

# Pseudo-Trotskyists Embrace Counterrevolution

Since our first issue *Socialist Voice* has reported in detail the vacillations and betrayals of the various tendencies claiming to represent Trotskyism. It is bad enough to make theoretical errors that violate the principles of Marxism, or to advocate bourgeois programs for the working class that will lead to inevitable defeat. But what we have to deal with now makes all past capitulations seem like child's play: the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Spartacist League (SL), the two largest American representatives of pseudo-Trotskyism, have enlisted openly in the armies of counterrevolution.

The SWP has chosen sides in the struggle in Iran between the ruling Islamic Republican Party and its bourgeois-liberal and working-class opponents. It argues that revolutionaries should swallow whole the anti-imperialist pretensions of Ayatollah Khomeini and the mullahs and insists that all Western efforts to restore imperialist influence in Teheran are being carried out through the agencies of ex-president Bani-Sadr and his left-Islamic Mojahedin supporters. The SWP

power is the IRP, its "Revolutionary Guards" and its fascist thugs, the hezbollahi. There is a parallel to 1917, but the Khomeini-IRP alliance represents Kornilovism, and Bani-Sadr is the Kerensky who momentarily had to rely on the workers to fight a rightist counterrevolution that he himself had colluded with.

There are pitched battles — nearly a civil war — going on in Iran today between the IRP's legions and the Mojahedin, together with centrist socialistic forces like the left-Fedayin and Peykar. The Marxist position is not determined by the politics or claims of the various misleaderships but by the need to save the workers' movement from destruction and help it overcome its pro-capitalist illusions — that is, to give it communist leadership. So in the current fight we give military support to the leftists against the thugs and murderers of the government.

Let there be no mistake. We are enemies of Bani-Sadr just as we are of the mullahs, because both sets of capitalist



*Once Iranian leftists wore masks for protection against the Shah's Savak murderers. Today Savak agents kill for Khomeini, while pseudo-Trotskyists provide them with the mask of leftism.*

tries to echo Marxist tactics by defining its position as that of "defense of the IRP government against attacks from the right" as opposed to *political* support of that government. It cites as a precedent the Bolsheviks' military defense of the Kerensky regime in Russia in 1917 against the Kornilov counterrevolution ("Why defenders of 'democracy' go wrong" by David Frankel, *Intercontinental Press*, October 5).

But who are the counterrevolutionaries in Iran? The IRP and Khomeini have gunned down over a thousand leftist militants and even children in the streets, seizing back many of the material gains and rights won by the workers in the revolution against the Shah. Bani-Sadr when he was president also tried to erase the workers' gains, but then the conflict between the liberal pro-Western capitalists he championed and the IRP (with whom he shared power) kept the regime weak. Now that he is out of favor, the workers' enemy in state

politicians are enemies of the movement and interests of the proletariat. We would fight together with the Bani-Sadr forces at the moment against the IRP only because the immediate victory of the mullahs means the immediate destruction of the workers' movement and its gains. But just as the Bolsheviks never called for Kerensky's victory, we never call for Bani-Sadr to regain power. We insist on the absolute independence of the workers' fighting organizations as a guard against their treacherous temporary allies. We continue to raise our communist politics: we urge our fellow workers to fight for political power for their own class in a workers' state. Should Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin win out, the workers must continue their military and political struggle against their capitalist regime as well.

The SWP prefers to back Khomeini, on the grounds that "democracy" is the U.S. imperialists' slogan in Iran. Yet the

saber-rattling Reagan regime is acting with notable moderation and caution in the Khomeini — Bani-Sadr conflict, despite the mullahs' anti-imperialist rhetoric. Washington's need for stability in the Middle East means *not* supporting the overthrow of Khomeini by the liberal, vacillating center of Bani-Sadr.

Ironically, the SWP's own evidence bears out this obvious deduction. Frankel mentions Washington's overt hostility to Khomeini but is forced to add that "if U.S. officials are to be believed, it is not doing anything about it." He then knowingly comments, "One does not have to be a Marxist to find this unconvincing." In reality it is unconvincing only if one is not a Marxist or just a moderately well-informed observer. Frankel's article shows that the U.S. is worried about Iran, but it offers absolutely nothing to show that it seeks Khomeini's overthrow — except for one argument that actually proves the opposite. In response to a report that 80 percent of the Shah's secret police (Savak) agents are now working for Khomeini, the SWP suggests that "these ex-Savaki are also working for their old buddies in the CIA." No doubt many of them are, and Khomeini of course knows about their CIA links. He understands their anti-working class accomplishments, and they are serving him well with their restored torture chambers for oppositionists. To conclude that this proves the CIA's *opposition* to Khomeini, as the SWP does, is to carry political degeneration to the point of absurdity.

The SWP falls back on the contention that, whatever Khomeini's crimes, the Iranian masses still back him against his enemies. Its case is refuted by many reports, including one in the same issue of *Intercontinental Press* that masses of workers, not just isolated petty-bourgeois leftists, have been ranged against the regime. A number of strikes against government policies are cited, beginning in December 1980 during the war with Iraq, when patriotic "national unity" propaganda was very high. The mass popularity of the Mojahedin is proved by the circulation of their press and the size of their rallies, both in the hundreds of thousands.

### 'Stalinist Betrayal' Fits SWP

This report came in an article by Michel Rovere, translated from the French-language *Inprecor*. *Inprecor* and *Intercontinental Press* purport to be different editions of the same publication, but in reality they are organs of rival factions in the self-styled "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (USec). This disunited bloc holds together by agreeing to disagree over many vital questions; thus there are three competing sections in Iran with counterposed strategies, although all of them began with an uncritical stance towards Khomeini. The Frankel and Rovere articles are implicit polemics against one another; in choosing not to make this explicit, the SWP is simply following the USec's ancient tradition of dishonest diplomacy.

Rovere, nevertheless, makes his position clear when he denounces the Iranian pro-Moscow Tudeh party for its position on the civil war. He quotes Kianuri, the Tudeh leader:

**"Even if our formation were to be outlawed and our members persecuted, we would continue to defend the line of Imam Khomeini, which is to battle imperialism and its local agents, the 'liberals' and 'Maoists.' Our position in this regard is not based either on partisan considerations or on tactical maneuvers. Our support to the revolution is of a strategic order."**

Rovere comments, with full justice: "This declaration

merits inclusion in an anthology of Stalinist betrayal." What he diplomatically neglects to add is that an equivalent position of Stalinist betrayal of the working class is held by his "fellow Trotskyists" in the SWP.



*SWPers take pride in their dedication to women's liberation. Early in the revolution these hypocrites defended Khomeini's imposition of the veil. Now they defend the mullahs' regime that specializes in rape and humiliation of suspected revolutionary women.*

Equally criminal is the position of the Spartacist League towards Poland. We have noted previously (*Socialist Voice* No. 10) how the vacillating centrists of the SL initially claimed not to be able to make up their minds about the Polish workers' revolt: it could be either revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, they said. This was hardly an incisive Marxist guide to action; indeed, it only masked the Spartacists' reluctance (and perhaps shame) to reveal their real position of hostility to the working class. Nevertheless, their contempt was plain to see in every bourgeois insult they muttered about shiftless workers: the Poles were "demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen," "in order to eat one must work," and the like. Subsequently, the SL made this explicit by urging the Polish proletariat not to oppose the Russian army if it invaded Poland to crush Solidarity. Now it has gone all the way and invited the Russians in: "The threat of a counterrevolutionary thrust for power is now posed in Poland. That threat must be crushed at all costs and by any means necessary" (*Workers Vanguard*, September 25).

The SL used to denounce open capitulators like the Marcyite Workers World Party for supporting the Russian armed forces against workers' upheavals, as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. But its political degeneration has been clear enough; *Socialist Voice* predicted the SL's switch to the side of the Russian rulers four years ago (issue No. 4, page 25). Even so, it is no pleasure to see our prediction come true. There are sincere would-be Trotskyists in the SL who have now openly joined the camp of Scheideman, Noske, Stalin and the other butchers of the working class.

The "counterrevolution" the SL is speaking of is led by Solidarity, the 10-million member workers' organization. In league with the CIA and all of Western imperialism, Solidarity is supposedly now aiming to destroy the Stalinist "workers' state" and introduce capitalist domination over Poland's

economy. Proof? Solidarity's national convention in early September called for "free trade unions" throughout the Soviet bloc and "free elections" to the Polish parliament, and both of these are obviously typical CIA slogans. Later the SL added to its indictment the proposal that Poland join the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Yes, there are counterrevolutionary forces in Poland and they are tied to the West. But who are they? Not even the Kremlin pretends that Western capitalism's armlock over the Polish economy was provided by Solidarity; it was the Warsaw regime (with Moscow's approval) that begged and borrowed millions of dollars in loans and is now up to its ears in debt. Russia's collapsing economy can no longer buoy up its crisis-ridden satellites. Western politicians and bankers are now demanding that Solidarity must accept austerity. All the counterrevolutionary forces, East and West, want Poland stabilized within the broad imperialist orbit.

The Kremlin and its Polish pawns do claim that the strikes and unduly large eating habits of the Polish workers have exacerbated the economic crisis, and here the SL's "free lunch" snottiness simply refines the line. When a society cannot meet the elemental needs of its people, that is the very time that the communist understanding that the system is a failure becomes clearest to the proletariat; that is when revolution is on the agenda. But that is precisely when the SL labels the workers' "excessive" demands counterrevolutionary and comes to the aid of the state, the main engine of counterrevolution in reality.

### Spartacists Back Russian Invasion

The SL's argument that the use of democratic slogans proves Solidarity's reactionary character is absurd, just as is the SWP's identical claim in Iran. As we show in a separate article in this issue, Lech Walesa & Co., like their trade unionist counterparts in the West, are seeking to reform the Polish state so that it can withstand and incorporate the workers' upsurge and prevent it from reaching revolutionary consciousness. One example: Warsaw would love to join the Western-dominated IMF, following the path of other Stalinist states. But such a move to enforce austerity would be highly unpopular — unless it is approved by Solidarity. Hence the reformists' proposal.

The SL further "proves" that the workers in Solidarity are counterrevolutionary by pointing to their leaders' affection for American AFL-CIO bureaucrats like Lane Kirkland and Albert Shanker, who are tied to the State Department and the CIA. Walesa's relationship to these bureaucrats is real; so are the latter's direct links to imperialism. But their policy (despite the SL's citation of a Woody Allen movie to corroborate Shanker's evil) is not to overthrow the Polish government and destabilize Europe. They share the constant attitude of American government since the 1956 Hungarian revolution. Contrary to the SL's oft-repeated "analysis," neither Brzezinski nor Reagan are "crazed madmen" but merely bourgeois reactionaries who want to see a weak Poland that will not break its Russian tie but will remain a constant drain upon it. Kirkland agrees and therefore encourages Walesa's reformism.

Accordingly, in the text of his speech prepared for the Solidarity convention, Kirkland called for "unlinking human rights and freedom from the question of who owns the means of production. Respect for workers' rights does not automatically flow from any economic system" (*New York Times*, September 27). In other words, there is no point in overthrowing either capitalism or "communism" to replace it by the other because workers have to struggle for their rights

under either system. Kirkland's reputedly fierce anti-Stalinism turned out to be quite tame. When it came down to the prospect of advocating a working-class revolution, even in distant Poland, he backed off.

The SL is quite explicit in denouncing as counterrevolutionary Solidarity as a whole, not just the reformist and clerical nationalist leaders who are trying to direct the anti-exploiter and egalitarian aspirations of the mass of militants. In turn, the SL makes its appeal to the Polish workers who did *not* join Solidarity — those who never responded to the general strikes, who stood aside when masses were demanding more food, who hoped to survive by collaborating with the Stalinist state rather than fighting. Every revolutionary knows of such Tory workers, the most backward elements of the proletariat, frequently found among the labor aristocracy. It is a telling indictment of the Spartacists' entire upside-down analysis that these are the elements they look to for building their "Trotskyist" cadre in Poland!

The SL, of course, justifies all its inanities by claiming that the reforms Solidarity wants amount to the restoration of capitalism. That in turn depends on the belief that the Stalinist seizure of power in Poland after World War II meant the abolition of capitalism. We have dealt with this disastrous idea before (see "Polish Workers Shake the World," *Socialist Voice* No. 10); for the present it is enough to state that in Poland the workers are exploited by an alien, privileged class of bureaucrats that owns the means of production, operated until last August a harsh police state, promotes anti-Semitism, and maintains capitalist inequality and mismanagement.



*Karl Radek, a Left Oppositionist in the 1920's, who became a leading capitulator and a shrill apologist for Stalinism. In contrast to Trotsky, the renegades from Trotskyism claimed that Stalinism was carrying out the revolution despite "atrocities." The Spartacist League continues this shameful tradition.*

This is not the first time an American leftist group has mimicked Moscow's line, the genuine counterrevolutionary one — and slandered the working class. But it is still rare for a professed Trotskyist organization to do so. After all, Trotskyism was born in the struggle *against* counterrevolutionary Stalinism. But the SL insists that Stalinism defends "the revolution" against the workers:

**'Solidarity's counterrevolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counterrevolution.'**

The Spartacist League has the gall to denounce *Reagan* for hoping for a Russian military invasion! Its support for actual counterrevolution is "of a strategic order," like the Tudeh's



*Starvation stalks Poland as its capitalist economy collapses. Masses daily line up to buy meat; the SL lines up with Stalinist butchers. Well-fed Spartacists echo bourgeois sneer that workers don't work hard enough to eat.*

support for counterrevolution in Iran. Whereas the SL "does not flinch" from the slaughter of masses of workers, the SWP, less forthright, prefers not to admit responsibility for the crimes it defends.

Political logic has led both the SWP and the SL to the support of counterrevolution in their respective countries of choice. Nevertheless, the politics that led them there are not precisely the same. The SWP "supports" every mass movement; that is, it tails the bourgeois (Khomeini) or reformist (Walesa) leaderships with gentle, non-revolutionary criticisms of their actual and potential betrayals. It even hopes, idiotically, to build a new International with the nationalist regimes of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. The SL likewise identifies every movement with its leadership but, in contrast, frequently chooses to oppose the movements for that reason. In Iran, it opposed the anti-Shah movement led by Khomeini and defended progress (i.e., pro-imperialist capitalism) against Khomeini's "feudalism." In Poland, it opposed the anti-Stalinist movement by defending progress (this time it was Stalinist state capitalism) against "counterrevolution."

The gaps between the SWP and the SL loom large on the surface, for the two groups differ to a greater or lesser extent on almost every practical question. We have often pointed out, however, that the SL's superficial leftism is no alternative to the SWP's blatant reformism, and the symmetry in their underlying distrust of proletarian action independent of petty-bourgeois control is striking. Now they have simultaneously taken their stands for outright counterrevolution, finding virtue in bloody reaction and stupidly citing irrelevant and contradictory evidence to hide the truth. The spectacle can only be described as an obscene farce.

Yet it reflects an historical tragedy. The SWP and the SL are the major dregs in the U.S. of the once-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party inspired and guided by Trotsky. The massive defeats of the world working class through fascism, World War II and the post-war counterrevolutions disoriented and later destroyed the Fourth International. Various currents of would-be Trotskyists seized on one aspect or another of the momentary reality of defeat (bourgeois national liberation struggles, reformist trade unionism, Stalinist "revolutions") as a substitute for working-class struggle, but all ignored the most fundamental principle of Marxism, the seizure of state

power by the proletariat and by no other class in its name. In the 1940's the International was dominated by the current of Pablistism, which held the theory that the working class is not necessary for the socialist revolution. Petty-bourgeois Stalinists or nationalists can make the revolution for the workers, without them, and if need be against them. The SWP, SL and many others share this theory today.

The SWP and SL "overlook" the counterrevolutionary danger facing real, living workers only because they "know" that the "real" revolutionary proletarian interests lie elsewhere: with the bourgeois nationalist "anti-imperialist" leadership for the SWP, with the "necessarily brutal, stupid" but supposedly anti-capitalist Stalinists for the SL. (The SL is obviously very proud of being an unflinching accomplice to potential mass murder. But it should be aware of a shameful precedent: the host of capitulators from Trotskyism in the 1930's in the USSR — Radek, Preobrazhensky, et al — who concluded that the Stalinists were maintaining the revolution in their own "brutal, stupid" way. These traitors were the political precursors of the post-war Pablistes and their successors.)

It is easy to hold on to bad theories and treasonous politics when no events are decisive enough to test them. Today, however, the SWP and SL have come face-to-face with the conflict between actual proletarians and the alleged guardians of proletarian interests. And they have sided against the workers; for them, the fictional "revolution" or "workers' state" has replaced the revolutionary working class. Certainly the reawakening class struggle in America will shake some of them back into sanity, but the prospect for the majority is not rosy. Such corrupted cynics are as likely to stand on the oppressors' side here as they do elsewhere.

The testing of would-be revolutionaries goes on in periods of lull as well as of action, and in a lull the tasks to be met are if anything harsher. The SWP and SL have miserably failed. Every great event of world history occurs twice, said Marx; the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. So it is with the collapse of Trotskyism in the face of proletarian defeats; the reciprocal collapse of today's pseudo-Trotskyism is a vile joke. The gain for the working class is that two of the more rotten pretenders to working class leadership have openly proven themselves to be the traitors they are. ■