prevent them from distributing their press, and not in self-defense. This testimony comes from different individuals and different organizations.

The Commission is therefore convinced that these attacks did indeed take place. It is inadmissible for an organization in the workers movement to act in this fashion, and this must stop.

* * * * *

The Commission of Inquiry's minutes are public in nature, before the entire working-class movement, in order to allow all working-class militants who may so desire to form their own opinion. The Commission makes the entire workers movement judge of the "Varga affair" and of the attitude adopted by its protagonists.

Paris, 29 May 1977

signed by:

Gus Horowitz (Socialist Workers Party)
Jean Lesueur (international Spartacist tendency)*
Georges Marion (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire)

* The international Spartacist tendency wishes to note that it votes in favor of these conclusions with the following reservations, whose reproduction constitutes a condition to signing the conclusions:

1) The OCI's unproved accusations must be characterized as slanders;

2) Varga's current attitude, namely to refuse to shed light on his past, must lead to characterizing him as a suspicious and highly dubious individual;

3) The OCI's use of violence against Varga's supporters must be characterized as deriving from Stalinist methods.

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Draft Conclusions on the Varga Affair Submitted by the iSt

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 165, 8 July 1977

The Commission of Inquiry was formed by Lutte Ouvrière, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, the Socialist Workers Party and the international Spartacist tendency, with the sole aim of arriving at conclusions about the "Varga affair." Although composed of organizations otherwise having serious political differences among themselves, the Commission is united in its determination to safeguard the workers movement against the alien practices of violence and slander and to denounce such practices whenever they may occur, thereby rejecting any attempt to turn it into the tool of any political alliance or regroupment.

On the basis of testimony and documents presented to it, the Commission of Inquiry has arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The Commission notes that, although representatives of the OCI twice appeared before it, the OCI in fact refused to collaborate with the Commission of Inquiry, above all by not turning over to it the entire documentation at its disposal; and by refusing to allow testimony from its members who, based on their own experience, could have answered the Commission's questions—on the pretext that the Commission should limit itself to stating whether or not the documents presented by the OCI were authentic or not.

2. The Commission also denounces the attitude of the LIRQI and its organizations toward the Commission. With the failure of the LIRQI's attempts to prevent the creation of an independent Commission of Inquiry in the best traditions of the workers movement—in particular that represented by the Dewey Commission—the LIRQI set up a so-called "impartial" commission composed overwhelmingly of its own organizations! The LIRQI's slanders of the Commission, which it terms "Lambertist agents," merely show its impotent fury following the refusal by the organizations which formed the Commission to cover for its maneuvers.

3. The OCI did not present any sufficient proof to demonstrate the correctness of its accusations against Balasz Nagy, known as Michel Varga; namely that Michel Varga was supposedly a paid agent of the CIA and KGB. Moreover, the OCI dishonestly manipulated the quotations it extracted from Varga's letters. The testimony, documents and information gathered by the Commission lead to the conclusion that these accusations can only be considered false, and therefore lying and slanderous.

4. It goes without saying that the Commission of Inquiry condemns the OCI's procedures, which are of a Stalinist nature. The OCI may have been familiar with the "Varga archives." It is quite probable that it at least knew of their existence. The OCI therefore had a special responsibility to try to examine these archives, given the central importance of a complete and unambiguous break with imperialism on the part of those who claim to have broken with the Stalinist bureaucracies in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Thus the OCI chose to launch a slanderous campaign, whose sole aim was to intimidate and discredit Varga, only after his political differences with the OCI appeared.

5. The Commission condemns the scandalous light-mindedness of Michel Varga, who refused to appear before it or to make any deposition. He has thereby refused to clarify his present position vis-à-vis his past activities. Consequently, the Commission can only note the fact that between 1957 and 1960-61 Varga consciously solicited funds from sources functioning as agents of American imperialism, and even from the U.S. State Department. And although Varga himself publicly admitted having undertaken consciously anti-communist activities in order to "combat Marxism," he has never explained—nor has he explicitly renounced—certain formulations to be found in his letters at that time, which enable us to characterize his attitudes as anti-Semitic and racist. Varga therefore appears as a highly dubious figure.

6. According to depositions taken by the Commission of Inquiry, the OCI has for a long time practiced violence against competing organizations in the workers movement. The OCI simply used its unfounded accusations against Varga as a pretext—following the emergence of political differences—to physically attack members of organizations which included Varga. The Commission vigorously condemns the OCI for its slanders and its violence of a purely Stalinist sort, alien to the best practices of the workers movement.

In addition, the fact that the LIRQI invoked bourgeois justice against members of the OCI demonstrates that despite its protestations, it does not fundamentally differ from the OCI on the question of workers democracy.

[Paris, December 1976]

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Varga Commission Finishes Work

OCI Slanders the Dubious Varga

The following article is adapted from the introduction to a French-language bulletin of documents relating to the Commission of Inquiry into the "Varga affair" recently published by the Ligue Trotskyste de France, sympathizing section of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt).

By reprinting materials published in Workers Vanguard *and* Spartacist *(édition française) over the past two and a half years,* Documents sur "l'affaire Varga" *documents the struggle waged by the iSt for a genuinely impartial commission of inquiry into the serious charges leveled against Michel Varga by the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI).*

It includes the statement of the iSt to the cover-up "commission" created by the Vargaites (see Workers Vanguard *No. 85, 14 November 1975); correspondence regarding the formation of the Commission of Inquiry; exchanges between its members and the Vargaites documenting Varga's refusal to testify before the Commission; excerpts from testimony to the Commission by Pierre Lambert of the OCI, Franco Grisolia and several former members of the Vargaite organization; a list of documents and testimony received by the Commission; and the concluding report of the Commission as well as draft conclusions submitted by the iSt, both of which are also reprinted below.*

The bulletin may be ordered from Pascal Alessandri, B.P. 336, 75011 Paris, France, or from Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377, GPO, New York, N.Y. 10001.

Jaume Mor

Michel Varga

The documents reproduced in this bulletin testify to the struggle by the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) to construct, and then to carry through to a conclusion, the work of a commission of inquiry to investigate the "Varga affair." They document efforts by the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) and the Vargaite group (LIRQI, which now styles itself the "Fourth International") first to block even the existence of an impartial commission in the tradition of the Dewey commission of inquiry into the Moscow Trials, and then to create obstacles to the Commission's work. And they reveal the equivocations of the other organizations—the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—which participated in the Commission.

Origins of the Commission

Although increasingly sharp political differences separated the OCI and Varga since at least September 1972, it was not until the end of June 1973, after the "discovery" of Varga's archives around May 1973, that the OCI publicly accused Varga—falsely, as the Commission established—of being an agent of the Stalinist secret police (*Informations Ouvrières*, 27 June 1973) and, later, of the CIA as well. It subsequently took more than six months for the OCI to state that working-class organizations could examine these archives, and it was not until March 1974 that a pamphlet announced in the first *IO* article finally appeared.

The "Varga affair" went hand in hand with a very rapid right turn of the OCI, expressed above all by its capitulation before the popular front in the 1973 and 1974 elections, as well as its rapprochement, beginning in early 1973, with the reformist SWP. In a centrist organization such as the OCI, the formation of a left tendency opposing the leadership's right turn might have been expected. And in fact wobbles showed up in *IO* which looked like the stirrings of left oppositionists in the OCI. But the "Varga affair" cut short any potential crystallization of a serious left tendency in the OCI. Just as the Vargaites cynically sought to take up positions to the left of the OCI, so too the OCI took advantage of its accusations against Varga to seal off anything resembling an opposition. It was obvious that at the outset the OCI was counting on the disinterest of the

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