

Photo: AFL-CIO



Tom Kahn with Vladimir Bukovsky (center) and Theodore Bikel (right), then President of the Actors' Equity Association, at the 1977 AFL-CIO Convention in Los Angeles.

THE GALLANT WARRIOR: IN MEMORIAM TOM KAHN

by Eric Chenoweth

*"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers..."
Shakespeare, Henry V, Act IV, Scene III*

When the history of the Cold War is written, its heroes will not be only military men — those whose bravery and strategy usually win wars. Rather, the Cold War's heroes will include the intellectual warriors whose testimony and moral clarity kept alive the simple idea that it was necessary to oppose communism and that by doing so there was hope of freeing hundreds of millions of people from communism's grip.

In the West, they were few who carried the banner of anti-communism, who proudly accepted the sobriquet "cold warrior," and who developed the strategy and tactics for this war of ideas. It is surprising to realize how few there were. The struggle against communism was — and in Asia and Cuba remains — the single greatest and most prolonged human rights struggle of modern history. Only the resistance to Nazism in this century and the abolitionist crusade against slavery in the past century are comparable in moral scope.

Yet, it was not so long ago that the intellectual and political elite in the West — the Establishment — scoffed at such moral certitude. There was, to be sure, no doubt as to the necessity of overthrowing the dictatorial regimes of Chile and South Africa, and of using all manner of economic and diplomatic means to that end. But for the Soviet Union, the East Bloc, China, and the dozen other communist countries — countries where victims were counted not in distinct thousands but in the millions — the Establishment seemed prepared to explain, at length, the necessity for accommodation, exchange, trade, investment, peaceful dialogue, and treaties of all sorts.

The Editors of Uncaptive Minds mourn the death of Tom Kahn. Kahn devoted his life to the struggle for human rights and democracy. He was also one of the most ardent supporters of Solidarity in the United States. As Assistant to the President and later International Affairs Director of the AFL-CIO, Kahn helped orchestrate Western efforts to sustain the independent union during the bleak years of martial law. Tom Kahn was unstinting in his encouragement to others, and the Editors of Uncaptive Minds gratefully remember the guidance he gave both the Committee in Support of Solidarity and its successor organization, the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe. His death is a sad loss for all. Uncaptive Minds editor Eric Chenoweth remembers Tom Kahn in the following article.

To advocate a hard line towards communism during the '60s, '70s, and even early '80s required intellectual courage — especially for those on the left of the political spectrum. Tom Kahn had such courage.

He was a gallant cold warrior, a man who relished political battle and who never shied from a fight over right and wrong, especially when it came to defending democracy and promoting its spread. Although a polemicist with a rapier tongue, he argued with a style and grace that won the respect of all but the most boorish. And while a man of intellect and brilliance, he shied from the term intellectual. For Tom Kahn, the world of the intelligentsia was too removed from reality. He was a man of action, of engagement in the politics of his time; his was a world where ideas had consequences.

Tom Kahn died on March 27, 1992 from AIDS, at the age of 53. Born in September 1939 into a world on the brink of war, he died, too young, with the Cold War won and the world moving away from the precipice. In an unusual life, he did much to make that happen.

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Tom Kahn was a committed social democrat to the end. Unlike many who devoted themselves to anti-communism, he began and ended his political career as a man on the left, whose political impulses were usually radical. At the core of his beliefs was a commitment to extend the boundaries of democracy and freedom. At a time when most people believed that communism had become a permanent fixture on the world scene, this commitment led him to advocate a policy of actively promoting democratic change in the communist world.

He began as a revolutionary socialist in a group called the Independent Socialist League (ISL) led by Max Shachtman. Shachtman was a former leader of the communist and Trotskyist parties who had split from his past associations to become perhaps the most fervid and certainly the most central anti-communist theoretician on the international Left. In a significant contribution to Marxist theory, he described the Soviet Union as a new form of class society, a "bureaucratic collectivist state." Milovan Djilas, writing from his experience within such a system, would later render a similar judgment in his book *The New Class*.

Max's followers were known as Shachtmanites within the American Left and in various radical circles world-wide. The Shachtmanites were a unique band; they were devoted socialists whose reputation was founded on their ardent anti-communism.

In his essay "Max Shachtman: His Ideals and His Movement," Tom Kahn describes the first time he saw the man who became his mentor:

It was shortly after the Hungarian uprising when, at the invitation of some friends, I found myself in a dingy and smoky room packed with several hundred people.

They fell quiet as the speaker was introduced and moved to the podium — a bald, clean-shaven man who, I remember thinking at the time, looked like Nikita Khrushchev....Max had an incredible voice. It was capable of a kind of music — Beethovenian. It would sneak up on you in soft whispers, gently threading your uncollected thoughts together, and then burst forth, with powerful resonance, filling up the room and tingling your spine.

I still remember the portrait of horror Max painted that night — of rolling Russian tanks, of defenseless Hungarian workers and students fighting back with stones, of a heroic people's crushed hopes, and of our democratic socialist links to those hopes. Freedom, democracy — they were not mere abstractions; they were real and could therefore be destroyed. Communist totalitarianism was not merely a political force, an ideological aberration that could be smashed in debate; it was a monstrous physical force. Democracy was not merely the icing on the socialist cake, it was the cake — or there was no socialism worth fighting for.

I do not remember whether that was the night I signed up. But it was the night I became convinced.

Tom never lost his conviction that anyone who considered himself on the Left was duty-bound to oppose communism ferociously. The Shachtmanites did not connect communism to the Left — as did many European social democrats and "Third Way" socialists — but rather to the "anti-left." As Tom described this view, communism was not in any way egalitarian; it was "a reactionary world force" and "a new form of class society even more brutal in its exploitation of the masses than capitalism had been in its most primitive phases."

It was easy for the Right to attack communism, but the Left always faced the problem of defining communism on the political spectrum. Weren't the means of production nationalized and thus socialized? Shachtman's theory of the "bureaucratic collectivist state" cut the Marxian Gordian knot. As Tom Kahn explained,

[Communism] was indeed anti-capitalism: it destroyed private ownership of the means of production. But it was not socialist. Whenever the means of production are nationalized — taken over by the state — the key question becomes: Who owns the state? In communist societies, in which the Party allows no opposition, the state is in effect the property of the Party. The Party and its apparatus thus come to constitute a new ruling class, in Marxian terms, by virtue of their particular relationship to the means of production. Workers cannot exercise social power through ownership of the means of production — they are propertyless.

This Marxist anti-communism was not merely a theory. For the Shachtmanites, it was a struggle. And thus anti-communism became their major field of activity. In their intellectual work, particularly in the journals *The New Internationalist* and *New America*, the Shachtmanites made a major contribution to stripping the communist movement of its intellectual respectability on the Left

— a respectability that had earlier led such publications as *The New Republic* and *The Nation* to support the Moscow purge trials and the Popular Front.

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Tom Kahn's earliest political engagement was in domestic, not international, affairs, above all in the civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s. Segregation and discrimination were the most salient injustices in America. The struggle for equal rights became the principle field of activity for radicals and liberals alike, and especially for the Shachtmanites, who at that time had joined the respectable Socialist Party in a move towards more mainstream social democratic politics. Tom Kahn and his friends devoted their youth to the struggle for equal rights and opportunities for blacks and other minorities in America. Tom, although slight, often put himself in physical danger as he manned barricades and organized marches, thus risking imprisonment and the hostility of white law enforcement officials. He was one of the few whites to attend the prestigious black institution Howard University, where he participated in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In Washington and New York, he helped organize some of the most important battles in the civil rights movement — including the Freedom Rides, the Sit-In Movement of the SNCC, and the Marches for Integrated Schools. The highpoint of Tom's career as a civil rights activist was the 1963 March on Washington, for which he was first assistant to Bayard Rustin, the March's organizer.

The March on Washington, which had been conceived by the civil rights and labor leader A. Philip Randolph, was a revolutionary act of non-violence. The March forced passage of the Civil Rights Act and other legislation that began to fulfill the promise of America's democracy for its minority citizens. Today, the March on Washington, particularly Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" oration, is one of the most widely recognized symbols worldwide for the non-violent struggle for democratic rights.

For Tom Kahn, the March and the subsequent civil rights victories — notwithstanding the difficulty of achieving equality in practice — reinforced his belief that change was possible through a radical application of democratic principles, an idea he took to his work in promoting democratic institutions and opposing totalitarian regimes.

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In the civil rights movement, Tom had his first significant experience with communists. The American Communist Party sought, both openly and clandestinely, to influence and manipulate the civil rights movement to its own ends, which were generally undemocratic and always in the service of the Soviet Union.

The American Communist Party was, however, waning fast. In the wake of Krushchev's revelations at the 20th Party Congress and the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution, the American party lost half its membership. But a more significant threat to democratic values was appearing on the horizon. The war in Vietnam and America's engagement in it were to throw the whole country off kilter, giving rise to the New Left. After the '60s, the liberal left would never be the same. The traditional political coalitions built in the New Deal and the early years of the Cold War came apart. The party of Truman became the party of McGovern, 1972's version of Henry Wallace. In this political maelstrom, Tom Kahn was continuously engaged in the war of ideas — ideas of great consequence for American political culture and foreign policy.

The key issue for Tom Kahn was the Democratic Party's retreat from anti-communism, and, simultaneously, the newly victorious Republican Party's adoption of a defeatist policy of coexistence. Both policy shifts signaled a disengagement from democratic principle and policy. If one believed in democracy, Tom held, anti-communism was a necessary corollary, for communism posed the single greatest threat to freedom. And if one was anti-communist, one had to advocate policies adequate to the task of containing, and ultimately defeating, the Soviet Union and China.

In response to Joseph McCarthy's red-baiting congressional hearings, the liberal left became more and more "anti-anti-communist." To be anti-communist was somehow to be anti-liberal, and certainly to be boorish. The liberal left distanced itself from the central issue, which was not McCarthy's brand of anti-communism, but communism itself. The phenomenon of "anti-anti-communism" was, however, nothing compared to the phenomenon of Radical Chic. Spawned by the New Left, Radical Chic was enamored with all things revolutionary, anti-capitalist, anti-establishment, and Third World. Here, radicalism took a new direction. The old CP was unacceptable; Stalin was passé. The New Left found what Kahn called a "new pole of attraction" in Cuba, Vietnam, and later Nicaragua, countries whose leaders had "more charisma than could be found in the plodding gerontocracy of the Soviet Politburo."

The New Left, led by the organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), became the center of the anti-war and counter-culture movements of the '60s and '70s. The SDS was an elitist organization that advocated a radical egalitarianism. The students rejected the "working class" and its institutions (such as the AFL-CIO) as reactionary. The New Left's revolution would be led by a vanguard of students and intellectuals. George Meany was the enemy, Herbert Marcuse the icon. Not surprisingly, the New Left came to adopt many of the same intellectual habits of the revolutionary vanguard that took power in Russia in 1917.

Tom Kahn, as director of the League for Industrial Democracy (from which the SDS originated) became one of the most prominent and most articulate critics of the new student movement. In the pages of *Commentary*, *Dissent*,

Partisan Review, and other prominent journals, Tom scoured the New Left and, later, its political cousin, the New Politics movement of George McGovern. Tom lambasted the New Left's and New Politics' elitism, their abandonment of the American labor movement, and their abandonment of anti-communism, once the hallmark of the liberal left coalition that brought such cold warriors as Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson to power.

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The experience Tom had gained in taking on student radicalism was to serve him well in the next stage of his career. In 1972, fresh off the failed presidential campaign of Henry "Scoop" Jackson, the last of the Democratic Party's great cold warriors, he was appointed Assistant to the President by the AFL-CIO's most noted cold warrior, George Meany. He also served in that position under Meany's successor, Lane Kirkland, until his appointment as Director of the AFL-CIO's International Affairs Department in 1986.

Tom's association with the trade union movement made perfect sense. For him (and the Shachtmanites), the AFL-CIO was America's mass social democratic institution. While communists and Third Way socialists had tried unsuccessfully to radicalize the American working class, the AFL-CIO had gone about the business of improving the living and working conditions of American workers — raising them to the highest level in the world. But there was something else for Tom Kahn: the AFL-CIO was also the only major liberal American institution to remain unwaveringly anti-communist. From the early '30s on, AFL-CIO leaders like George Meany, Jay Lovestone, and Irving Brown took the lead in combating Soviet attempts to subvert free trade unions — and, indeed, democracy — throughout the world.

Tom Kahn joined the AFL-CIO during the salad days of détente, the bipartisan policy which Nixon and Kissinger initiated, Ford and Kissinger continued, and Carter and Vance extended. It was a time of communist advances throughout the Third World, and, in the wake of Vietnam, of growing American disengagement abroad. Alone among America's major liberal institutions, the AFL-CIO fought the political tide.

It was not easy going. The Democratic Party and other liberal institutions were growingly hostile to the foreign policies and military expenditures needed to match the Soviet Union's expansionism and military build-up. The Nixon and Ford administrations were engaged in efforts to negotiate "peaceful coexistence." The business community lobbied heavily for détente policies that would open up trade and investment opportunities.

During this time, Tom Kahn helped craft much of the AFL-CIO's foreign policy and its domestic strategy for maintaining a credible anti-communist stance. When Gerald Ford refused to meet with Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Kahn recommended that Meany invite him to the AFL-CIO and provide him with a

national forum, one Solzhenitsyn used to give a stirring call for freedom. As editor of the *Free Trade Union News*, Kahn kept readers abreast of the struggle for democracy and free trade unionism in the communist world. In 1977, when the Carter White House would not meet with Vladimir Bukovsky, exiled in a trade for Soviet spies, George Meany had Kahn organize a national tour for him, which ended at the AFL-CIO convention. "Tell the truth about the 'workers' paradise,'" Meany told Bukovsky.

Kahn built political alliances for the AFL-CIO to conduct its foreign policy work. In 1977, with the League for Industrial Democracy, he launched an international campaign to defend the first free trade union in the Soviet Union, SMOT, and its leaders, who had been thrown into psychiatric hospitals. In 1979, Kahn helped organize, with Freedom House, the International Sakharov Hearings and the counter-Helsinki Conference, both of which helped give voice to opposition to the US's policy of not bringing up human rights issues at follow-up conferences of the Helsinki Final Act. These were just a few of the efforts undertaken to defend human rights activists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Most importantly, Tom was a rare ally and friend to the growing number of Soviet, Eastern European, Cuban, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Angolan, Chinese, Ethiopian and other dissidents from communism — people who were arguing desperately against the accommodationist policies of détente and for a serious US human rights and foreign policy. In the climate of the 1970s, these dissidents were shunned by government officials, politicians, and Establishment policy specialists. Tom Kahn was the person for them to see in Washington to get help and advice.

Like the dissidents, Tom believed détente could only reduce the chances for achieving peace and for advancing the democratic interests of workers. While the Sociological community spent its time trying to "understand the Soviet Union," he wrote,

The Soviet system is what it is. If we do not understand it well enough, we should try harder. It may be that it is not our understanding of the Soviets that should be changed in the interest of peace, but rather the Soviet system that needs to be changed — and that strategies for peace should have that as an objective.

Tom's views on foreign policy and the Soviet Union came to be associated with those of the influential "neo-conservatives" affiliated with the magazine *Commentary*. Previously colleagues in liberal and civil rights struggles, the neo-conservatives broke with the liberal left and the Democratic Party. While agreeing with many of the neo-conservatives' foreign policy prescriptions, Tom did not change his views on domestic policy and was discomfited by the neo-conservatives' break with the American labor movement, an institution they had supported in the culture wars with the New Left. But such disagreements did not, in Kahn's view, argue against maintaining a common anti-communist

front. Liberal-left critics thus vilified neo-conservatives and social democrats like Kahn with equal ferocity. It was a lonely time for anti-communists on the Left. With the election of Ronald Reagan, liberal anti-communists like Tom became lonelier still.

But 1980, as Tom Kahn wrote in a speech that December to Social Democrats, USA, was also "the year of Poland, glorious Poland, perhaps the central event of our lifetime." It was in the Polish struggle that Tom Kahn would again distinguish himself.

While not alone in hailing the workers' rebellion that gave rise to the Solidarity free trade union, Kahn immediately saw in it the initial buds of a democratic flowering throughout the Eastern bloc. Events in Poland confirmed Tom's growing belief in the potential of the dissident movement. His foresight stemmed from his continued adherence to the theories of Max Shachtman, whose Marxian anti-communism rested on a Marxian dialectic. In this view, the advance of democratic rights had tempered the revolutionary dialectic under capitalism; workers could exercise their power through the ballot box to gain control over the means of production, or at least to influence the distribution of wealth. But under communism, workers were completely powerless — for communism to change there had to be nothing less than a social revolution, one that stripped the Party of its control over the state and over the means of production. Reform of such a system, as advocated by most Sovietologists, was impossible; the only strategy for change in the Soviet bloc lay in "changing the Soviet system itself," something inconceivable to the Sovietologists, was nationality, much less the foreign policy community. At the heart of such a revolutionary change would be the working class, which at some point would rise up to unshackle the communist chains.

By 1980, after sixty-two years of Bolshevik repression and Soviet expansionism, the Shachtmanite scenario seemed a little far-fetched. But then in August 1980, the Polish workers' movement exploded on to the scene and seemed to give validity to the theory. Just as Tom and Shachtman before him had predicted, the workers rebelled and sought to gain democratic control over their lives through their own self-governing organization. Here was the first stage in the revolutionary movement that would topple communism. While some, fearing disruption of the status quo, were shocked at the developments, Tom argued tirelessly that peace and freedom depended on the success of the Polish workers, and, by extension, of the democratic forces in the Soviet bloc.

In his December 1980 speech to the Social Democrats, Tom laid out a foreign policy argument that guided his actions during the next ten years:

...serious American efforts should be directed not merely to frustrating Soviet expansionism but at attacking its roots in the totalitarian structure.... I believe our ultimate objective must be the dismantling, by non-nuclear means, of the Communist system. Others may disagree but they are then obliged to describe

their own view of the end for which this and unborn generations are asked to sacrifice. All else is twilight talk.

He added:

For if we do not, we are in effect saying to generations of young people that the preconditions for real peace are unattainable, that they have nothing to look forward to but interminable tension and continual military buildups threatening human survival.... It is one thing to tell young people that the road to peace and freedom is arduous and long; it is quite another to suggest that it stretches to nowhere.

Tom understood that such a policy was potentially dangerous, but he argued that such a risk was necessary. In 1983, at the height of the anti-nuclear movement, he defended this risk in a speech entitled "The Soviet Myth":

We must try to further the cause of liberty in communist countries by various means, including assistance to those behind the Iron Curtain who are struggling for a greater measure of freedom... [and] we must accept the fact that if we do these things we risk increased tension in the US-Soviet relationship.... Capitulation to the Soviets will bring relaxation of tension — but it is the relaxation of the graveyard. Tension attends creativity.

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The theory was the basis for creative action. There arose a whirlwind of activity by the AFL-CIO, as well as by the social democratic organizations that looked to Tom Kahn for leadership.

Lane Kirkland, who had succeeded George Meany in 1979, proposed to establish an AFL-CIO Polish Workers Aid Fund at the end of August 1980, even before the formal establishment of Solidarity; he assigned Tom Kahn the task of running it. Tom devised a strategy to support the Polish workers and organized a number of activities and demonstrations. The AFL-CIO raised \$300,000, which was used to purchase printing presses, typewriters, computers, and other necessary equipment for Solidarity.

The AFL-CIO's work was not highly popular with the Establishment, particularly the Carter White House. Secretary of State Edmund Muskie pressed the AFL-CIO not to send money or equipment, for fear of provoking a Soviet invasion. The AFL-CIO, already saddled with a reputation as a hopelessly retrograde and reactionary anti-communist organization, changed neither its policies nor its actions. It believed in the strength of worker organization and its centrality to democracy; there was a basic trade union imperative to help fellow workers. For the AFL-CIO, that principle was called solidarity.

The question whether or not the US should provide aid to Poland gave rise to a friendly but nonetheless consequential debate between *Commentary*

editor Norman Podhoretz and Tom Kahn in March 1981. The neo-conservatives had provided the intellectual spark behind the Reagan administration's reorientation of American policy away from détente, but they were nonetheless wary of the Polish revolution. Reflecting this unease about the situation in Eastern Europe, Podhoretz argued that the Soviets would not allow Solidarity to continue and thus any efforts at trying to help Solidarity or Poland would only end up helping the Soviet Union. It would also, he continued, detract the US from the essential task of rebuilding its military defenses and strengthening its foreign policy stance. Podhoretz concluded, finally, that the Soviet Union would not implode from the outer edges of the empire in, but rather explode from the core out. Kahn, on the other hand, put forward the thesis that Solidarity provided a model for revolutionary change in the communist world. It thus was imperative that the West support Solidarity so far as possible and heighten the dilemmas it posed for the Soviet Union. That could be done, in Kahn's view, by increasing the cost of intervention to the Soviets and offering the Polish government real incentives not to crack down on the democratic movement. Such a policy, he concluded, would induce an implosion of the Soviet bloc, beginning at the edges and eventually reaching the decrepit core.

The imposition of martial law seemed to end the debate in Podhoretz's favor. Poland was subjugated once again, even if the popular social movement was repressed by its own jailers and not by Soviet forces. The aid that was provided to Poland was absorbed into the Soviet bloc; the printing presses sent to Solidarity were confiscated and used by the reestablished official trade unions.

Kahn and Kirkland nevertheless believed that Solidarity had done irreparable damage to the foundations of communist rule. Time would settle the debate in Kahn's favor, they believed. So the AFL-CIO redoubled its efforts to help the underground movement that survived martial law's first blows. The large printing presses that had been confiscated were replaced by hundreds of mimeograph machines and small offsets that could better escape police detection. The AFL-CIO urged the US government to put maximum pressure on the Polish and Soviet regimes, through means such as calling in the Polish debt, and thus compel them to relegalize Solidarity.

The Establishment could not have disagreed more with such an adventurous policy. A coalition of anti-communist liberals, obsessed with the danger of increased Soviet-American tension and nuclear war, and the business community, intent on protecting its large investments in the Soviet empire, lobbied against too hard a line toward Poland or the Soviet Union. And this view was shared widely in diplomatic and foreign policy circles. In time, even the anti-communist Reagan Administration weakened its policy of strict sanctions against Jaruzelski's Poland.

Tom Kahn was the architect of the effort to keep the pressure on the communists and to continue support, both moral and material, for Solidarity. Whenever the administration wavered, the AFL-CIO increased its own efforts to

broadcast messages of support on Radio Free Europe. When the administration threatened to reduce support — openly allocated but clandestinely provided — for the Solidarity underground, the AFL-CIO went to Congress. (Contrary to Carl Bernstein's *Time* magazine report, there is little evidence that there was much, if any, covert activity to provide financial and material support to Solidarity, either directly or through the Vatican.)

Islands of resistance multiplied within the Soviet bloc and challenged the totalitarian structures. The communist regimes were forced to respond to both growing political opposition and economic backwardness. Tom worked tirelessly to organize political and financial support, from both sides of the political spectrum, for these islands of resistance. Eastern Europeans and Soviets, exiled to or visiting Washington in the 1980s, found Tom Kahn to be one of the rare believers in their cause — and their prospects for victory. He played a key role in winning congressional backing for the creation of the bi-partisan National Endowment for Democracy. Tom also lent his backing to numerous initiatives — including the Committee in Support of Solidarity and the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe — to help the democratic forces in the East.

As International Affairs Director for the AFL-CIO from 1986 to 1992, Tom provided assistance to struggling democratic trade unions being formed in the East. Besides Solidarity, free trade unions in Hungary, Lithuania, the Soviet Union, and Bulgaria received support from the AFL-CIO. These workers' organizations have been a critical element in the democratic struggle against entrenched communist elites. Despite the long AFL-CIO tradition of such support, some of its affiliates followed the position prevalent within the European labor movement that the AFL-CIO ought to deal with the official trade union structures on the grounds that they were the only game in town. The AFL-CIO held firm, however — and still does.

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In the end, the rebellion against communism was universal. In country after country, the whole of society — workers, students, intellectuals, and even disillusioned members of the communist ruling class — joined together to lay the sick and tired beast to rest. Despite the role the working class played in toppling Eastern Europe's totalitarian regimes, Shachtman's theory, even as updated by Kahn, overstated the case. Indeed, students, intellectuals and a "white collar" coalition often took the lead in bringing communist rule to an end.

Even so, Tom Kahn elaborated the theory that proved correct: that peaceful and democratic revolution could force change within the communist world. He argued that reform, whether Gorbachevian or any other variety, would prove insufficient to change the ultimate structure of the regime. He asserted that a democratic solution required the dismantling of the system itself, which would only be possible by supporting democratic forces in the Soviet bloc. While Kahn's views were not widely embraced in the West, they mirrored those of

oppositionists in the East, who, after their attempts to encourage reform had failed, concluded that the system had to be transformed for any real change to occur. In the end, there was a democratic revolution — one that took political power out of the hands of the communist party and that, more slowly, is trying to take economic power — ownership of the means of production — away from the party and its vast structures.

Tom also argued, like many other cold warriors, that the preconditions for real peace lay not in disarmament agreements, but in changing the system that posed such a danger to the free world. The end of the Cold War has shown how profoundly correct the cold warriors have been in this regard. Within six months of the fall of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin signed an agreement with President Bush to slash nuclear arms by two-thirds, in a fashion that leaves Russia in an inferior strategic position.

After the end of the Cold War, Tom looked forward to returning his attention to the battles for justice and equality. After being unfairly tagged a neo-conservative, he enjoyed every opportunity to take on international capitalism head on for its exploitation of cheap labor in Asia (especially China), Latin America, and even the new markets of Eastern Europe. Domestically, he worried about the disparity between rich and poor, and especially the plight of the large number of black Americans left behind by the civil rights revolution. He believed these issues threatened the democratic fabric of the country. In any case, for Tom it was time to return to bread-and-butter issues after an ideological war that had turned various maxims on their head. Max Shachtman had theorized (in the '40s) that only the downfall of communism would allow the genuine struggle for democratic socialism to take place. And Tom stood by his mentor to the end. His last article — which he was not able to finish because of the advance of his illness — was titled "Was Max Right?" "In every last detail," he answered.

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Few Cold War figures matched Tom Kahn's intellectual clarity in the anti-communist struggle; fewer still maintained such clarity while holding true to a radical or social democratic philosophy; and even fewer still connected words and ideas to actions. Throughout, Tom suffered the vitriol of that part of the Left which betrayed its democratic heritage. It didn't matter: he led a happy band of warriors. And unlike many who undertook the good fight, he saw the end of the empire that had so long oppressed so many.

Like King Harry and Exeter at Agincourt, he should be remembered in the annals.

OPPOSITION, DISSIDENTS DEMOCRACY

by Jakub Karpiński

Jakub Karpiński is a sociologist and a historian of post-war Poland. The following article is an extended version of a paper presented at a conference on government and opposition in post-communist societies, which was held March 25-27, 1991 in Timișoara, Romania.

Most countries of Eastern and Central Europe are now governed by those who, in communist times, made up the opposition. How did this come about, what have been its consequences, and what does it mean for politics in this region?

Opposition to communism took various forms and was conducted within various social groups. Private enterprise carried on despite repressive measures (in particular, in the Polish countryside), university teaching free of ideology in disciplines subject to ideological pressure, cultural and religious expression unfettered by the dictates of the state — these were some of the forms opposition assumed; the degree to which such activities were restricted by state control varied from country to country.

One form of opposition was — as the West called it — the dissident movement. This movement consisted of overt expressions of discontent by people who took pains to ensure that their names and their public stances were known to the authorities and to the public at home and abroad. In the latter stages of communism, oppositionists whose names were recognized in the West enjoyed a measure of protection from police repression, and were thus better able to continue their opposition activities. If two people were engaged in the