

There's trouble in "the Trend" these days. The former New Lefties who several years ago baptized themselves the "anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist trend"—because they don't like either Russia ("revisionist") or China ("dogmatist")—are finding out that double-negative politics lead nowhere. As the Peking Stalinists developed their anti-Soviet alliance with U.S. imperialism during the late '70s, the "Trend" picked up disillusioned Maoists who felt uncomfortable walking hand-in-hand with the bloody butchers of Indochina. But as the Carter/Reagan Cold War drive heats up, they have found fence-sitting an increasingly impossible position. Today the trend of the Trend is clearly slouching toward Moscow. And No. 1 trend-setter is Irwin Silber, former associate editor of the *Guardian* and long-time RCA Victor mascot of Moscow Stalinism.

Two years ago Silber split from the *Guardian* to form his "National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs" (NNMLC). The clubs have since been replaced by the looser form of discussion groups, study projects and forum series sponsored by his *Line of March* journal. While Silber calls for "rectification" of the disoriented "Marxist-Leninist" milieu, the Trend's other main pole around the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC) calls for "fusion" with the everyday struggles of the working class. This was embodied in the so-called Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center (OCIC), formed by assorted Maoist local collectives in 1978. But lately the OCIC has undergone a process of self-mutilation in the form of Stalinist "white chauvinism" trials which boomeranged and sparked mass resignations. Many of the departees are now leaning toward Silber's *Line of March* (LOM).

Particularly with Silber's present political line, someone unfamiliar with the American left might think the "Trend" and the Spartacist League (SL)

Ex-Maoists On the Road to Moscow



Irwin Silber

WV Photo

Where Is the "Trend" Going?

major force in the struggle against imperialism."

Of the Trend one can truly say, "left in form, right in essence."

There is another crucial difference as well. Although the politics of the hard Maoist and ex-Maoist Stalinist organizations—Mike Klonsky's Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (CP-ML), Jerry Tung's Communist Workers Party (CWP), Bob Avakian's Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), Nelson Peery's Communist Labor Party (CLP), Milt Rosen's Progressive Labor Party (PLP)—are profoundly counter-revolutionary, their cadre are far more

first time Chinese foreign policy utterly repelled broad radical sentiment. In particular, black radicals and even liberals instinctively solidarized with the Angolan nationalists and Cubans fighting the armed forces of apartheid imperialism. Whatever sympathy American black militants had for Maoism was killed along with white-supremacist South Africa's commandos on the Angolan battlefield. And the *Guardian's* turn to critical Maoism was marked by the departure of its long-time Peking loyalist, Carl Davidson. Henceforth, the "independent radical news-weekly" took a posture of "comradely criticism" toward China, but had no independent policy of its own.

When Peking attacked Vietnam in early 1979 in collusion with the United States, *Guardian* editor Jack Smith could only throw up his hands in despair. Commenting "evenhandedly" on the Chinese invasion of Soviet-aligned Vietnam and Hanoi's invasion of Pol Pot's Cambodian land of death, a front-page headline lamented, "End Wars in Indochina" (*Guardian*, 7 March 1979). Rebellious against this middle-of-the-road policy, Irwin Silber resigned from the editorial board. In a pamphlet, "The War in Indochina," he proclaimed, "Today, China's international line and actions represent a greater concession to U.S. imperialism than the Soviet Union ever dared propose." His call for complete political solidarity with the "genuine Marxist-Leninist" Vietnamese leadership was Silber's bridge back to the Moscow camp.

Afghanistan soon made it clear that this was the real content of Silber's call for a "rectification of the general line of the US communist movement." Mao clinking glasses with Nixon while B-52s carpet bombed Hanoi may have made New Left Maoists queasy; with Angola and the China-Vietnam war many of them passed from critical Maoism to becoming Stalinoid lost souls wandering in the no man's land between Russia and China. And here was the USSR supporting a leftist regime under attack by a gang of Islamic clerical reactionaries backed by U.S. imperialism and the Peking bureaucracy. Silber commented:

"Therefore, the Soviet leadership frequently *does* support revolutionary struggle as a way to weaken its major foe—always carefully weighing the possible consequences if it should go too far in confronting the U.S." "In many of the crucial confrontations with imperialism (i.e., Vietnam, Angola, Zimbabwe, Palestine, etc.), the Soviet Union winds up on the correct

side of the barricades."

—Irwin Silber, "Afghanistan—The Battle Line Is Drawn"

Silber made his mark by seizing on the Cold War uproar over Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as the moment for the soft/critical/ex-Maoists' crossing of the Ussuri on the road back to Moscow.

Irwin Silber and the Guardian Tendency

As indicated by its wishful self-designation, "the Trend" likes to present itself as a new, broad, dynamic current in the American left. This is a completely false picture. When one speaks of the Trend, one is basically talking about Silber's *Line of March*, not simply because it is the largest and most dynamic group. In the midst of the disillusioned, disoriented "M-L" milieu, Silber is a man who knows where he wants to go. He knows, because he's been there. For over three decades the *Guardian* has represented a relatively defined radical/liberal audience. It has sought to be the voice of the fellow traveler, the petty-bourgeois wing of a (non-existent) popular front. And Silber is now calling the tune because he first and most clearly recognized that rad/lib stomachs were too weak for Peking's increasingly unpopular front with U.S. imperialism.

It is anything but a historic accident that the *Guardian* originated as the organ of the Progressive Party of Henry Wallace. In 1948 there was a bourgeois popular-front breakaway movement, for which the Communist Party (CP) provided the organization and troops, around FDR's naive and quixotic former Democratic vice president. Volume 1, Number 1 of the *National Guardian* was dated 18 October 1948, in the heat of Wallace's presidential campaign. Its editorial statement stressed the paper's continuity with the liberal politics of the Roosevelt period:

"This editorial point of view will be a continuation and development of the progressive tradition set in our time by Franklin D. Roosevelt, and overwhelmingly supported by the American people in the last four elections."

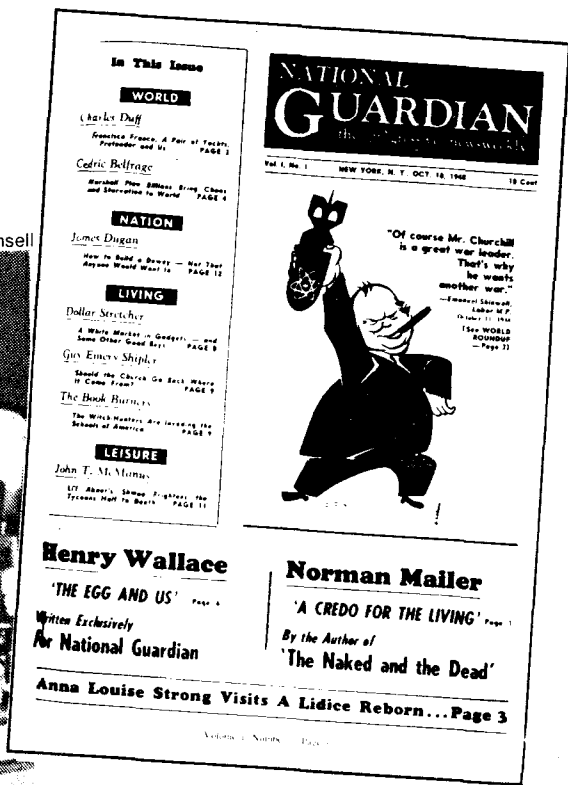
By 1950 Wallace had renounced the Progressive Party, supported "our boys" in the Korean War and made copious *mea culpas* for having been a "Commie dupe." After a disastrous showing by Progressive candidate Vincent Hallinan against Adlai Stevenson in 1952, the CP returned to its old policy of boring from within the Democratic Party.

A number of CP fellow travelers

1948:

First issue of the *National Guardian*, a mouthpiece for the Progressive Party campaign for Henry Wallace.

Marzani & Munsell



today occupy positions relatively close together on the political spectrum. Silber's support to Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, for instance, led Euro-communist Dorothy Healey to bait him for "Trotskyism." However, such a view is an optical illusion. The Trend set is moving from soft right-wing Maoism to fellow traveling with the Kremlin. For Silber this marks a return to his political stance of the 1950s. A *Guardian* (8 October 1979) "On the Left" column was not being demagogic when it commented:

"However, in reacting against China's reactionary foreign policy, LOM has increasingly dropped the struggle against revisionism and tends more and more to view the Soviet Union as a

serious-minded than the trendy Trenders. What separates the "Trend" from the Spartacist League is not just or even primarily our Trotskyist world analysis (which we suspect they crib for use against Maoist opponents). Rather it is our willingness to swim hard against the stream of prevailing radical/liberal public opinion. This Bolshevik hardness they see as "sectarianism." Thus the main components of the Trend are centrally defined by Menshevik-type anti-vanguardism.

The "Trend" dates its origins from Peking's support to the CIA-engineered South African invasion of Angola in 1975-76. Angola was the first fruit of Maoist China's alliance with Washington against the Soviet Union, and the

associated with the Progressive Party and the American Labor Party (ALP) in New York—Hallinan, *National Guardian* co-editor James Aronson, Paul Sweezy—dissented from this policy. This did not represent a more leftist impulse compared to the Communist Party, simply a more freelancing style. William Z. Foster's demoralized CP labeled McCarthy fascist and prepared to take a dive. But how can a milieu of fellow travelers operate in semi-clandestinity? This would require a discipline and commitment utterly alien to them. Without CP backing the moribund Progressive Party and ALP folded entirely, but the Hallinan/Aronson group maintained the paper and the politics. The *Guardian* came to see itself as the candle of nostalgia for the popular front in the dark night of McCarthyism.

This amorphous popular-front literary politics of the *National Guardian* ("the Progressive Newsweekly" as it then called itself) on a journalistic level was reflected by Sweezy's *Monthly Review* on an academic level. Both catered to the largish CP periphery and saw themselves as somewhere within the world Stalinist movement. The paper served as the "collective organizer" not of a communist vanguard, but of what editors Cedric Belfrage and Aronson referred to in a chapter heading of their book as "The Extended *Guardian* Family":

"As radical America became more and more an undefined ghetto, our advertising columns were modestly swollen by inmates who depended on taking in each other's washing."

—*Something to Guard: The Stormy Life of the National Guardian, 1948-1967*

Soon they were "peddling coffee tables, Guatemalan skirts, 'Kantwet' baby beds"; later came the *Guardian* picnics, tours, etc. Insofar as they had a political perspective at all, they were waiting for (or at any rate hoping for) a new and more successful version of the Progressive Party.

In the early/mid-'60s, the *Guardian* began to favor the "Third World" Stalinist regimes—Castro's Cuba, Mao's China, Ho's Vietnam—as against Moscow. (Here again the parallelism with the *Monthly Review* holds.) Wilfred Burchett, the *Guardian's* former Moscow correspondent, turned up in Hanoi, and the paper gradually took on many characteristics of the New Left: Third Worldism, black nationalism, sectoralist politics in the U.S. This gave it an entrée to the new radical generation, in more than a few cases the sons and daughters of old Stalinists and fellow travelers, who were looking for a militant alternative to the stodgy Khrushchev/Brezhnev bureaucracy.

In February 1968 there was a palace coup in the *Guardian* offices, and the insurgents declared their solidarity with



Der Spiegel

the Vietnamese guerrilla fighters. In order to abolish hierarchy the "new *Guardian* collective" demolished former editor Aronson's office with an axe. But real control was in the hands of mod-rad journalist Jack Smith who brought in writers from SDS and the "underground press." Irwin Silber signed on a few months later as "cultural editor" (he had earlier published the folk music magazine *Sing Out*) and eventually became the paper's political guru. The "new *Guardian*" declared itself to be part of the "Marxist-Leninist" movement. This was, of course, *de rigueur* in New Left radical circles at the time, as even English professors were waving Mao's Little Red Book. In the absence of a genuine popular front and lacking an established Stalinist party in the U.S. to identify with, the distinction between vanguard party and "progressive" fellow traveler was unclear. In actuality, the basic nature of the *Guardian* tendency did not change, as subsequent developments showed.

In the wake of the 1969 split in SDS, the various Maoist tendencies and collectives regrouped themselves into competing "M-L" vanguards: Klonsky's October League, Avakian's Revolutionary Union, Peery's Communist League. (Indeed, many of the *Guardian's* new staff members soon departed on their way to joining various left parties, including the Spartacist League.) But the *Guardian's* role in all this was to maintain that such "party-building" formations were "premature." The more serious Maoists in the early 1970s were not especially concerned with Silber & Co.'s positions on the nature of the Soviet Union, the power struggles in China, the black question, etc.—positions which were ill-defined, tenta-

tive and changeable. What Silber was known for, what he was really "hard" about, was opposition to the formation of any Leninist vanguard party.

This was not simply a matter of dilettantism or personal softness. From its inception as the voice of the Progressive Party, the *Guardian* has been the expression of American popular frontism *par excellence*. Silber himself left the Communist Party together with the right-wing opposition led by *Daily Worker* editor John Gates. The Gatesites concluded on the basis of Khrushchev's "secret report" to the CPSU 20th Congress and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution not only that Stalinism was bankrupt, but the future lay in Democratic Party liberalism. Silber's *Guardian* looked forward to the creation not of a communist vanguard party, but rather of a broad "radical" party embracing even left-wing bourgeois politicians (analogues of Henry Wallace) and trade-union bureaucrats, as well as self-styled "Leninists."

So what are Irwin Silber's credentials for leading a "Marxist-Leninist" organization? Far and away the most important thing about him is that for years he has passed himself off as a "Marxist-Leninist," but for the past quarter century has made a science out of fellow traveling—first with "Uncle Joe," Nikita, Fidel, then Mao and now once again back to Brezhnev.

"Rectification" versus "Fusion"

The *Guardian's* popular-frontist opposition to a would-be Leninist vanguard party created a natural bloc between it and various localized New Left Maoist collectives—such as the PWOC, the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective, the Potomac Socialist Organization—which for their own particular reasons had stood outside the "party-building" process of the early/mid-1970s. This anti-"vanguardism" is the real origin of the Trend, whatever positions were developed later on. As we noted in our article "The Maoists United Will Never Be Repeated":

"In general those New Left collectives which did not adhere to serious party formations by the end of the Maoist regroupment period of the early 1970s degenerated into hardened circle-spirit Menshevik groups. Cliques, local ultra-parochialism, extreme hostility to Marxist theory and program and sub-reformist activism became the norm. The very existence of these collectives represented a contradiction. As self-proclaimed 'Marxist-Leninists,' they were formally committed to building a centralized party; in practice they rejected such a formation."

—*WV* No. 183, 25 November 1977

It is enough to list the political backwaters where the collectives subsist—Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Tucson, Eugene, Oregon, etc.—to understand that they are New Left holdovers preserved in a time capsule by their isolation.

1978:

Guardian sits on the fence when China invades Vietnam. Silber resigns and looks to Moscow.



But even for these left-wing mugwumpers, some form of national ties is useful if only as a pretense to politics. So in February 1978 some 30 "M-L" collectives got together under PWOC leadership to form the Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center. The OCIC was based on 18 points of mush-mouthed generalities—for socialism, against capitalism, for the working class, against the CP, fight racism/sexism/opportunism—plus the obligatory "Trotskyism equals bourgeoisie," the "main enemy is US imperialism" (against Pekinese running dogs yapping about the "polar bear"), and the real political core: "fusing of the communist movement with the class struggle." In platitudes inherited from their strange encounter with Maotse-tung thought, this is the PWOC/OCIC "fusion" line—that all questions can be resolved through immersion in the daily struggles of the proletariat.

Over the next two years there was a running crossfire in the pages of the *Guardian* between Silber's "rectificationists" and the "fusionists" led by PWOC's Clay Newlin. The mutual charges were usually correct, though understated. Newlin would repeat over and over "practice is primary," and issue such polemical gems as:

"For the simple reason that as soon as one understands the full meaning of essence as organizing principle—particularly its indication of the role of essence as the pivot of connection between the basic features of a process—one can easily expose the idealism inherent in the rectificationist formulation of the essence of party-building. Whereas 'essence means particularity' tends to obscure that idealism."

—*Organizer*, August 1980

Apparently Newlin is seeking to invent a new Kantian category, the jabberwock imperative! But the PWOC honcho gets some good digs in against Silber, whose perpetual "pre-party period" (PPP) excludes actual "party-building" as "premature." According to Silber:

"The particularity of organization in the pre-party period (ignored by the leading organizations of the new communist movement) means that all organizations must be conscious of their limitations...."

"The all-sided form in a period without a material basis fostered the tendency toward organizational competition, the drive for organizational hegemonism, and the sectarian characteristics of the period."

—NNMLC, "Developing the Subjective Factor" (May 1979)

No material basis—in 1979, 62 years after the Russian Revolution?! But then the kind of party a "serious" Silber would build could have nothing in common with the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. Rather than a communist vanguard it would be another Klonsky-type "party" which can only be an obstacle to proletarian revolution.

Initially, many Trenders saw the

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1968:

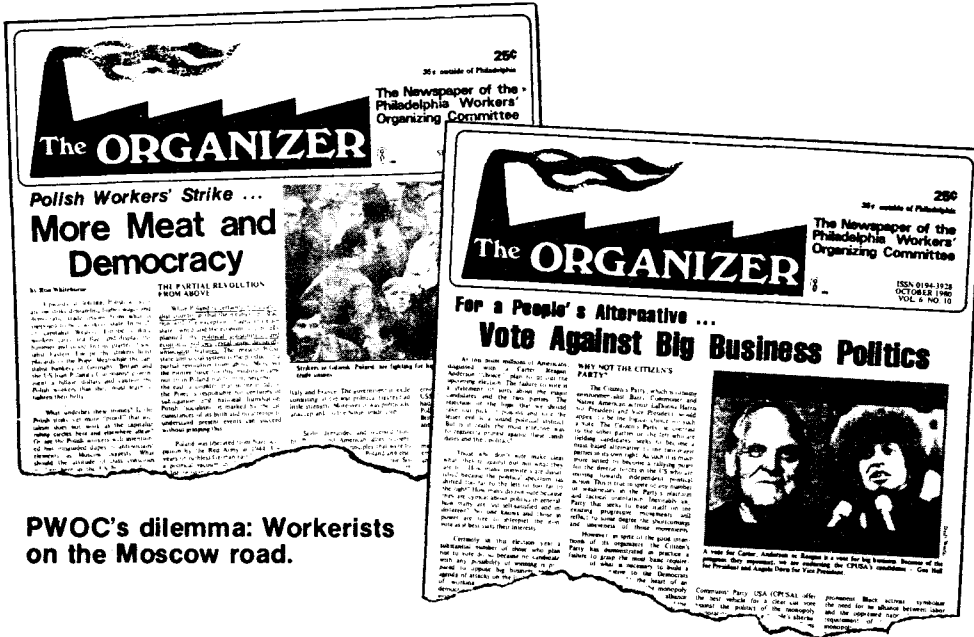
First issue of the "new" "Independent" Guardian marks the shift to Maoist/New Left radical milieu. Without a popular front the Guardian traveled with the popular.

"Trend"...

(continued from page 7)

PWOC/OCIC as the more serious pole. They went into the unions, actually tried to make something out of the hodge-podge collectives. But in the last six months OCIC has experienced massive internal hemorrhaging as a result of a seemingly bizarre "anti-white chauvinism campaign." Was this a throwback to late-'60s New Left guilt-tripping about "white skin privilege"? But then why such an exodus? The resignation/expulsion list reportedly includes the entire Tucson, Minneapolis and Eugene, Oregon collectives, fragmentation of the Potomac Socialist Organization, as well as half of the Bay Area Workers Committee and 40 percent all told of OCIC's western region. Newlin recently admitted that "approximately 100" people had "voluntarily quit" the PWOC/OCIC.

An "Open Letter to the Party Building Movement" signed by 50-plus dissidents denounced Newlin's campaign as a cynical maneuver: "It is employing opportunist methods to whip the cadre into line and eliminate all opposing views rather than face political struggle on the fundamental questions before our movement head-on." Surprise! "White chauvinism" witchhunts have a hoary tradition in the American Stalinist movement, being used to harden up the membership as far back as 1931. This time around it was no doubt intended to divert attention from—or scapegoat the ranks for—the OCIC collectives' failure to go anywhere with their low-level economist organiz-



PWOC's dilemma: Workerists on the Moscow road.

ing. It always worked fine before, but when PWOC tried it the result was a giant fiasco. Newlin asks:

"What kind of communist movement is it that when challenged to combat white and petty-bourgeois chauvinism in its ranks suffers not only extensive opposition, but even a mass of resignations."
—Organizer, December 1980

No kind, of course. Behind this so-called "white flight" from the OCIC is the fact that the collectives are not made up of Stalinist cadre but of soft New Leftovers. When bureaucratic strong-arm tactics are used on these fellow travelers (from the Russian term *sputnik*), instead of abjectly confessing many just spin out of orbit. So the attempt to hammer this Menshevik mush into a vanguard party predictably failed (this sure looks like the death

knell for the OCIC). In any case, a low level of class struggle is hardly favorable to workerist groups, and the force of world events is making itself felt even on these committed parochialists. Four years ago they could perhaps bury themselves in the latest Philadelphia garbage strike and dismiss such questions as Angola as having no relevance on the shop floor. But with the post-Afghanistan Cold War drive and Reagan in the White House, it is impossible to ignore international issues in the plants, particularly the all-important Russian question.

Afghanistan, Poland and the Soviet Union

The PWOC/OCIC Stalinoid workerists have been forced out of their ostrich

holes and are now stumbling empirically from position to position, trying to orient themselves by keeping an eye on the "main enemy." Reluctantly they came out for Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. A few months later they enthusiastically backed the Communist Party's Hall/Davis election campaign, praising in particular the fact that the CP platform doesn't call for socialism. On the other hand, they hailed the Polish strikes in August for "More Meat and Democracy." However, in September the PWOC declares, "The political thrust of the movement is predominantly progressive," while the next month a more contradictory verdict is returned:

"The demands won by the workers, while registering important democratic gains for the working class, also create political space for forces that are basically hostile to socialism or at the very least oppose those policies necessary to move Poland forward. This includes the powerful Catholic Church, much of the dissident community and elements of the peasantry."
—Organizer, October 1980

But just what is to be done to "move Poland forward"? Where does the PWOC stand vis-à-vis the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy?

That, of course, is the heart of the question, the one they can't escape. "Poland is certainly not a capitalist country," writes the PWOC. What is it then? They don't say. This confusion is expressed even more elaborately in a lengthy double-talking treatise by the academic-Eurocommunist Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective:

"We do not believe that there are no significant restraints on the growth and reproduction of capitalism in Poland, nor do we find that a new bourgeoisie

Anti-Klan Network Doesn't Fight Fascism

"New strategies" trumpets the conference call of the "National Anti-Klan Network" (NAKN) for the meeting in Washington, D.C. at the end of January. But what is the strategy of NAKN "to counter the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and racist violence"? It is a very old strategy in fact, a very treacherous strategy, and one which even in the short period of the Anti-Klan Network's existence has proved it can only stand in the way of efforts to actually stop the race terrorists, who are acting with increasing boldness and frequency from coast to coast.

The Anti-Klan Network's grand strategy, like the strategy of the Communist Party (CP), is captured in the slogan, "Ban the Klan." Simply stated, it is a strategy for reliance on the capitalist state to stop fascism and racism, an open appeal to legalistic liberalism, passivity and sometimes outright cowardice. Even as the cops and courts protect the KKK/Nazis while victimizing the left and anti-Klan demonstrators, these "Klan banners" continue to call on the armed bodies of the capitalist state to reform themselves into anti-fascist fighters. Even if these reformists are successful in getting some "banning" laws passed (which is highly unlikely at present), history as well as the ABCs of Marxism show that these laws will be used against the left, not the fascists. Quite a "strategy": if it loses, it loses; if it wins, it loses; and in the meantime its propaganda disorients, demoralizes and debilitates forces which may be trying to find a road to struggle.

But the NAKN strategy is not just an ineffective way to fight fascist terror. It is not just that it doesn't work. It is not intended to fight fascism at all. Those who attend the Washington conference will hear again the tired old call for "the broadest possible unity" to "ban the Klan." But these are code words for the strategy to get behind the "progressive" bourgeoisie. The real strategy behind the "fight the right" rhetoric is to help the Democratic Party shore up its tattered image as the party of "the

people" now in loyal opposition. It is appropriate that the Washington conference builds toward the address by black liberal Democrat John Conyers.

Don't just take our word for it. As Mao used to say, "No investigation, no right to speak." So let's look at the record to see what the "new strategy" is in practice. There is practically no Anti-Klan Network practice on the East Coast. But on the West Coast, particularly the Southern California Anti-Klan Network run by Irwin Silber's front group, National Anti-Racist Organizing Committee (NAROC), we can find the strategy in full bloom. What did the Southern California AKN do when Klansman Tom Metzger campaigned for race terror on the Democratic ticket in San Diego? They picketed the Democratic Party headquarters in Los Angeles, chanting "Democratic Party take a side against the right-wing tide." That the Democratic Party was and is instrumental in creating the "right-wing tide" and the climate for Metzger is unthinkable for these reformists.

The Southern California Anti-Klan Newsletter spells out the strategy:

"To stop Metzger, the government, the Democratic Party, and the media must join in a united effort with anti-Klan forces. People in the public eye must take a stand against open and institutionalized racism. The Democratic Party should close its ranks to racism and fight it forcefully."

To attempt to fight the Klan through or with the Democratic Party is criminally insane and a betrayal of the blacks, Latins, Jews, unionists and others targeted by the fascist killers. The party of the Dixiecrats, "ethnic purity" Carter and racist NYC mayor Koch is the key ruling party of racist, capitalist America!

But there is another strategy, one that can work—the strategy of class struggle. Not little bands of leftists in adventurist substitutions, nor calls upon the state to "ban the Klan." The enormous power of labor and blacks must be mobilized to smash the KKK/Nazis. But when faced

with such mobilizations to actually stop the Klan, the Anti-Klan Network actively tried to sabotage them. In San Francisco the Nazis said they would "celebrate Hitler's birthday" last April 19 with a rally at the Civic Center. The Spartacist League then initiated a united-front demonstration called for the same time and same place for all who were willing to come out and stop the Hitler-loving scum in their tracks. The Anti-Klan Network said no. They along with the Communist Workers Party formed the "Anti-Klan/Nazi Coalition," went begging to SF mayor Dianne Feinstein to "ban the Klan" and forswore any attempt to confront the Nazis.

What happened? Some 1,200 trade unionists, socialists and community people came out to the SL-initiated April 19 Committee Against Nazis (ANCAN) demonstration which was endorsed by 35 Bay Area union leaders and nine local unions. ANCAN made sure there were no Nazis marching in SF that day. The "Coalition" held their own little "educational" rally blocks away, where they could be sure of staying safe and sound. Later the Coalition was forced by internal pressure to make a damning "self-criticism" at a public meeting in Oakland last July 12:

"We thought the only people who would come to that [the SL-initiated demonstration] were basically the people who may be in this room and a few others... Now, we may have been wrong... we did not bring a lot of mass elements to our rally..."

"We did have some struggle inside [the Coalition] where the rightist line of a fear of any confrontation with the Nazis convinced people to stay far enough away. That was a rightist line that we all fell to, and that's got to be an honest self-criticism." [our emphasis]

—Maoists Admit: 'Fear of Confrontation with Nazis,'
WF No. 261, 25 July 1980

So on April 19 there were two sharply counterposed strategies—take your pick.

The Anti-Klan Network's bright "new" strategy? At a January 8 forum in

the Bay Area, a speaker for Irwin Silber's *Line of March* "essentialized the correct response" to rising fascist terror as "the legacy of George Dimitrov and the analysis of the Seventh World Congress" (of the Stalinized Third International). It was this 1935 Congress which blessed the popular-front alliance of class collaboration with the "democratic" bourgeoisie under Dimitrov's misnamed "United Front Against Fascism." But it was Trotsky who called for genuine united-front action based on the powerful organizations of the working class to smash the fascist terrorists. The leadership of the Stalinists and the social-democratic parties had already paralyzed the struggle of the working class. And it was when Hitler came to power without having to fire a single shot, despite the presence of a mass, influential Stalinist party, that the Third International became unredeemable in the eyes of the most class-conscious workers. It is against that historic betrayal that Trotsky began to build the Fourth International.

Now, as then, there are only two fundamental strategies on the left to fight fascism: the dead end of reformism and the hard road of revolution. Reformists of every stripe have at their hard core a strategy of class collaboration to reform the capitalist state. The Stalinist tradition of the popular front adopts the slogan: "Ban the Klan." The reformists of the Socialist Workers Party tail the civil-libertarian bourgeoisie calling for "free speech for fascists." While the Silberites begged the Democratic Party to cleanse itself of Tom Metzger, the SWP debated the KKK Democrat. Both reformist strategies despair of working-class/black action. Turning to the bourgeoisie they turn away from the most urgent task: to mobilize the power of labor and blacks to smash the KKK/Nazis as part of the struggle for socialist revolution. This is the strategy to finally banish the threat of fascism from the face of the earth—that is the uncompromising Trotskyist program of the Spartacist League. ■

has been created which holds state power as a class... Poland may not be capitalist, but that in no way minimizes the very serious problems with which it is faced."

—Theoretical Review,
November-December 1980

In contrast, a *Line of March* spokesman simply condemned the Polish strikes and supported the bureaucracy: "The government's policy of opposition to independent trade unions was correct. The line of the Soviet Union which saw the settlement as a retreat was correct. The tendency toward capitalist restoration will be exacerbated" (*Guardian*, 17 September). So for all Silber's talk of Moscow still being "revisionist headquarters," he has nothing to say to the Polish working class except that they should once again obey their Stalinist masters!

As Trotskyists we emphatically defended Soviet intervention against imperialist-aided Islamic reaction in Afghanistan ("Hail Red Army!" was our famous headline), and we have loudly warned against the capitalist-restorationist danger in Poland, calling for solidarity of Polish workers with the Russian proletariat. If and when it comes to military defense of the revolutionary gains of the deformed workers states, we shall be at our posts. But in the contradictory situation created by the Baltic strikes, we do not write off the Polish working class, consigning them to the camp of clerical nationalism. The key task for a revolutionary (Trotskyist) vanguard in Poland would be to *split* the new union movement, winning over the mass of workers from the Catholic church-led forces. The PWOC workerists have no program for such an independent struggle for communist leadership, and to a dyed-in-the-wool fellow traveler like Silber it is literally inconceivable.

Silber does admit, however, that at issue in polemics over Afghanistan (and Poland) is really the role of the Soviet Union, and he makes the obvious point: "In order to assess the actions of the USSR, one needs first to determine what kind of society it is and what general policy or line guides its development." He contends that "despite serious shortcomings and deformations in the theory and practice of Soviet socialism, a capitalist counter-revolution has not been affected in the USSR" ("Afghanistan—The Battle Line is Drawn"). Silber has seized on American radicals' strong emotional attachment to Vietnam and capitalized on Afghanistan, where Moscow (for once) is supporting a clearly progressive cause. But barely critical support to "Soviet socialism" isn't going to be an easy pill for his ex-Maoist audience to swallow, as he realizes:

"In addition, this trend was deeply infected by the anti-communist prejudices of U.S. society in general and the New Left in particular, so that there existed in the anti-revisionist movement a ready audience for the wildest slanders which could be concocted about the Soviet Union."

—Bruce Occeña and Irwin Silber,
"Capitalism in the USSR? An Opportunist Theory in Disarray," *Line of March*,
October-November 1980

Hence the need for a "rectification movement" to overcome the anti-Soviet views in the "M-L" milieu, to bring the popular front back into kilter...with the Moscow camp.

So part of the polymorphous Trend is a Soviet Union Study Project, whose first publication is a new pamphlet, *The Myth of Capitalism Reborn: A Marxist Critique of Theories of Capitalist Restoration in the USSR*, by Michael Goldfield and Melvin Rothenberg. *Line of March* praises this "break-through theoretical work" whose political significance "can hardly be overstated," since it refutes "the two main theories advanced on behalf of the restoration thesis," those of Martin Nicolaus and Charles Bettelheim. This is sheer political dishonesty. You wouldn't know it from *LOM*, but Nicolaus' attempt to

prove Russia capitalist was first trumpeted from the pages of the *Guardian*, which ran it as a 28-part series from February to October 1975. And the associate editor and chief "theoretician" of the then-Maoist *Guardian* was today's great rectifier, Irwin Silber (who privately claimed to be "unconvinced" by Nicolaus). Moreover, the first, central refutation of Nicolaus' and Bettelheim's "restoration theses" was published by *Workers Vanguard* in the fall of 1976, later reprinted as the Spartacist pamphlet, *Why the USSR Is Not Capitalist*, many of whose arguments are repeated in the Trend pamphlet.

Goldfield and Rothenberg do not, however, answer the most basic questions facing revolutionaries. If there is "an enormous growth in bureaucracy" in the USSR, how do you get from there to the communist goal of the withering away of the state? The authors admit that their "break-through" pamphlet leaves out "the international role of the Soviet Union" and that it doesn't "represent a fully developed line on the Soviet Union." Concluding that Russia is not capitalist, something the bourgeoisie has known ever since 1917, they fail to say what Russia is. In contrast, Trotsky's analytical conclusion—that the Soviet Union is a bureaucratically degenerated workers state—and the programmatic consequence, his call for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic caste, are a Marxist guide to action. This is, in fact, the only coherent basis for intransigent defense of the degenerated/deformed workers states against imperialism and for communist opposition to both Moscow and Peking Stalinism.

Trotskyism: The Only Answer

While generally preferring to disappear contemporary Trotskyism, the Silberites are nonetheless forced to concede: "The great-power chauvinism of the Soviet Union (and subsequently China) lent new credence to Trotsky's long discredited opposition to building socialism in one country" (*Line of March*, May-June 1980). Long discredited opposition? The credibility (scientific validity) of a theory is the result of its predictive power. So where did this great-power chauvinism come from? As early as 1929, Trotsky predicted that the doctrine of "socialism in one country" would lead to national chauvinism not only within the Russian leadership but throughout the world Communist movement:

"If it is at all possible to realize socialism in one country, then one can believe in that theory not only after but also before the conquest of power... It will be the beginning of the disintegration of the Comintern along the lines of social-patriotism." [emphasis in original]

—The Third International After Lenin

Unlike the Maoists' truly discredited "theory" of the restoration of capitalism in Russia, Trotsky's analysis and program have stood the test of time, explaining as well the Stalin-Tito split, the Sino-Soviet dispute, the China-Vietnam war and the rise of Eurocommunism.

And what about China's reactionary alliance with U.S. imperialism, which certainly no one in the "Trend" anticipated. Eleven years ago, when Silber & Co. couldn't praise Mao's China enough, we wrote:

"At the present time, the Vietnam war and the extreme diplomatic and internal difficulties of the Chinese state have forced the Maoists to maintain greater hostility to imperialism and verbally disclaim the USSR's avowed policy of 'peaceful coexistence' while themselves peacefully coexisting with Japan. However, we must warn against the growing objective possibility—given the tremendous industrial and military capacity of the Soviet Union—of a U.S. deal with China. Should the imperialists adjust their policies in terms of their long run interests (which would take time, as such factors as U.S. public opinion would have to be readjusted), the Chinese would be as willing as the

Russians are at present to build 'Socialism in One Country' through deals with imperialism at the expense of internationalism."

—"Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League" (30 August 1969), *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part II, 30 August 1969

Only when empirical reality simply overwhelms him does Silber recognize the great-power chauvinism of the Chinese as well as the Russian regimes. Shortsightedness (always a hallmark of Stalinism) is hardly a qualification for revolutionary leadership.

But Silber has focused on a real contradiction: a whole generation educated in the New Left which is hostile to the Soviet Union, partly out of anti-Communism, as we have pointed out before, but also out of revulsion for the sellout Kremlin bureaucrats who starved the Vietnamese revolution of sophisticated weapons to face the U.S. terror bombers; who stood for "peaceful coexistence" while Mao and Castro called for "picking up the gun." Silber tries to lay claim to Vietnam and Cuba, the popular causes and symbols of struggle of yesteryear. But to bring the ex-'60s radicals to Brezhnev is a big hurdle to cross—this is the job of the "rectification movement" for a new "General Line." If Silber & Co. are gaining over the *Guardian* crowd it is because they have a clear line of march down the Moscow road. As for the collectives around the PWOC, they will doubtless remain mired in sub-reformist activism and parochial irrelevance.

It is truly unconscious irony that *Line of March* takes as its watchword the classic Marxist dictum that "its purpose is not just to understand the world, but to change it." For the Silberites have nothing to do with changing the world, even in terms of paper program. Their concept of program never goes beyond the vague hope that some element in the Russian or Chinese bureaucracy might "rectify" itself. Sort of a reverse Khrushchev—back to the "good old days" of Stalin and Beria, minus the "errors," of course. They don't fight for a communist party to carry out socialist revolution in the capitalist West; they aren't for a communist party to carry out an anti-bureaucratic political revolution in the Stalinist East. The Silberites, like the *Guardian*, simply put out a publication, hold forum series, start a few study projects: just a base to pressure the rad/lib milieu. They can "study" forever and it will lead to nothing. They cannot study the history of the Third International without examining the Stalin-Trotsky conflict. And this they seek above all to avoid. A party flows from program, and it is the revolutionary program of Trotskyism they refuse to confront.

Irwin Silber has come full circle, from Bulganin to Brezhnev. It would, however, be too bad if many of those radicals who broke with Chinese Stalinism over its connivance with American imperialism end up tailing the Kremlin betrayers they once rightly despised. The difference between the "Trend" and Trotskyism is the gulf between the communist perspective of a vanguard party leading a conscious working class to power and the non-perspective of finding the most "progressive" of the powers that be. As we stated in the introduction to our pamphlet *China's Alliance with U.S. Imperialism* (1976):

"It is not enough to dissent from the outright counterrevolutionary acts of Chinese foreign policy. It is not enough to support whatever forces appear to be battling imperialism or domestic reaction at any given moment. The counter-revolutionary policies emanating from Peking and Moscow must be destroyed at their root. And that root is the privileged bureaucracy which 'defends' collectivized (proletarian) property relations by intriguing with imperialism—in a word, Stalinism. It is the historic task of Trotskyism, and no other tendency, to lead the working class to the overthrow of the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies and place the enormous resources of the Sino-Soviet states totally in the service of world revolution." ■

Reagan Years...

(continued from page 5)

Catholic church. It reflects the fact that the present Polish state did not come about through an indigenous revolution, even a deformed one, but came with the baggage trains of the Red Army. It was imposed from the top down. There's the difference between the USSR and Poland, because the memory of the revolution in the USSR still exists. These dissidents who occasionally show up in Red Square really don't need the KGB to repress them. A lot of them are seen for what they are—the pro-imperialist ones—simply traitors, very unpopular.

Targeting the Communists

There are other pressures. Things are getting hot in the U.S.—people are getting shot. Greensboro—the acquittal of these Nazi murderers gives them the green light. Detroit [November 10] and [San Francisco] April 19—we were very serious about those demonstrations; we intended to march. We were quite prepared to take 400 or 500 arrests in Detroit and we were quite prepared to have a confrontation—not an adventure, but a confrontation with the Nazis should they show up. Because we didn't want them marching in San Francisco on April 19.

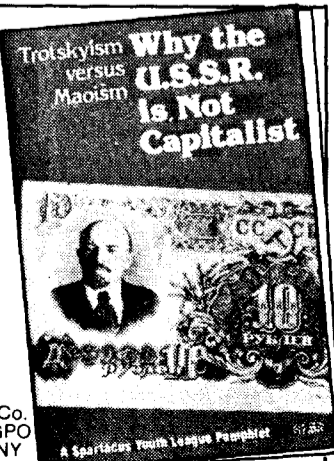
So things are getting more serious than they have been in the past. A sign of the times, of the rightward shift: so you can say anything about communists now, right? All across the country we're hearing it. In Detroit there was a fire at Wayne State in a room that the SYL—the Spartacus Youth League, our youth section—was going to have a forum in the next day. It was written on the blackboard, "Sparticus Revolution Begins" [sic]. It was a pretty bad fire, and a picture of Carter or somebody like that, some bourgeois notable, was purposely left half-burned on the floor. The student newspaper simply printed a story giving an account of this stuff that was a patent attempt to frame us up for arson.

Then in L.A., the *Daily Bruin*: there was a letter to the editor of the *Daily Bruin* that was written by some anti-Iranian rightist that ranted and raved about PL, the RCP, the Spartacus Youth League and these groups and what the California attorney general has to say about them. We thought, well, you know, it's possible we're in this report, but we didn't believe it. We got a copy and sure enough, there we were in it. Now this is a report on "Organized Crime in California, 1979," by the California attorney general George Deukmejian. And presumably it's supposed to deal with organized crime. But a lot of it is devoted to terrorism. This is "Part II, Terrorism: Summary, Political Terrorism, Prison Gangs in California, Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs..." This is the company we're in: the Mansons, the SLA, Hell's Angels, Mexican Mafia, the Aryan Brotherhood.

Presumably this is the sort of stuff that the lieutenants in the LAPD read before they brief their guys about dealing with the demonstration we called. And it's not even a "subversives" list. There are some people missing from here: SWP, CP.... It's essentially an

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