

INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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EXCHANGE OF VIEWS II

Between the SL/US and the RWP of Ceylon:

- Draft Letter to Samarakkody
by Norden and Sharpe 26 June 1974**
- Draft Letter to Samarakkody
by Samuels, 12 August 1974**
- National Question: RWP-SL/US Differences
by Samarakkody, 31 October 1975**

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1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | <u>page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| -Introductory Note | 3 |
| -Excerpt from Letter to Edmund Samarakkody from James Robertson, 18 January 1974 | 4 |
| -Draft Letter to Samarakkody by Norden and Sharpe, 26 June 1974 | 5 |
| -Draft Letter to Comrade Samarakkody by Samuels, 12 August 1974 | 19 |
| -National Question: RWP-SL/U.S. Differences by Edmund Samarakkody for the RWP, 31 October 1975 | 52 |

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The draft letters to Comrade Samarakkody and the Revolutionary Workers Party of Sri Lanka, reprinted here, were written in response to Comrade Samarakkody's document of 9 February 1974 (International Discussion Bulletin, No. 3, May 1974). The draft letters were given to the RWP delegation when it visited North America and Europe in October 1974 as a basis for discussion since, although the documents had not received final editing, they represented our general line on the disputed questions. Since Comrade Samarakkody's "National Question: RWP-SL/U.S. Differences" (October 1975) was based on the draft letters, we are reprinting them here in the original form they were given to the RWP comrades.

We had earlier planned to include another document, replying to Comrade Samarakkody's document printed here. This would indeed be the normal Leninist practice since in presenting an exchange with another group in our own internal bulletin, we have a responsibility to answer its arguments. However, in deference to Comrade Samarakkody's explicit thought, we are making an exception to this norm and are not publishing a reply here.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Lenin and Trotsky have been standardized to the 1974 Moscow English language edition of Lenin's Collected Works and the Pathfinder editions of the Writings of Leon Trotsky, respectively.

--Interim Secretariat, iSt

EXCERPT FROM LETTER TO EDMUND SAMARAKKODY
FROM JAMES ROBERTSON, 18 JANUARY 1974

Our PB discussion on the Near East has been very fertile, in structuring in a more general way our outlook on national and democratic demands. Thus the article referred to in WV 36 rests on three central propositions. First, that where democratic demands are in collision (for example, the national rights of geographically interpenetrated peoples; the mass right to immigrate vs. the right to retain the national identity of an indigenous people) there can be in general no democratic resolution within the framework of capitalism because that "framework" necessarily means policy carried out under the aegis of one or the other ruling class, i.e. to the detriment of the other people. Seen this way, Lenin's self-determination is that happy special case in which there is not such an essential collision. Second, that it is not the responsibility of the Marxist proletarian vanguard to project a program over such matters within the framework of capitalism which is "rational" and therefore utopian. Therefore ours is instead the task of irreconcilable opposition to every anti-democratic "excess" (immigration quotas, round-ups of foreigners, etc.). Third, all this is but a way of arriving empirically and a century after the Manifesto, again, at the conclusion that the nation-state is no longer the vessel for human progress and that internationalism is not just a nice word but a desperate necessity for the working people in flat opposition to the bestial chauvinisms of nationalism.

DRAFT LETTER TO SAMARAKKODY

5.

by Norden and Sharpe

New York
26 June 1974

Dear Comrade Samarakkody,

In order to facilitate our reply to your letter of 9 February 1974, our Political Bureau asked Comrade Samuels to reply to the section concerning the Arab-Israel conflict and the Near East, and ourselves to answer the sections on the OCI, popular front and workers government. In addition, recent articles in Workers Vanguard have a direct bearing on the questions which are the subject of this letter, notably the tactics of revolutionists toward the popular front in the 1974 French presidential elections ("Not Mitterrand, But a Workers Government!" WV No. 43, 26 April 1974; "Mitterrand Loses in Close French Elections," WV No. 46, 7 June 1974) and toward traditional social-democratic coalitionism in the current Canadian parliamentary elections ("NDP Must Break With Liberals," WV No. 47, 21 June).

The thrust of your criticisms of our attitude toward the OCI appears to be that we have behaved opportunistically toward this organization. According to a report from a comrade who was visiting you early this year, you also feel that we have not concentrated sufficiently on the United Secretariat during the current faction fight between its Mandel and Hansen wings.

To deal with the latter point first, we have in fact devoted a great deal of attention to the USec over the last several years, although for obvious reasons this work has not always been immediately reflected in our public press. This has resulted in a stream of recruitment to the Spartacist tendency and recently to winning several leading oppositionist cadre, both in the U.S. and Europe, from USec sections. Nor has our modest success in this respect been surpassed either by the OCI or Healy's SLL/WRP, both of which asked admission to the USec discussions while purposefully muting their public criticisms of this fake-Trotskyist "International."

You will note in Workers Vanguard a series of resignations from the SWP and the expulsion of the Revolutionary Internationalist Tendency (RIT), both in the U.S. and Australia, whose members have been working in solidarity with the Spartacist tendency or have joined it. We have recently made what could develop into a substantial breakthrough in the pro-Mandel USec sympathizing group in Canada, the Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG), and we now have a group operating in Toronto. In addition, the Australian comrades have had a certain success vis-à-vis the local Mandelites while the Austrian comrades appear to have recruited several members of the small USec section in Vienna.

In France we recruited two members of the Revolutionary Communist Front (FCR--the "political continuity" of the former Ligue Communiste), including one member of its Central Committee who has just resigned in solidarity with the RIT. Our comrades in Paris

have printed over a thousand copies of his resignation statement (excerpted in WV No. 46, 7 June 1974) and he is now openly working with us. The document on the current French elections entitled "Only One Solution: A Workers' Government" (which has been sent to you previously) was written by these comrades for internal discussion in the FCR, and they authored parts of the "New Vanguard or Construction of the Revolutionary Party" document (submitted to the USec 10th Congress by the "Third Tendency") which you inquired about.

OCI: From Centrist Confusion to Simple Reformist Appetites

Concerning the OCI, you remark in your letter that, "It would appear that in the genuine desire of the SL/U.S. to intervene by participation in the OCRFI conference, without at the same time being conscious of the far-reaching differences between the SL and OCI, it has overlooked the danger of a possible compromise of its own politics." And a few paragraphs earlier you state:

"We find that the SL has raised many questions on important issues (your letter to OCRFI). On the specific questions you have raised with them, we could generally agree. But it appears to us that on some important issues SL's differences are not fully brought out--e.g., the politics of the POR (Bolivia). Again it is our impression that some formulations of SL in regard to OCI politics are insufficient and could well compromise the politics of the SL/U.S...."

In specific you feel that our differences with the OCI (over the Bolivian POR, over the International Committee) have been understated, that our characterization of the OCI as "politically far superior to the politics of the Healy-Banda group" is wrong, and that we comment on their actions in a manner which gives "a better political image to the OCI than to other centrist currents."

For our part, we have sharply criticized Healy's shameful overtures to the United Secretariat in 1970 (see "World Trotskyism Rearms," Spartacist No. 20, April-May 1971) in which he proposed a "common international conference," spoke in an undifferentiated way of "our movement" and neglected to mention either Pabloism or any of the specific differences between the IC and USec--while also offering to terminate public polemics (see Workers Press, 8 September 1970). Thus we are fully in agreement with you that, "It cannot be wrong on principle to enter into discussions with those who claim to be Trotskyists.... It would however be imperative to state frankly and with clarity our differences in regard to their orientations."

We believe that this has been scrupulously done in the course of our non-relations with the OCI (they have yet to reply in writing to a single one of our letters). Although it is diplomatically worded, our letter of 15 January 1973 clearly stated that because of programmatic differences and unclarities we could not request admission to the OCRFI, despite its stated aim to fight on the basis of the Transitional Program for the reconstruction of the Fourth International. The letter notes important areas of agreement between the

SL and OCI, but it is primarily devoted to listing important areas of disagreement. The importance of mentioning points of agreement is obvious, because in their absence there would be little reason for discussions--open polemics for the purpose of destroying the other organization would be quite adequate.

In the letter we proceeded to reject the OCI's concept of a "strategic united front," to condemn the policies of the Bolivian POR both before and after the Banzer coup of August 1971, to point to serious ambiguities in the OCI's characterizations of Stalinism, to note the anti-Leninist relationship with its de facto youth section (the AJS), to strongly oppose the OCI's use of the bourgeois state apparatus to mediate disputes in the workers movement and its use of physical violence to suppress the views of other working-class tendencies, and finally to raise the need for a review of the past experience of the IC rather than simply deploring its split.

Moreover, we referred the OCI to articles from Spartacist and Workers Vanguard for a more complete statement of our views on Bolivia, OCI work in France and the IC. In one of those articles the OCI is characterized as having "a persistently centrist thrust-- i.e., an opportunist practice," and accused of "constantly [sacrificing] the explicit presentation of program to unity at any price..." ("OCI Seeks Class Unity, Weakens Program," WV No. 11, September 1972). Another of the appended articles accused the OCI of "unprincipled combinationism" in its years-long cohabitation with the SLL in the IC without clarification of numerous outstanding differences between them ("Reconstruct the Fourth International," WV No. 3, December 1971).

These sharp criticisms were not unnoticed by the OCI/OCRFI leadership, although it has assiduously avoided any formal political discussion with the SL. Instead it sought to create the fiction of a SL/Voix Ouvrière bloc at the 1966 London IC conference, supposedly based on a common rejection of the "continuity" of the FI. (However, when Lambert made this slanderous amalgam in front of 2,500 militants at a public educational last fall, he was forced to retract a large part of his attack under pointed questioning from his own members.) The OCI's insistence that it represents a mystical "continuity" of the Fourth International (despite the virtual non-existence of even the OCRFI at this point) is verification that the difference between our slogan "For the Rebirth of the FI" and the OCI's "For the Reconstruction of the FI," noted in our letter as an area of unclarity, is in fact more than semantical.

For some time we have considered the OCI to be a centrist organization, i.e., one that is fundamentally deformed by opportunist deviations and not simply a healthy revolutionary organization which has made a few mistakes. Consequently we have had no illusions about winning over the entire organization or leadership. But it would have been a mistake to ignore the OCI's substantial number of cadre with 20 and more years in the movement, located in the capital of world ostensible Trotskyism (between them the OCI, Lutte Ouvrière and FCR have roughly 7,000 members and perhaps an equal number of close sympathizers). Moreover, the relative superiority of the OCI to the other French groups and Healy was real. The struggle for the

rebirth of the FI is, in the first instance, a struggle against Pabloist revisionism which the OCI, alone among the French ostensible Trotskyists, attempted to carry out.

In comparison to Healy, the OCI's call for the "reconstruction" (rather than Healy's "construction") of the FI; its opposition to tailing after the Vietnamese Stalinists, the Red Guards and bourgeois Arab nationalists; and its belated criticism of the federated bloc practice of the IC did indeed constitute significant divergences and ones which pointed toward positions held by the Spartacist League. The fact that the OCI (like Healy) also claims to be the continuity of the FI, that in the OCRFI it continued the opportunist practice of the IC (attempting to build an international with substantial unresolved internal political differences), that its own views are distinctly soft on ostensible "left" bureaucratic oppositions in the deformed workers states (Mao, Dubcek) were contradictions that had to be pointed out and exploited.

On French issues the OCI has often taken a line closer to authentic Trotskyist positions, which we have duly noted in WV. However, on some issues their policies have been to the right of the LO and FCR/Ligue, which we also noted. In RCY Newsletter No. 18, July-August 1973, we pointed out that only LO attempted to give an anti-militarist content to the struggle against the Debré Law (eliminating student deferments from the draft); the OCI simply tailed after the CP. Also, in the recent French presidential elections we denounced the OCI position as a betrayal. (This caused Stéphane Just, member of the OCI's PB, to physically expel our Comrade Helene Brosius, member of the SL/U.S. PB, from selling French Spartacist in front of an OCI meeting on 11 May 1974.)

As to your more specific comments on the subject of the OCI/OCRFI, you are, of course, quite right in supposing that the real requirements or framework for the discussion within the OCRFI are quite different from what we carefully termed the "formal requirements for participation." The significance of our formulation was not lost on the OCI which in our informal discussions has insisted on agreement over the questions of "continuity," Stalinism, the POR, etc., as a precondition to participating in OCRFI deliberations. Among OCI militants and members of other "sections" of the OCRFI with whom we have talked, the contradiction between the OCI's claim that the discussions are open to all who "fight on the program of the Fourth International to reconstruct the leading center" and its refusal to admit the SL or even answer our letter has had some impact.

Concerning the Bolivian POR, the OCRFI statement which you quote does indeed amount to "agreeing to disagree" over key questions. However, it is not correct that in view of the OCI's declared total support for the POR policies in the People's Assembly in 1971 its subsequent criticisms of the FRA (Anti-Imperialist Revolutionary Front) as a popular front "could be of no importance." The Assembly was not a popular front and, moreover, the OCI's sharp attack on Lora over the question of the FRA reportedly resulted in the POR breaking with the OCRFI almost a year ago. Again we have a contradiction to be exploited. The OCI supports the POR's capitula-

tion to the CP in the summer of 1971, in the name of the strategic united front; yet this capitulatory policy later produced the FRA, which the OCI rejects.

The OCI's centrism implies that there could well exist an amorphous left wing within the organization which opposes its international line (on the POR, on its support to the SWP in the USec fight) and its gross opportunism domestically. Our orientation has aimed at detecting and crystallizing such possible left currents as may exist into a clear political faction which could struggle against the historical leadership of the OCI.

Do such definable leftist currents exist in the OCI today? We have no direct evidence, although there have reportedly been rumblings of discontent with its election line both in 1973 and 1974. In any case, as you know we feel that the OCI's grossly capitulatory electoral policy in this May's election (voting for the single candidate of the popular front on both rounds, not even attempting a token opposition candidate of their own or supporting that of some other group standing to the left of the Union of the Left) represents a watershed which, if it does not provoke the emergence of a clear left faction (particularly since it is currently in a pre-conference discussion period), will represent the definitive degeneration of the OCI and of any potential left forces within its leadership.

Our current position toward the OCI was indicated in the following motion, passed by the Political Bureau meeting on 15 April 1974:

"To note that, over the question of giving support to Mitterand on the first round in the French elections, the OCI is moving from centrist confusion to a formal right-centrism containing simple reformist appetites. Since this is now taking place, we must see how different elements of the OCI respond to this transition."

A subsequent motion, at the PB meeting of 22 May, added:

"That we seek to give all elements in the OCI the time to digest the implications of their sharp right turn. While continuing to lay the basis for the expression of our concern over the Varga affair and our resentment at physical attacks on our supporters, we seek to avoid a premature formal break with the OCI on these issues, pending the OCI's internal clarification. In any case our own internal dynamics in Paris tend to force a definitive choice on us by fall."

Finally, on the question of the OCI's view of Stalinism, it does characterize the USSR, China, Yugoslavia, North Korea, North Vietnam, etc., as deformed workers states (but not Cuba); however, the term "Stalinist" is used by the OCI exclusively for the USSR and direct appendages of the Kremlin bureaucracy (the East European deformed workers states, West European CP's). Our major difference with them in this respect, however, is the OCI's tendency to imply that any break with the bureaucracy is necessarily "to the left"

(what about Sakharov/Solzhenitsyn?) and to capitulate uncritically before any "left" current in the bureaucracy (e.g., Dubcek). We have had several heated arguments with OCI militants on this subject and project the translation of some of our material on "Russian dissidents" for the French edition of Spartacist.

The Role of Workers Parties in Popular Fronts

We fully agree with the other specific points of criticism of the OCI/OCRFI which you raise, in particular that,

"...the OCRFI clearly projects the concept of the development of revolutionary consciousness within the proletariat as an inevitable consequence of the unity of the working class."

The "strategic united front" is but an extension of this conception. So, too, are the OCI's arguments justifying its call for a vote for the working-class parties of the popular front in the March 1973 French legislative elections and for the single candidate of the popular front (Mitterrand) on both rounds of the presidential elections this spring. In their election pamphlet ("Political Resolution of the OCI," 7 April 1974) we read:

"We are unconditionally in favor of the defeat of candidates of the bourgeois parties by a candidate of a workers party in these elections as in every other." (our emphasis)

Evidently the OCI would have told the workers to vote for the CP/SP candidates of the popular front in the Spanish and French elections of 1936, or in Chile in 1970! Whatever their explanations for this policy, it can only be interpreted by the workers as meaning that the proletariat should seek to place in power, by giving electoral support (however critical, which in the case of the OCI is not very much), a government including representatives of sections of the bourgeoisie. However, electing the popular-front coalitions of class collaboration is simply preparing the way for the bloody dictatorships of Franco, Pétain and Pinochet!

It appears to us that there is a contradiction between your correct criticisms of the OCI for its perpetual tailing after the Stalinists and social democrats, and your (at least implicit) support for the tactical implementation of this line, namely voting for the CP and SP while they are running as part of the popular front. Although in a certain sense the OCI's support for Mitterrand on both rounds this spring is a logical extension of its policy in 1973, it could have preserved a fig leaf by running or supporting an independent candidate on the first round. But even had it done so, on the second round it still would have voted for the candidate of the popular front. What would your own policy have been in these recent French presidential elections?

You criticize our view that participation in a popular-front coalition suppresses the contradictions inherent in the reformist workers parties--that is between their subordination to the interests of capitalism and their claim, implicit or explicit, to represent the interests of the working class and/or base themselves on

organized labor. If this contradiction were suppressed, you argue, then it would have no meaning for revolutionaries to call on the reformists to break with the bourgeoisie and take power in their own hands, as Lenin demanded from April to July and again briefly in late August of 1917.

We do, of course, call on the French CP and SP to break from the Union of the Left and run on their own, just as we did in the context of the Allende coalition in Chile. But this in no sense contradicts the view that in a popular front the dual character of the reformist workers parties is suppressed. Your argument appears to rest on the equation of "suppressed" with "eliminated." Clearly, the class contradictions in (to use Lenin's expression) the "bourgeois workers parties" continue to exist even though they formally tie themselves to a section of the bourgeoisie and a program of government which maintains capitalism. But that contradiction is, at least temporarily, suppressed in favor of the dominant bourgeois element; the contradiction is inoperative.

The revolutionists must seek to make this contradiction operative by demanding that the workers parties break with their bourgeois allies and run on a program of transitional demands corresponding to the interests of the proletariat. It is also our obligation to warn the workers that the leaders of these parties are not simply misguided, but actual agents of the class enemy in our ranks and they will refuse to carry out or seek to sabotage such a revolutionary policy. But it is legitimate to demand that they implement a working-class program for such parties claim to represent the interests of the workers (and often to be socialist and even communist), and under overwhelming pressure from the masses they could be forced to take some such steps. This is inherent in their dual character. In contrast, to call on a bourgeois party (such as the SLFP in Ceylon) or a bourgeois popular front to carry out a proletarian revolution can only awaken illusions in the masses.

Your basic argument in favor of giving (in some circumstances) critical support to the workers parties of a popular front appears to be that this coalitionism is nothing more than the expression of the class-collaborationist policies constantly advocated by the reformists. If we can give them critical support when they run independently, if we can advocate the election of a Labour Party government in Britain which we know will function faithfully as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, then what is the fundamental difference which prevents us from advocating votes for their candidates when they merely give a concrete expression to their pro-capitalist politics, in the form of the popular front? The programs of such coalitions are often identical to the immediate (minimum) program of the Communist and Socialist parties, and in any case we take no political responsibility for such counterrevolutionary parties.

A popular front is defined not simply by its program, but above all by the class forces which compose it, and the fact that it is an ongoing political bloc in which the full freedom of criticism, to raise revolutionary politics aimed at overthrowing capitalism, is suppressed. We believe you give insufficient weight to the fact that

the purpose of the tactic of critical support is to play upon and use to the Marxists' advantage the contradictions inherent in the reformist ("bourgeois") workers parties. The existence of, and a vote for, the mass social-democratic, labor and Stalinist parties represent a step toward independent political action against the class enemy, if only by their organizational independence from the capitalist parties. At least in an elemental way this draws a class line. Advocating a vote for these parties, while raising demands on them which generalize the principle of working-class independence into a struggle against capitalism, enables revolutionary Marxists to show in practice to the workers how the reformists' real program is support for capitalism. By the same token, the formation of and votes for a political bloc with a section of the bourgeoisie represent a step away from this basic principle of Marxist politics.

As Engels remarked at the 1871 London Conference of the First International:

"We want the abolition of classes. What is the means of achieving it? The only means is political domination of the proletariat.... However, our politics must be working-class politics. The workers' party must never be the tagtail of any bourgeois party; it must be independent and have its goal and its own policy."

--"Apropos of Working-Class
Political Action"

This was subsequently written into the rules of the International Workingmen's Association:

"Article 7a. In its struggle against the collective power of the possessing classes the proletariat can act as a class only by constituting itself a distinct political party, opposed to all the old parties formed by the possessing classes...."

--Karl Marx and Friedrich
Engels, "Resolution on the
Rules," 1872

And this is precisely what the popular front negates--the principle of proletarian independence from the class enemy. Thus critical support for workers parties in a popular front means voting for the reformists not only when they take a step in the direction of proletarian democracy, but also when they take a step in the direction of the bourgeoisie. In that sense it is a logical expression of the "strategic united front," and of its derivative principle that revolutionists should "unconditionally" favor a workers party against the bourgeois party in "every" election.

There are a number of additional arguments for this position which should be mentioned. First, there is the OCI hocus-pocus that in voting for Mitterrand it is voting not for the candidate of the Union of the Left, but rather for the "First Secretary of the Socialist Party." If these two candidates were counterposed then we could consider giving critical electoral support to the latter

against the former. But, alas, they are one and the same, and the OCI's distinction vanishes into thin air.

A second common argument (raised by the FCR) is that the working class has illusions in the popular front; by putting it in power we will enable the masses to see what are the real policies of the Union of the Left. In short, we must "go through the experience of the popular front" together with the workers, not isolated from them. This argument misses the point that there are some experiences we do not want to go through with the workers, namely those which stand opposed to the principle of working-class independence. If they support an imperialist war or a bourgeois party, this would certainly not cause revolutionists to vote war credits to the government or to advocate critical support to the SLFP or the U.S. Democrats (despite the fact that a good number of workers certainly support the Democrats and the Bandaranaike outfit).

Thirdly, it is often maintained (as by the OCI in the recent French elections) that a popular-front government would set the stage for a sharpening of the class struggle. This is a revealing argument, for it would hold good for voting for the bourgeois as well as the workers parties of a popular front. In any case, while popular fronts frequently come to power in a situation of working-class upsurge they represent not an expression of this unrest but rather a fundamental barrier to its generalization, a self-defense measure for the bourgeoisie and a formal commitment by the reformists not to transcend the bounds of capitalism.

You do not raise such opportunist arguments and have expressed sharp opposition to the coalitionist policies of the LSSP and CP in Ceylon. (However, we do not know what your policy was in the 1970 Ceylonese elections.) But how can we explain to the workers that communists oppose in principle giving any political support to the parties of the bourgeoisie if we are calling on the workers to place in power a popular-front government? How could Chilean Marxists explain to the working masses, who are paying with their blood the consequences of a popular-front government, that revolutionists should have voted for Allende in 1970? Can we tell Ceylonese workers that they should have voted for the LSSP or CP in the last elections so that Perera and Keneuman could place Bandaranaike in power--to prepare the JVP massacre of 1971 and now perhaps a military coup?

Perhaps the nub of your call for a vote to the CP and SP in last year's French elections may rest in failing to recognize the existence of the popular front as a distinct political entity. Such a position may be plausible, though in our view wrong, in the case of two different candidates of a popular front, one bourgeois and the other working-class; but how can this be maintained when there is a single candidate of the coalition? Should we take a different attitude toward the candidate of the popular front depending on whether it is Mitterrand (Socialist) or Fabre (Radical) running for president? The workers would not understand this, and with reason. Revolutionary French workers will one day hold the LO, FCR and OCI responsible for their capitulation before the popular front.

In Chile, the MIR's position of critical support for Allende determined its capitulationist policies throughout the three years of Popular Unity government, and it was a similar policy which prevented all the ostensible Trotskyist groups in that country from crystallizing a revolutionary opposition to the popular front. The core of the Trotskyist policy in Chile was to give no political support to the UP, no matter how critical, and warn the masses from the beginning that the popular front was preparing the way for a bloody massacre. A policy of critical electoral support to the workers parties of the popular front (which, incidentally, accounted for about 95 percent of the UP vote) would fundamentally undercut and make a mockery of this hard Bolshevik line. "You say you do not support the popular front politically against the other bourgeois parties," a militant worker might well reply, "but you helped put it in power in the first place. Your call for a break from the political bloc with the bourgeoisie is nothing but words. The Trotskyists talk big, but at the decisive points they capitulate just like the MIR." If we had called for votes for Allende in 1970, or for the Socialist Party in the April 1973 Chilean elections as did the USec affiliate (PSR), then we would stand naked before such an attack.

The question of Trotskyist policies toward popular fronts has recently presented itself to us in two additional aspects which deserve mention. Both in France and Canada we have given critical electoral support to candidates of ostensibly Trotskyist parties which have run in opposition to popular fronts, although they in turn do support the workers parties' candidates of class-collaborationist coalitions. We do not view the question of a popular front as a form of original sin which is visited upon even the fourth generation removed (e.g., "critical support to a party which gives critical support to a party which gives critical support to...is unprincipled"). Their candidacies are, although fundamentally deformed, an attempt to express opposition to the class collaboration of the popular front. On the other hand, where an independent candidacy is on a program no less collaborationist, expressing no real opposition to the principle of popular frontism, and the workers have no illusions in this party (for instance, the Communist Party of Canada), then it is absurd to call for votes to its candidates.

In the current Canadian elections we have faced another important question, namely the existence of a de facto "corridor coalition" between the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) and Trudeau's Liberals. Ostensibly the NDP is running independently in the election. However, it is campaigning on its program of "making Parliament work," i.e., obtaining marginal reforms in return for parliamentary support to the Liberals; and the NDP leader, Lewis, has declared that in the event of a Liberal minority he would again support Trudeau in parliament. In such circumstances one would have to be at least partially blind not to see the existence of a real coalition--consequently we call on the NDP to break with the Liberals as a condition for electoral support. In Germany, where the Social Democrats have been ruling in coalition with the Free Democrats we would take the same position--i.e., a pledge to refuse

coalitions with bourgeois parties as a precondition to any support, however critical, to its candidates.

We hope these examples make clear our views on this question and we repeat that we find your suggested policy toward the 1973 French elections in contradiction to your strong criticisms of the OCI politics whose tactical implementation, however, is voting for the working-class parties of a popular front.

The Workers Government: A Transitional Demand

It does not appear that there is a difference between us on the question of a workers government or workers and peasants government. We have noted on several occasions in Workers Vanguard how both the United Secretariat and the OCI have debased this revolutionary slogan into a social-democratic call for a "workers government" of a capitalist state. For the OCI this betrayal is accomplished by posing the alternative of a CP-SP government, obviously parliamentary in character, to the Union of the Left; the former, according to the OCI, would be a "workers government." We, too, call on the CP and SP to break with the Radicals. We call for a government uniting the mass reformist workers parties and the trade-union federations, thereby emphasizing the need for transcending the purely parliamentary framework. But we do not dignify such a government of reformist parties with the title workers government.

The USec, both in its Mandel and Hansen wings, has vitiated the revolutionary content of the Transitional Program, first by considering it only an important historical document and not the program of the Fourth International, and second by stating that the key to the "transitional method" is to raise demands reflecting the present consciousness of the masses. Since the workers do not yet understand the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, then the USec calls for a "workers government" of the bourgeois state which will somehow support the struggles of the masses, i.e., something akin to a left-wing Labour Party government. This reformist claptrap has been raised to the level of "theory" by these fake-Trotskyists:

"Here again the Fourth International [i.e., the "United Secretariat"] has both revived and enriched the teachings of the third and fourth congresses of the Communist International by using the slogan as a transitional governmental formula corresponding to the organizational conditions and consciousness of the masses at a given moment, and not as a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat."

--Pierre Frank, "The Transitional Program," International Socialist Review, May-June 1967

Just how much this "enrichment" of the program of the early Comintern has to do with Trotskyism can be seen from Trotsky's own comments on this subject:

"The important thing is that we ourselves understand and make the others understand that the farmers, the exploited farmers, cannot be saved from utter ruin, degradation, demoralization, except by a Workers and Farmers Government, and that this is nothing but the dictatorship of the proletariat." (our emphasis)

- "Conversation on the Slogan
'Workers and Farmers Government',"
Writings (1938-39)

In general propaganda, the demand of a workers government is for Marxists the key element of the Transitional Program, for it represents the necessity of generalizing and centralizing all struggles of the class in the struggle for state power, for the dictatorship of the proletariat. We raise this demand not only to contrast to the reformists' policies of "popular fronts" and coalitionism, but also in our trade-union work where it makes clear the need to construct a revolutionary (not merely "militant" or "rank-and-file") leadership of the unions around a full transitional program and not simply a few popular demands.

The purpose of the demand for a workers government is not to be a "synonym" for something else in an attempt to mask our true goals or give them a sugar coating. Rather, it is a transitional demand which enables us to explain concretely to the workers why it is necessary to achieve a proletarian dictatorship. We begin with the fairly simple point that the workers need a government which represents their interests, instead of the present capitalist government. But we also explain what revolutionary measures a true workers government would have to take, namely expropriate the bourgeoisie, dismantle the bourgeois state apparatus, crush the armed resistance of the class enemy, etc.:

"The most elementary tasks of a workers' government must consist in arming the proletariat, in disarming the bourgeois counter-revolutionary organisations, in introducing control of production, in putting the chief burden of taxation on the shoulders of the rich and in breaking down the resistance of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie."

-- "Theses on Tactics," Fourth
Congress of the Communist International,
1922

Naturally there is some possible ambiguity about this slogan in the mouths of reformists. But this is true of all transitional demands. Mandel has demonstrated how it is possible to divorce the slogan of workers control from the struggle for state power with his phraseology of "anti-capitalist structural reforms." Thus it is no surprise that he and his co-thinkers would do the same for the demand of a workers government. As Trotsky wrote at the time of the Fourth Congress discussions:

"The workers government is an algebraic formula, that is, a formula whose terms have not been given fixed numerical values. Therefrom derive its advantages and also its disadvantages. Its

advantages are that it reaches even those workers who have not yet raised themselves to the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and to the understanding of the need for a leading party.

"Its disadvantages, a result of its algebraic character, consist in that it can be given a purely parliamentary sense...."

--"The Workers Government,"
November 1922

It is the task of revolutionaries to supply the numbers for this algebraic formula, to raise it in such a manner as to make clear its profoundly revolutionary meaning.

This is all fairly straightforward for all but the most committed reformists. But incredible confusion creeps in when the same slogan is used as a united-front demand, directed at the social democrats and Stalinists. "To such an open or disguised bourgeois social-democratic coalition, the Communists oppose a United Front of the workers, a coalition of all the workers' parties on the economic and political field for the struggle against the bourgeois power and for the ultimate overthrow of the latter" ("Theses on Tactics," 1922). As one speaker in the Fourth Congress discussions put it, in 1917 Lenin called for the formation of a Soviet government; this would have included the Bolsheviks (the supporters of the proletarian dictatorship) and the Mensheviks (the opponents of the proletarian dictatorship)--is that the dictatorship of the proletariat?

The confusion has come about in part due to Zinoviev's attempt to use the workers government as a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat when it is used as a propaganda slogan, and as something quite different, a stage in the direction of the dictatorship, when used as a united-front slogan. This is manifestly nonsensical and, moreover, contains tremendous dangers for the Marxists. If we mean that a true workers government must take measures to overthrow the bourgeoisie immediately, that it cannot be based on the bourgeois state apparatus but rather on the organizations of the working masses, then we must not use it as a united-front slogan except to signify precisely that.

At a minimum, for a workers government to exist it must either base itself on or create organs of dual power, that is, organizations representing the working class in its entirety and counterposed to the bourgeois state apparatus. Whether it comes about as a result of a prolonged struggle in the soviets with the Bolsheviks finally assuming the majority, or as the result of an unusual parliamentary situation in which the masses force the reformists to put an end to coalitions with the bourgeoisie and instead ally with the communists--in either case it will lead to the frontal conflict between capital and labor, the decisive conflict for state power. As Radek remarked at the Fourth Congress, the workers government has the same relationship to the proletarian dictatorship as the threshold to the house.

One could go into great detail evaluating past experiences with this slogan (Hungary 1919, Saxony and Thuringen 1923, Bolivia 1952) and in postulating the circumstances in which it is correct to call

on the reformists to form a workers government. We agree with you that this can only happen in a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation, for otherwise we would simply be masking (or even drawing the communists into) a parliamentary regime.

We do seek to provide an "alternative governmental formula" even in the absence of a pre-revolutionary situation, by calling on the reformists to break from their bourgeois allies and campaign in their own names. Should they do this we would give them critical electoral support and defend them militarily against bourgeois reaction, while warning the masses against the pro-capitalist policies of their treacherous leaders and calling for the implementation of various transitional demands.

Thus we called for votes to the Labour Party in the British elections this February, while also calling for "a Labour Party/TUC Government Pledged to a Socialist Program of Expropriating the Capitalist Class." At present when there is controversy within the Labour government over the question of nationalizations, agitation in the unions for a massive demonstration around the above demand could have considerable impact (putting militant-talking TUC leaders on the spot for their servile kowtowing before Wilson, exposing centrists who only call on Labour to implement its own limited program of nationalizations). But we do not refer to the Labour government as a workers government. In fact, we counterpose the Labour parliamentary government to a revolutionary workers government.

In closing we must apologize for the length of time which it has taken to prepare this reply. We hope to have the letter dealing with the Near East question in the mail to you in a matter of days.

Comradely,

Jan Norden
John Sharpe

DRAFT LETTER TO COMRADE SAMARAKKODY

by Samuels

New York
12 August 1974

Ceylon

Dear Comrade Samarakkody,

This letter is intended as a reply to section V of your letter to Robertson dated 9 February 1974, subtitled "Arab-Israel Question."

Our differences on the Near East do indeed seem to center on the nature of Israel as an "outpost of imperialism." You draw a fundamental distinction between Israel as an "outpost of imperialism" and all other states in the Near East, even those such as Jordan and Iran which you characterize as "client states of imperialism in the Middle East." Of these "client states of imperialism" you write:

"The history of imperialist aggression and colonisation provides numerous cases of client states of imperialism, through which the latter carried on aggression and maintained their colonialist powers. Feudo-capitalist rulers of such states have been found to function as agencies of imperialism in the Middle East--even now Jordan and Iran."

--"Letter to Robertson" [International Discussion Bulletin
No. 3], 9 February 1974, p. 18

You claim that:

"The reason why imperialism has not been able to convert Arab states (Jordan -- Iran) into imperialist outposts as in the case of Israel is that there is a struggle against imperialism in all colonial and semi-colonial countries. While all the countries of the Arab Middle East have formal political independence, severe imperialist exploitation continues in most of these countries. Especially in the oil-rich areas the imperialist oil companies have extracted enormous profits. They need to continue such exploitation. Nixon's threat to use force against the Arab countries operating the oil boycott was proof that the struggle to end imperialist pressure in those countries is real. These backward countries of the Middle East cannot move out of their state of economic stagnation without eliminating imperialism from their countries and from this region. The Arab masses, the so-called national bourgeoisie and even the Arab feudal kings are adversely and directly affected by imperialism.

"It is precisely this conflict between the people of the Arab states and imperialism that manifests itself from time to time with anti-imperialist actions and confrontations between the feudo-capitalist rulers and imperialism in the Arab states.

"On the other hand in regard to Israel there is no question of any conflict with imperialism in this state, except in the sense that the working class of Israel has an interest in the struggle against imperialist oppression. There are no issues on which

the anti-imperialist struggle is posed for the people of Israel. This unique situation of a country at the very centre of a region in which imperialism has maintained its exploitative system being free of imperialist exploitation has only one explanation--that is because Israel functions as an outpost of imperialism."

--ibid., pp. 18-19

Thus we are told that these client states of imperialism, Jordan and Iran, through which the imperialist powers "carried on their aggression and maintained their colonialist powers," are nonetheless in conflict with imperialism because their economies are exploited and their economic development is retarded by imperialism. Furthermore this conflict between the people of the Arab states and imperialism supposedly manifests itself in confrontations between the feudo-capitalist rulers, the agencies of imperialism in the Middle East, and imperialism.

Here we are presented with a series of inverted Maoist categories such as "feudo-capitalist rulers" (or compradore bourgeoisie) who are both the "agencies of imperialism" and "exploited" by imperialism. Furthermore, the passage implies that the main axis of social struggle by the Arab masses is expressed through confrontations between these feudo-capitalist rulers and the imperialists.

"Outpost of Imperialism"

We are also told that as distinct from the "client states of imperialism" Israel is an "outpost of imperialism" because there is "no question of any conflict with imperialism in this state....There are no issues on which the anti-imperialist struggle is posed for the people of Israel...except insofar that the working class has an interest in the struggle against imperialist oppression." Elsewhere you write:

"Is it not relevant to inquire how this unusual phenomenon of a 'relatively advanced European capitalist order' has been transplanted in a sea of backwardness in the Middle East, where feudalisms still reign? The agrarian revolution and other democratic rights have still to be accomplished in all these countries of the Arab East, while in this State of Israel there are no such unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks. And if 'Israel lacks the industrial resources to support such an order,' what is the explanation for this unique social phenomenon? And when a state which has only flowers and fruits as its chief export products maintains a 'relatively advanced capitalist order' without any serious economic and social problems, without balance of payments problems, problems of increasing debts, etc., it only means that imperialism maintains this state not on economic development and exploitation but as an armed encampment."

First, it should be noted that you have chosen military terms such as "imperialist outpost," "imperialist fortress" and "armed encampment" to describe this "unusual phenomenon." In the strict and literal sense, one [can] refer to the British naval base at Trincomalee or

the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea as "outpost of imperialism," "imperialist fortress," or "armed encampment." Giving a broader usage to these military terms, one could contend that the British converted Malta and the U.S. converted Okinawa into "imperialist fortresses." By analogy one can speak of the British-owned Suez Canal or even the state of Israel as an imperialist outpost. As you point out, we ourselves used this analogy in our resolution on the 1967 Israel-Arab War. The undisputed point we wanted to make there is that Israel could have come into existence only under the sponsorship, and in the service of, somebody's imperialism. This was recognized by the important Zionist leaders. Thus, to find a sponsor for the Zionist colonization, Herzl approached the most reactionary, most notoriously anti-Semitic leaders of the imperialist powers: the Black Hundred pogromist, Russian Minister of Interior, Plehve; the Turkish sultan; the German Kaiser; and finally the British Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. Weizmann, who throughout his life cast Britain in the role of "godfather," wrote during World War I to C. P. Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian:

"We can reasonably say that should Palestine fall within the British sphere of influence and should Britain encourage Jewish settlement there, as a British dependency, we could have in twenty to thirty years a million Jews out there, perhaps more; they would develop the country, bring back civilization to it and form a very effective guard for the Suez Canal."

--Transformation of Palestine,
Ibrahm Abu-Lughod, ed., 1971,
quoted in "Zionism as Western
Imperialism," Richard P.
Stevens, p. 41

These sentiments were put even more crudely for the consumption of Israeli public opinion by the editor of the mass-circulation Zionist daily Ha'aretz:

"Israel has been given a role not unlike that of a watchdog. One need not fear that it will exercise an aggressive policy towards the Arab states if this will contradict the interests of the U.S.A. and Britain. But should the West prefer for one reason or another to close its eyes one can rely on Israel to punish severely those of the neighboring states whose lack of manners towards the West has exceeded the proper limits."

--Ha'aretz, 30 September 1951,
quoted in The Other Israel,
Arie Bober, ed., Doubleday,
Anchor, 1972, p. 99

This chauvinist filth clearly states how Israel's ruling establishment conceived of the Zionist colonization and the formation of a Zionist state as an "outpost of imperialism." Certainly it behaved in exactly that way when the neighboring state of Egypt's "lack of manners toward the West exceeded proper limits" by Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. Israel marched off with the British and French to "severely punish" the Egyptian nationalists. There is no doubt that Israel was prepared, if called upon, to play

a similar role in Lebanon or Iraq in 1958 and in Jordan in September 1970.

Marx and Lenin on "Reactionary" Nations

At the time of the 1848 revolution and its immediate aftermath, the term "outpost" was given a meaning by Marx and Engels which made it applicable to nations. Lenin writes in "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up":

"Marx and Engels at that time [1848-49] drew a clear and definite distinction between 'whole reactionary nations' serving as 'Russian outposts' in Europe, and 'revolutionary nations', namely, the Germans, Poles and Magyars."

--Critical Remarks on the National Question, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, p. 131

But here Lenin is stressing the concrete historical context in which Marx and Engels drew a sharp distinction between "reactionary nations" which served as "outposts" of reactionary Russia and "revolutionary nations." He describes the conditions as: (1) that capitalist development still had a historically progressive mission to fulfill; (2) that this mission could only be fulfilled in the process of national consolidation (similar to the French Revolution) in which smaller nations, the "relics of peoples," are absorbed into more progressive nations, breaking down feudal-particularist barriers; (3) that the main bulwark against progressive capitalist development in Eastern Europe was Russia (e.g., Russia's suppression of the 1848 revolution in Hungary); and (4) that the South Slav nations were incapable in this period, because of their cultural and social backwardness, of articulating a genuinely progressive bourgeois-democratic movement. Therefore the separatist aspirations of the Balkan nations could only be tools of Russian reaction and the role that was played by the French nation, i.e., the role of the leading nation of revolutionary national consolidation, could only be played by the Magyars, Poles and Germans. But Lenin's main point here is the historical specificity of this distinction between "reactionary" and "revolutionary" nations. The conditions which might have made such a distinction valuable in the period 1848-71 no longer existed in the epoch of imperialism when capitalism was no longer progressive, when capitalist development produced not national consolidation but national oppression, and when Russia was no longer "the main enemy" but itself dominated by finance capital. Lenin is polemicizing against both the right-wing social-chauvinist opportunists like Cunow and the left-wing Polish Social Democrats (the "consistent" and "wavering annexationists" as Lenin calls them respectively). Both take this distinction of Marx and Engels out of context to suit their own purposes. In the case of the opportunists, they sought to defend their respective bourgeoisies as leaders of the "revolutionary" nations against the "reactionary" ones. The left-wing Polish Social Democrats, on the other hand, wished to deny to small and economically unviable nations the right to self-determination since they would be "outposts" of somebody's imperialism.

"The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" was written in 1916. Through the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 Lenin shared Marx's conception of the Russian question. He held that tsarism was the bulwark of European reaction and could be destroyed only by external assault. Thus, believing that Japan was not yet an imperialist power and that any blow against Russia could only be for the better, Lenin supported Japan against Russia. During this period revolutionary defeatism was seen as having a unique and categorical application to Russia.

Here it is important to repeat that Marx and Engels considered the South Slavs "whole reactionary nations" because they lacked a democratic bourgeoisie and a developed labor movement and were therefore incapable of the liberal-labor alliance which Marx and Engels envisioned as necessary to sweep away feudal vestiges in Eastern Europe. Until 1905 Lenin also tended to consider that Russia was a "whole reactionary nation" whose working class was too weak and whose bourgeoisie was too tied in with tsarism to carry out the democratic revolution. After the 1905 Russian Revolution and the demonstration of the capacity of the working class for nationwide political struggle, the historic mission for destroying tsarism shifted, in Lenin's view, from the task of external assault to the task of the Russian working class in alliance with the peasantry. As Brian Pearce wrote in "Lenin and Trotsky on Pacifism and Defeatism":

"The overwhelmingly important result of Tsarist Russia's defeat in 1905, however, was to put an end to the 'special question' of Russia as a question to be solved on the international plane. Whereas Marx and Engels had had to decide in all international conflicts which outcome would be most disadvantageous to Russia, and work for that, and even to incite war against Russia, from 1905 onward the liquidation of Tsarism could be safely left to the Russian working class, which had now stepped into world history."

--reprinted in What Is
Revolutionary Leadership,
Spartacist Publishers, 1973

Thus, by World War I, revolutionary defeatism was no longer seen by Lenin as uniquely applicable to Russia; it had become an obligation for the labor movements in all the belligerent countries in an imperialist war. In "Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up" Lenin states explicitly that Marx and Engels' distinction between "whole reactionary nations" which become "outposts" of Russian reaction and "revolutionary nations" was no longer applicable and could be resurrected only to defend social chauvinism. And this is just as true in the Near East today as it was in Europe in World War I. To claim that Zionism of 1973 equals tsarism of 1848-1871--"the bulwark of reaction"--or that Israel is an imperialist outpost the way the South Slavs were Russian outposts, is to deny the existence of imperialism as the political and economic bond between foreign capital and the native Arab and Jewish bourgeoisies. It is a denial of the existence of a Hebrew working class whose historic mission is the destruction of Zionism. Instead it can only be an ideological defense of the Arab bourgeois-

sies and their false claims that it is they who will destroy Zionism and carry out the tasks of democracy in the Near East. In short, it is a denial of the permanent revolution in the Near East.

Zionist Paradise or Armed Fortress

"Imperialist outpost," and "imperialist fortress" are very good analogies in describing Israel. But a very good analogy can become a misleading and mistaken analogy if it is abused, especially by mistaking the analogy for the reality itself. To equate Israel with Trincomalee or the Sixth Fleet can be highly misleading indeed. For then one must, as you do, assert that since there can be no contradiction between imperialism and its outposts (whether the Sixth Fleet or the state of Israel), there can be no conflict between imperialism and the people of Israel. But on this point you equivocate by drawing a clearly false distinction between the "people of Israel" and the Israeli working class which, you agree, has an interest in ending imperialist oppression. To be consistent you must consider the Israeli working people as imperialist soldiers in the guise of workers. For if Israel is in reality an armed encampment of imperialism, a Trincomalee, one can hardly speak of classes or class struggle at all in regard to Israel, only of officers and enlisted men. And while some of the latter may perhaps desert, this is not class struggle within the imperialist fortress but, at best, mutiny. Further, one could hardly speak of the right to self-determination or any other rights for the Israeli people just as one does not speak of the right to self-determination for the British at Trincomalee. The only good one is a dead one.

In order to paint Israel as simply another Trincomalee you are forced to badly distort the reality of Israeli society. Thus we are told that Israel has "no unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks," that it is "without serious economic and social problems, without balance of payments problems, problems of increasing debts." But is this not the classless paradise of Zionist propaganda?

Self-Determination for the Hebrew Nation

We read that, among other things, Israel has "no unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks." Of course if you consistently contend that Israel is another Trincomalee then Israel has no unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks because it has no bourgeois-democratic rights (e.g., self-determination for the Hebrew-speaking people). However, you not only apply the right of self-determination to the Hebrew nation, you even claim that this right has existed since the beginning of the 20th century.

But prior to the mass migration of eastern European Jewry to Palestine in the 1930's there was no Hebrew nation either in Eastern Europe or the Levant. Lenin insists throughout his writings on the national question that in Eastern Europe, where over half the Jews in the world lived, Jews constituted a caste and not a nation. In "Critical Remarks on the National Question" he writes:

"Of the ten and a half million Jews in the world, somewhat over

a half live in Galicia and Russia, backward and semi-barbarous countries, where the Jews are forcibly kept in the status of a caste. The other half lives in the civilised world, and there the Jews do not live as a segregated caste."

--Critical Remarks on the National Question, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971, p. 14

and elsewhere:

"The Jews in Galicia and in Russia are not a nation; unfortunately (through no fault of their own but through that of the Purishkeviches), they are still a caste here."

--ibid., p. 17

Lenin himself did not even deem it worthwhile to ask whether the Zionist-Tolstoyan utopian communities in Palestine could be considered a nation. But at the Second Congress of the Comintern, when considering the application of the left-wing Zionist group Poale Zion to join the CI, the Congress emphatically rejected the conception that that the Zionist settler-colony in Palestine could be considered a nation. However, there is no doubt that by the defeat of the Palestinian Arab Revolt in 1939, the Zionists had consolidated a closed Jewish economic community with 400,000 members that occupied a specific region of Palestine and could be considered a nation.

Yet, while claiming that there has existed a Hebrew nation with the right to self-determination since the beginning of the 20th century, you also state that Israel "is not the realization of self-determination for the Hebrew nation." By 1947 there existed a Hebrew nation in Palestine with the right to self-determination nonetheless, from the standpoint of the interests of democracy (much less those of the socialist revolution), the Hebrew nation did not have the right to exercise self-determination, i.e., to form an independent Hebrew-speaking political state at the expense of the Palestinian Arab nation. The SWP wrote in a Militant editorial following the first truce of the 1948 war:

"Haven't the Jewish people the right to self-determination and statehood as other peoples? Yes--but even if we abstracted this question from its aforementioned social reality the fact remains they cannot carve out a state at the expense of the national rights of the Arab peoples. This is not self-determination but conquest of another people's territory."

--Militant, 31 May 1948

To this the Shachtmanites responded with an article by Hal Draper called "How to Defend Israel," which characterized the SWP position in the following way:

"A dishonest reply. (1) It means that the Jews have a right to self-determination but no right to exercise it. This does not make sense. One may, as we said, advise against its exercise in favor of a different course; but it is pure fakery to grant the

right and in the same breath denounce its exercise as 'conquest of another people's territory'."

--New International, July 1948

This passage shows not how contradictory the "Cannonites" were, but rather how far down the path from Trotskyism to social democracy the Shachtmanites had traveled. From the standpoint of some sort of Wilsonian democracy, a right is right and everything else is subordinate. However, for Leninists:

"The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a small part of the general-democratic (now: general-socialist) world movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected."

--Critical Remarks on the National Question, p. 132

In this particular case, the exercise of the right of self-determination by the Hebrew nation during 1947-48 contradicted the general interests of democracy and the socialist revolution in the Near East and therefore had to be rejected. Thus, we opposed the 1947 partition plan and the formation of the Israeli state. But while it is one thing to take these positions, it is quite another to deny that in 1947-48 the Hebrew nation did in fact constitute itself as a sovereign state.

Your attempt to hold at the same time that Israel is simply an "imperialist fortress" and that there exists within this fortress a Hebrew nation with the right to self-determination leads you to the following contradictions: (1) "...it is necessary to consider the Jewish people of Palestine (Israel) apart from their Zionist overlords who are pliant tools of imperialism." However: "There are no issues on which the anti-imperialist struggle is posed for the people of Israel." (2) "...especially since the first decade of the 20th century there was the question of the self-determination of the Hebrew people." And: Israel "is not the realization of self-determination for the Hebrew nation." But: "...in this State of Israel there are no unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks." Thus the people of Israel are both oppressed and not oppressed by imperialism, they constitute a Hebrew nation whose national rights are unresolved in a state for which there are no unresolved democratic rights. This is indeed a "unique" and contradictory phenomenon.

If you contend that in this sea of backwardness, within its little "fortress," imperialism has carried out a bourgeois-democratic revolution, then it indeed has performed a miracle in the land of miracles (and disproven the theory of the Permanent Revolution to boot). But if you accept the view that Israel is composed of peoples who, like all other peoples have a "right" to democratic rights, then Israel certainly has unresolved bourgeois-democratic tasks. To this a myriad of other peoples can attest: the deposed Palestinians of the East Bank, Gaza or the Syrian and Lebanese refugee camps; the Palestinian Arabs on the West Bank under military occupation; the 300,000 Palestinian Arabs in Israel; the so-called Black or Sephardic

Jewry who make up a majority of the population of Israel and who suffer under racial and ethnic discrimination. Israel is a racist, clericalist, chauvinist state that has not even resolved such basic democratic questions as the separation of synagogue and state. Even for its "own" Jews Israel has not resolved many of the bourgeois-democratic tasks.

The Reality of Israeli Society

You state that Israel is "without serious economic and social problems." Even if we accept that this country of three million is nothing but another Trincomalee, allowed to lap up the drippings from imperialist oil money, there still is at least one glaring social problem. This is the social problem that results from being an "imperialist fortress" in a state of continuous war mobilization, under the whip of "emergency regulations" that are the legacy of the British Mandate and under the yoke of 30 percent yearly inflation and the highest tax rate in the world. The fruits of being an "imperialist fortress" are the 2,500 Israelis killed in the October War, the continuous tension of being a besieged country and bearing the burning and justified hatred of the majority of the people in the surrounding area. Furthermore, if there are no economic and social problems, how are we to account for the massive strike waves that shook Israeli society (which according to Zionist mythology is supposed to be classless) in 1951, 1962 and 1970?

You also state that Israel is "free of imperialist exploitation." Then what kind of society is it? Is it socialist? Does Israel exploit imperialism? Is this "unique phenomenon" some new kind of state whose economic life is one giant PX (army base store), subsidized by imperialism without being exploited by imperialism? Much is made out of the fact that Israel is a "schnorring" (Yiddish for begging) state, living off alms from world Jewry and German guilt money (now dried up) for the Nazi Holocaust. (This delightful and perfectly accurate description, "schnorring," was coined by the cranky anti-Zionist Jewish cultural nationalist Moshe Menuhin in his Decadence of Modern Jewry.) There is no question that an advanced European capitalist order could not have been developed or sustained in the sea of backwardness which is the Near East without the unilateral capital transfers from schnorring. It should be pointed out that Israel is coming more and more to resemble an ordinary capitalist state as, for instance, more of this capital transfer consists of capital investment. Moreover, fruits and flowers are not the chief exports of Israel. In 1970 it exported \$244.6 million in polished diamonds, \$96.5 million in textile and clothing and only \$88.6 million in agricultural products. Of all the capital transfers from 1949-1965, 51.5 percent came from world Jewry, 41 percent from German reparations and 7.4 percent consisted of direct aid from the U.S. Although the public sector (Histadruth and government) is still the biggest capitalist in Israel, there is a tendency toward denationalization and every encouragement is given to foreign investment. Of the domestic product as a whole, industry accounts for 25 percent, government and public services 19.5 percent, private commerce and services 18.5 percent and agriculture 8.2 percent.

Is Israel exploited by imperialism? Certainly. Even where foreign firms do not engage in the direct extraction of surplus value at the point of production, they get their cut through marketing or selling Israel raw materials (e.g., the British Diamond Trading Syndicate of London), or manufactured goods. (McDonnell Douglas does not donate Phantom jets for United Jewish Appeal fund drives; it sells them for hard cash.)

Of course, imperialism's main interest in Israel is not its profitability in economic terms. One can make the same arguments in regard to Jordan which does not even have polished diamonds and which has as its primary exports potash, tomatoes, fruits and nuts. How is it that Jordan, a country of nomads and desert which has a per capita income of \$280 per year (1969), manages to have an army equipped with the most advanced weapons, planes and tanks that the U.S. and British technology have to offer? How has Jordan maintained a trade imbalance every year since the June '67 War where imports are seven times greater than exports, without experiencing a balance of payments crisis? (For Israel imports are traditionally twice as great as exports.) Just as the major portion of compensation for the deficit in Israel's trade balance comes from world Jewry, so the major contribution to making up the difference in Jordan's trade balance is from the oil kingdoms and sheikdoms. Another portion consists of direct aid from the U.S. to which even the Ford Foundation pays a small contribution. The rest is made up by so-called "development loans" of which the main lenders are AID, IDA, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and West Germany. Imperialism is no more interested in Jordan solely for her potash, tomatoes, fruits and nuts than it is interested in Israel for its polished diamonds, fruits and textiles. Imperialism allows itself to be "exploited" by both Jordan and Israel--it allows both these states to "schnorr" upon it--because they both serve common functions: as "outposts" and "client states of imperialism" and as part of the 'balkanization of the Near East.

Development of the Hashemite Kingdom

An examination of the history of the area bears out the aptness of the description of an "outpost," "armed encampment," or "fortress" of imperialism as applied to Jordan. How is it that the sons of the dynastic rulers of nomadic tribes in the Hijaz of Western Arabia, the Hashemites, came to occupy the thrones of Jordan and, until 1958, Iraq?

In the Balfour Declaration the Zionists were promised a "homeland" in Palestine in order to mobilize Jewish public opinion behind the Allies during World War I and provide for British imperialism a means of balkanizing the Ottoman Empire and "a very effective guard for the Suez." During the same period, similarly, in the Hussein-McMahon agreement, the British promised to Faisal and Abdullah, the sons of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, "independent" Arab kingdoms (restoration of the Caliphate) if they would mobilize their tribes against the Turks. (This is the irregular warfare romanticized in Lawrence of Arabia.) But in the Sykes-Picot treaty (1916) the British agreed to give Lebanon and Syria to France. When Faisal went to Damascus to crown himself king of "Greater Syria," the French drove him out. As consolation Britain gave Iraq to Faisal and carved out a

completely new entity, Transjordan, from Palestine and gave it to Abdullah. In 1925 Ibn Saud, the ruler of Eastern Arabia, drove Hussein Ibn-Ali out of Hijaz and consolidated all of Arabia into one kingdom, Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world named after its ruler. The center of the Hashemite Dynasty was simply switched to Jerusalem, Baghdad and Amman. Faisal's descendants ruled Iraq until the 1958 republican rebellion. The grandson of Abdullah, Hussein, still rules what has become the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Transjordan Army, or Arab Legion, was raised, trained, equipped and officered entirely by the British and until 1950 was under the command of the British Middle East Forces. During World War II the Arab Legion participated with the British in the suppression of Rashid Ali's uprising in Iraq and in campaigns against Vichy Syria. The Arab Legion was used along with British forces to police Palestine and participated in the breaking of the 1936 Palestinian Arab general strike and in the suppression of the subsequent guerilla warfare.

Where are to be found, through World War II, the confrontations between the "feudo-capitalist rulers" (the Hashemites of Iraq and Transjordan) and imperialism? The kingdoms of Iraq and Transjordan were artificially carved out of the dismembered Ottoman Empire and given to the sons of desert tribal chieftains who roamed, pillaged and occasionally ruled what is now Saudi Arabia. These "kingdoms" were superimposed upon peoples who had suffered already hundreds of years under the yoke of foreign rule which had created artificial political entities exacerbating real ethnic, national and religious differences. (Thus the Kurdish peoples were divided between Iran and Iraq. The elite Arab Legion was entirely recruited from Bedouin tribes whose tyranny was bitterly resented by the pastoral and farming population in Palestine and on the East Bank.) In the case of Transjordan, this elite army became the only imperialist raison d'être for the state; its chief "industry" was and continues to be the Arab Legion. Here, what Y. Rad says of the Haganah in his article on the 1948 war, and which you quote in your letter to Robertson, can also be said of the Arab Legion:

"This army had experience that had been acquired at the time of the suppression of the 'Arab revolt' and at the time of the second imperialist war. Most of its commanders were simply former British army officers." (your emphasis)

--quoted in Letter to Robertson,
p.14

The 1948 War

What of the 1948 Arab-Israel war of which you claim "that what the Arab masses, including the feudalists and bourgeoisie were seeking in 1948 was to demolish the 'imperialist fortress' of Israel and that it was on their side an anti-imperialist struggle"? As every historical commentator has asserted, Abdullah and his Arab Legion entered the 1948 war not to demolish the "imperialist fortress" of Israel but to extend the "imperialist fortress" of Transjordan to those parts of Palestine allotted to the Palestinian Arabs by the UN partition. In particular, Abdullah wanted to annex the

West Bank and crown himself "king of Jerusalem." The entire course of the 1948 war was predetermined by agreements worked out in meetings between Abdullah and Golda Meyerson (Meir). Both the Zionists, represented by Meir, and Abdullah agreed that their greatest enemy was an independent Palestine and their common goal was its destruction. Abdullah made it quite clear that he had no intention of attacking those areas allotted to Israel under the mandate; he wanted to rule over only those areas allotted to the Arabs. The agreement broke down over who was to get Jerusalem which was supposed to be "internationalized" under the UN partition scheme.

The importance of Jerusalem was not just symbolic or mystical. Prior to the development of oil extraction, Saudi Arabia's major source of income was the taxation of the Muslim pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca. Jerusalem, as the center of three religions, offered the promise of a lucrative pilgrim-tourist business which, next to agriculture, was the mainstay of the Jordanian economy prior to the 1967 war. Nonetheless, one should never underestimate the role that religious obscurantism and fanaticism play in these things. The Saudi king, for example, gave as his main reason for launching the recent oil boycott not striking a blow against U.S. imperialism or even against its "fortress" in the Levant but regaining the "third most holy city of Islam," Jerusalem, for the Arabs.

Although the other Arab League forces (Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia) entered the 1948 war to counter Abdullah's ambitions, since Abdullah's Arab Legion was the only modern, effective fighting force in the Arab League, he was able to dictate battle strategy. The Arab League intervention was therefore subordinated to Abdullah's desire to annex the West Bank and, principally, Jerusalem.

Can it be said that the 1948 war was an "anti-imperialist struggle" on the side of the Arab Legion? Were the dismemberment and destruction of the Palestinian nation and the annexation of the West Bank and half (the "Old City") of Jerusalem blows against imperialism in the Near East? To portray the Arab Legion's intervention into Palestine in 1948 as anti-imperialist and therefore to call for its military victory (a position of revolutionary defensism), then one must "enjoy" the spoils of that victory, the reconstructed "Hashemite Kingdom" over the Palestinian dispossessed.

And are we to support the intervention of the "fraternal" Hashemite Kingdom, Iraq, which was the most bellicose (if least effective) of the Arab League forces in 1948? As we point out in our article on the 1948 war in WV No. 45, within the Arab League "...the Iraqi prime minister Salah Jabr...was the most radical in his rhetoric and proposals, calling for immediate armed intervention. Jabr knew he was sitting on a volcano of social unrest at home and needed the diversion a 'Holy War' against Zionism would bring." Here is one description of what Iraq was like during this period:

"The nation's three million fellahin continued to till their soil as unimaginationally, and as unproductively, as their fathers before them. Several thousand rural families, pouring into Baghdad each spring to escape the Tigris floodwaters, lived in mud

huts or wretched encampments on vacant lots. No one bothered to tend to their needs. Those responsible for the nation's welfare were less than a thousand tribal sheikhs, who owned two thirds of the land and virtually controlled the parliament."

--Europe Leaves the Middle East 1936-54, Howard M. Sachar, New York, 1972, p. 430

What we did not have space to discuss in our article and what is left unsaid by the bourgeois historian quoted above, is that Iraq had the most class-conscious proletariat in the Arab East. According to the Stalinist Soviet Encyclopedia (1947), the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) controlled 18 unions with 38,000 members, though this figure is probably exaggerated. But even anti-communists, like Laqueur (in his Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East, New York, 1956), accept the fact that the ICP controlled such strategic unions as the railway workers with 1,500 members in the period 1946-48. In 1946 the ICP led a total general strike in Kirkuk which was ruthlessly suppressed by the police and army. This was followed by strikes of the rail workers, postal workers and printers. The government dissolved the unions, persecuted the ICP members and finally arrested the entire ICP leadership in January 1947.

The January 1948 rebellion, while sparked by the Portsmouth Treaty signed with the British, was actually a renewed upsurge of months of sharp social struggle and resulted in the bringing down of the Jabr government. Various nationalist parties participated in the January demonstrations and strikes but the Stalinists played a leading role. The resignation of the hated Jabr and the rescinding of the Portsmouth Treaty momentarily suppressed a situation bordering on the pre-revolutionary, only to resurge in March with a nationwide rail strike which paralyzed communications and which was joined by a sympathy strike of Baghdad students.

None of the Arab League members, including the Hashemite "brother kingdoms" of Transjordan and Iraq, were able to commit the bulk of their forces to the "anti-imperialist" struggle against the Israeli "fortress" because they were busy suppressing genuinely anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles at home. Both the Kirkuk general strike and the demonstrations against the Portsmouth Treaty were seen by the entire population as blows against British imperialism. Most political parties joined with the Stalinists in both actions. Social upheaval continued at home throughout the Arab League intervention in Palestine-Israel.

Are we to support the ICP-led strike wave and anti-British agitation even if it cut across the mobilizing, support and participation of the Iraqi Army in besieging the "imperialist fortress"? If one must choose between the struggle against an "outpost of imperialism" and a mere "client state of imperialism" (Iraq), shouldn't one subordinate the [latter to the former]? Of course we would both agree with the Leninist formulation that "the main enemy is at home." And we must also agree with Trotsky when he writes:

"Imperialism is a highly powerful force in the internal relationships of China. The main source of this force is not the warships in the waters of the Yangtse Kiang--they are only auxiliaries--but the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie."

--"The Chinese Revolution and the Theses of Comrade Stalin," (1927), reprinted in Problems of the Chinese Revolution, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1967, p. 21

The main source of the force of imperialism in the Near East is neither the warships of the Sixth Fleet in the waters of the Mediterranean nor the "imperialist outpost" of Israel; it is the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie. In the same article Trotsky writes:

"A workers' strike--small and large--and agrarian rebellion, an uprising of the oppressed sections in city and country against the usurer, against the bureaucracy, against the local military satraps, all that arouses the multitudes, that welds them together, that educates, steels, is a real step forward on the road to the revolutionary and social liberation of the Chinese people."

--ibid., p. 22

Might not Trotsky have written the same thing of the Kirkuk general strike, the demonstrations against the Portsmouth Treaty and the continuation of anti-British, anti-capitalist social struggles throughout the 1948 war? The defeat of the Egyptian armies led to a destabilization of the Farouk regime and to the 1952 Free Officer coup that threw out the King and the British. But this is a vindication of the position of revolutionary defeatism more than anything else. Jordan is the only Arab regime which one could call victorious in the war. It is ruled by the hated, reactionary Hashemites to this day.

One can say regarding all the Arab regimes: for them the 1948 war was not an anti-imperialist struggle but a diversion of the anti-imperialist struggle. Each country was facing a severe threat to its own internal stability. This is the viewpoint of every serious commentator on the 1948 war.

The Question of Support of Israel in 1948

As you know, we have previously held the position of military support for the Haganah against the Arab League forces on the grounds that the war posed the question of national survival for the Hebrew nation. Under more careful examination of the historical facts of the 1948 war, an examination to which the excellent article by Y. Rad (WV No. 35) was an important contribution, it became clear that our belief that an Arab League victory would have meant the destruction of both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking nations was erroneous.

Given the Meyerson-Abdullah agreements, the co-equal strengths of the Haganah and the Arab League forces at the start of the 1948 war in May and the Haganah's rapidly acquired superiority, it became obvious that, despite all the "drive the Jews into the sea" rhetoric, the Arab League had neither the capacity nor the intention to drive the Jews into the sea. As there was no basis for revolutionary defensism on the side of the Haganah, we could only have been defeatist.

It is important to point out that the change in our understanding represented the acquisition of additional historical material--not a change in methodology. If the survival of the Hebrew nation were indeed threatened, then our position toward the forces of the "armed encampment" of imperialism would be revolutionary defensism. And this must be your position if you accept that the people who constitute the Zionist "outpost of imperialism" also constitute a nation with the right to self-determination. This must include the right to fight for their own survival under the gun of an irredentist and genocidal war.

The 1948 War and the Palestinian Arab Nation

The only nation for which the question of national survival was placed on the agenda by the 1948 war was the Palestinian Arab nation. The 1948 war was a war for territorial aggrandizement in which armies of both sides struggled to occupy that portion of the territory allotted to the Palestinian Arabs under the UN partition scheme of November 1947. To support either side in 1948 is to support them against the Palestinians--not against imperialism. Had the Palestinian Arabs been able to launch an independent military force, we would have called for revolutionary defensism and military support against both the Arab League and the Haganah. From the standpoint of both democracy and socialist revolution, this would have been the only just war.

Due to the treachery of the Palestinian effendis (who fled after the UN voted for partition), and the double treachery of the Palestinian Stalinists (who for twenty years had tailed after the Palestinian effendis only to swallow the Moscow line in 1947 and come out for the UN partition scheme), the Palestinian masses were left leaderless. As a result there was no independent Palestinian Arab military force to defend. The Palestinian Arab population simply fled before Haganah-Irgun-Stern Gang terror.

Relationships with the Imperialists

We must examine the relationship of Israeli and Arab forces to British and American imperialism. Nowhere does Y. Rad in his article claim that the "1948 war on the side of Israel was 'anti-imperialist' (British imperialism)." In fact he states just the opposite when he writes:

"Anti-imperialist war means to retreat--on the orders of American imperialism--from the one battle Zionism conducted against British imperialism, as can be seen from the terminating of the fighting in the Sinai."

But this does not mean that continued Jewish immigration and consolidation of the Israeli state did not come into conflict with British imperialism. Following the 1936-39 "Arab Revolt" in Palestine (which, allow me to repeat, was suppressed by both the Jordanian Arab Legion and Haganah as well as British forces) the British and Zionists had a falling out. As we wrote in "Birth of a Zionist State, part 1":

"Twenty years of British imperialism in the Near East had, on the eve of World War II, turned many Arab governments pro-Axis. In order to shore up their shaky Arab support the British were quite willing to jilt their faithful Zionist servants. In 1939 they issued another "White Paper" which restricted Jewish immigration to 75,000 for the next five years and thereafter made it conditional on the consent of the Arab majority."

--WV No.33, p. 7

In addition to restricting immigration, the 1939 "White Paper" imposed restrictions on that other pillar of the Zionist effort to consolidate statehood: land purchases. During and after World War II the British did everything possible to enforce the White Paper of 1939. The ports and borders of Palestine were closely patrolled by the British forces to stop illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants, most of whom had escaped the Nazi concentration and death camps, were placed in British concentration camps in Cyprus, when caught. When the British navy captured one of the wretched, unseaworthy ships carrying Jewish refugees, it was either forced to return to its point of origin or ruthlessly sunk.

After World War II, the concentration and death camps passed into the hands of the "Allies." Instead of facilitating the transit of these victims of Nazi barbarism to strengthen the "imperialist fortress" in Palestine, the concentration camps were rechristened "displaced person" camps and the desperate Jewish survivors from genocidal Nazism were subjected to "democratic" imperialist incarceration. Neither the U.S. nor England would offer sanctuary to these Jews, who probably numbered at most 250,000, and could readily have been assimilated into either country. As Bevin put it, Truman probably came around to the scheme to have these Jews sent to Palestine not so much from the pressure of the Zionist lobby, nor from military considerations (the military establishment was opposed to U.S. support for Zionist statehood as they believed it cut across U.S. penetration into the Arab countries), but because Truman wanted to remove an embarrassing problem from U.S.-occupied Germany and he did not want these Jews in New York. Bevin adamantly opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine not because he had suddenly become an Arab nationalist, but because war-weakened British imperialism could not afford the additional costs of suppressing heightened Palestinian Jewish-Arab intercommunal strife that would likely result from further immigration.

After World War II, Zionist conflict with British imperialism intensified. As we pointed out in our article on the 1948 war, a state of civil war existed between British and Zionist forces from

1945 through the British departure in May 1948. Blowing up the King David Hotel, British military headquarters, was merely the most spectacular incident. This was hardly the behavior of an "imperialist fortress." To assert that Zionism, because of its "unique" character, can never come into conflict with imperialism, or that Zionist raison d'état can never be in contradiction with its imperialist sponsor, is to disregard entirely the actual history of Palestine from 1945-48. Even Maxime Rodinson, who could never be accused of Zionist sympathies, is forced to admit that during the period of British withdrawal from November 1947 to May 1948:

"It is true that the Arab armies enjoyed some British support on various levels. But this support, which was clandestine and non-official, was also limited...many decisions on a local level favored the Arabs. In a series of cases, the English soldiers warned the Arabs of imminent English evacuation of a garrison, thereby (often) permitting the Arabs to seize it. Numerous British weapons seem to have found their way into the hands of the Arabs in such cases."

Further Rodinson writes:

"The very day after the partition plan was announced, on November 30, 1947, at dawn, Arab attacks announced the Arab refusal to accept the Jewish state. The guerrilla struggle began right away, in the presence of the British soldiers, who observed a neutrality that was somewhat partial to the Arabs."

--Israel: A Colonial Settler State?, Monad Press, 1973, pp. 71-72

This is certainly not the proper way to treat one's "imperialist outpost."

The Arab League, Agent of British Imperialism

The Arab League was very much the agent of British imperialism during this period. It was sponsored by the English in 1945; its meetings were regularly attended by leading British officers and representatives of the Colonial Office. Its armies were officered, equipped and trained by the British. Adopting your analysis one cannot account for the fact that the Zionists and the Arab League clashed in 1948 unless one claims that the Arab League was anti-imperialist. In that case--which imperialism? Imperialism does not exist in the abstract as a disembodied oppressive force emanating from the West. Imperialism is a specific economic relationship between specific countries; it is the bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie, to use Trotsky's expression. Similarly, it is inexplicable that in 1967 the Jordanian Army, which was just as much a tool of American imperialism then as it was of British imperialism before the Korean War, clashed with Israel, also the tool of U.S. imperialism, unless one claims that the Jordanian Army in 1967 was anti-imperialist, simply and solely because Israel was on the other side. And one must hold these positions regardless of the results of these wars. In the case of 1948 the result was the de-

struction of the Palestinian nation and its annexation by Jordan and a smaller part [by] Egypt as well as by Israel. The 1967 defeat destabilized the Hashemite throne and led to the 1970 Civil War in which the "anti-imperialist" Hashemites of 1948 and 1967 proved themselves as the gravediggers of Palestinian resistance. Here, what was said of Israel in our resolution on the 1967 war reprinted in Spartacist No. 11 can be said of all the Arab states involved in the 1948 war: they are not mere puppets or "outposts" of imperialism but weak allies which act in conjunction with imperialism for their own interests. Of course, the weaker and more dependent on imperialism these countries are, the less room to maneuver and the more subservient they will be. (In this category Israel and Jordan, each carved out of Palestine, are really a pair. While other states, with valuable resources and somewhat more viable economies can pursue somewhat more independent paths. Examples of the latter would be Iran, Iraq and, to a much lesser degree, Saudi Arabia.)

The fact that the Zionists came into conflict with British imperialism in the period following World War II does not convert Zionism into an anti-imperialist force. Nor does it mean that we should have supported the Zionists militarily during this period. The same is true in Ireland where the Ulster Unionists frequently come into conflict with British imperialism. For example in the recent Ulster Unionist general strike against the British-sponsored Ulster Executive, we could certainly not have supported the Unionists. As Lenin pointed out in "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism":

"Hence, it is not every struggle against imperialism that we should support. We will not support a struggle of the reactionary classes against imperialism; we will not support an uprising of the reactionary classes against imperialism and capitalism."
(emphasis in original)

--Collected Works, Vol. 23, p.63,
Moscow, 1974

Just as a Unionist victory over British imperialism can only lead to reactionary pogroms and inter-communal warfare in Ulster, so the Zionist "victory" over British imperialism could only set the stage for the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland.

I believe that you hold that Zionism could never come into conflict with imperialism. It is important to stress that the Zionists, for their own vital self-interests, did come into conflict with British imperialism (e.g., over the question of immigration). But this conflict was by no means progressive.

I believe that you hold that any conflict with imperialism (e.g., the recent Arab oil boycott) is inherently progressive.

"U.S. imperialist interest was explicitly spelled out in a study done by a government interdepartmental committee (Navy, Army, Commerce, Interior, State) entitled 'U.S. Petroleum Policy.' The policy as stated was to:
'...seek the removal or modification of existent barriers (legal, contractual or otherwise) on the expansion of American foreign

oil operations and facilitate the entry, or reentry of private foreign capital into countries where the absence of such capital inhibits development'."

--quoted in Limits of Power,
Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, 1972

Prior to World War II the Near East was primarily a British "sphere of influence." The "barriers (legal, contractual or otherwise)" referred to above were presented by the British. The postwar history of the Near East is one of the successful replacement of the British by the penetration of U.S. capital and "influence." For example, prior to World War II, U.S. firms controlled 10% of the oil resources in the Near East and British firms 72%. By the June 1967 Israeli-Arab War, U.S. firms controlled 59% and the British 29%. The U.S. systematically replaced the British in Greece and Turkey in 1947, in Palestine in 1948, in Iran in 1951 and Jordan in 1957. Saudi Arabia has been a battleground of inter-imperialist rivalries between the U.S. and the British, with the U.S. dominant, since 1943.

Y. Rad's characterization of the 1948 war as an "imperialist war" does indeed seem to be incorrect. In our article on the 1948 war we write:

"While the imperialist powers certainly had an interest in and intervened to shape the outcome of the conflict, it is not possible to consider the struggle on either side as anti-imperialist. Thus the Israelis were aided by the U.S. and the USSR (diplomatically and, at least indirectly, militarily), while the Egyptians, Iraqis and Jordanians all received British military aid. (On the other hand, not only the Israelis but each of the Arab countries involved was assiduously pursuing its own national aims, so that it is likewise impossible to reduce the war to a simple great power conflict.)"

-- WV No.45, p. 11

The Trotskyist Position During the 1948 War

One last point on the 1948 war must be mentioned. Your position, that on the side of the Arab League forces it was an anti-imperialist struggle and therefore we should take a revolutionary defensist position towards the Arab League forces, is a position which is in fundamental conflict with the position held by the Trotskyist movement at the time.

Both before the entry of the Arab League forces into Palestine/Israel, when the fighting was between the Haganah on one side and Kaukji's Arab Liberation Army irregulars (financed and under the command of the Arab League) backed up by Palestinian Arab partisans on the other side, and after the Arab League forces had entered the conflict on 15 May 1948, the position of the Trotskyist movement was revolutionary defeatism on the Arab as well as the Zionist side. For example, an article written before the entry of the Arab League forces entitled "Against the Stream" (reprinted in Fourth International, May 1948 as "The Trotskyist Position on Palestine") adamantly

and explicitly argues against the conception of this war as anti-imperialist on any side:

"Each side is 'anti-imperialist' to the bone, busy detecting the reactionary--in the opposite camp. And imperialism is always seen helping the other side. But this kind of exposure is oil on the imperialist fire. For the inveigling policy of imperialism is based upon agents and agencies within both camps. Therefore, we say to the Palestine people in reply to the patriotic warmongers: Make this war between Jews and Arabs, which serves the end of imperialism, the common war of both nations against imperialism!

"The only way to peace between the two peoples of this country is turning the guns against the instigators of murder in both camps."

--Fourth International,
May 1948, p. 88

Likewise, after the Arab League forces had entered the war, the SWP wrote in an editorial in the 31 May 1948 Militant:

"The present Jewish-Arab war, far from enhancing reactionary Zionism or imparting to it a progressive mission, exposes in glaring manner that the program of a Jewish state in Palestine and the Jewish war for this end--is reactionary and bankrupt from beginning to end....Neither are the Arab rulers conducting a progressive struggle for national independence and against imperialism. They are, by their anti-Jewish war, trying to divert the struggle against imperialism and utilizing the aspirations of the Arab masses for national freedom, to smother the social opposition to their tyrannical rule. That is why their war against the Jewish state lacks the progressive characteristics of a national war against imperialism and does not deserve the support of class conscious workers."

Just because the official position of the FI in 1948 towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was revolutionary defeatism on both sides, does not make that, ipso facto, the correct position. But it is worthwhile to compare the position taken by the FI in 1948 in the Arab-Israeli conflict of that year to the position taken by the United Secretariat towards the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. In comparing the two wars, it should be recognized from the outset that if revolutionary defensism is inapplicable toward the Arab side in 1948, then most certainly it is inapplicable in 1967.

While the 1948 war destroyed the Palestinian nation and brought into being the Israeli state through a series of reactionary annexations, the 1967 war was simply and solely one of territorial aggrandizement, a struggle to annex and oppress the remainder of the Palestinian Arab people and nation on the part of both the Israelis and the participating Arab countries, especially Egypt and Jordan. Therefore, while not in itself conclusive, it is significant to recognize that the position of the FI before its decisive Pabloite degeneration, when it was still attempting to view world events from a proletarian perspective, was that of revolutionary defeatism

on both sides in the 1948 war. In fact, I am not aware of any tendency within the FI at that time which held your position of giving military support to and calling for the victory of the "anti-imperialist" Arab League. On the other hand, in 1967 the Pabloite United Secretariat, after it generalized the Algerian and Cuban experiences into a petty bourgeois nationalist and guerrillaist perspective for (at least) the colonial world, adopted with much less justice a position of revolutionary defensism on the side of the Arab states in 1967. As far as I am aware, this position was opposed by no one within the United Secretariat at the time though we are aware of your protests against the excesses to which the USec position was carried. However, I would contend that these excesses, namely the slopping over of military defense into political support, and the claim that at least Syria was some sort of "progressive" and even "revolutionary" regime, followed from the position of military defense in this case. The 1967 war was a war between states for territory which belonged to none of them. Only if one contends that one side was inherently and fundamentally more progressive than the other side (i.e. the USSR and Finland in 1940) could one argue for revolutionary defense in the 1967 war.

The 1956 War

While we share the same programmatic conclusion concerning the 1956 war in the Near East, namely revolutionary defensism on the side of Nasser, your attempt to defend your conception of Israel as a "unique phenomenon" and as an "imperialist outpost" leads you to make rather peculiar statements about this war.

"It is an extraordinary course of conduct for a very small country of less than 2 million people to get on the side of imperialist giants in military operations against Egypt when, at the time, Egypt had given no cause for Israel's action. And moreover, Israel was ready to identify itself with what was unqualified and naked imperialist aggression by UK-French imperialism against Egypt and that in the year 1956, not in the 18th or early 19th century."

--Letter to Robertson,
9 February 1974, IDB No. 3

The classic phrase to describe the role of imperialism in Africa, Asia and the Near East is balkanization. The whole history of the Balkans, from the Congress of Berlin of 1878 (a Congress which, by the way, might very well be said to have marked the beginning of the epoch of imperialism) has been a history of very small nations getting on the side of imperialist giants in various military operations. For example, Trotsky, in "The Balkan Question," wrote:

"The mere existence of Austria-Hungary, this Turkey of Middle Europe, blocks the way to the natural self-determination of the peoples of the South East. It compels them to keep constantly fighting against each other, to seek support against each other from the outside, and so makes them a tool of the

political combinations of the Great Powers."

--reprinted in War and the International, 1915, Young Socialist Publication, 1971

The Congress of Berlin was to the Balkans, to European Turkey, what Versailles was to the Near East, to Asian Turkey. In the epoch of imperialism there are countless examples of such alliances; they are, in fact, the norm. To mention just one: the very small country of New Zealand which took the side of the imperialist giant, the U.S., in its military operations in Vietnam. What cause did North Vietnam provide for New Zealand to enter the unqualified and naked imperialist aggression against it? Perhaps New Zealand is also an "outpost of imperialism."

The Pabloite Analysis of the Near East Wars

In dealing with the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, I would like to return to a point I made earlier. Between 1948, when the Trotskyist movement had taken a revolutionary defeatist position on both sides of the conflict, and 1967, when the United Secretariat took a position of support to the Arab side, the organized Trotskyist movement had undergone Pabloite degeneration. (As I shall demonstrate, neither their position on 1967, nor the Healyites' position, should be confused with revolutionary defensism.)

Of particular importance was the revisionist response to Cuba, and, even more importantly, Algeria. It was Pablo's conception of Algeria as a piecemeal and irreversible structural transformation into some sort of workers state which was transposed to the Near East. In particular, a tendency crystallized around Maitan expressing the viewpoint that Egypt, and especially Syria, were undergoing a "cold revolution," i.e. a peaceful, piecemeal, gradual transformation towards some sort of working-class property relations and "revolutionary state." This position was to the right of even Pablo's Algerian position for it stated that this transformation was supposedly taking place without even the bonapartist mass mobilization and military confrontation that occurred in Algeria and Cuba. Not only did this transition from "state capitalism" to "revolutionary state" to workers state occur without the breaking up of the old capitalist state apparatus, it was claimed that this transformation took place under the direction and leadership of the old state apparatus, especially the officer corps of the old bourgeois army ("military socialism"). While the more extreme positions of Maitan on Syria and Egypt were partially rejected at the 1965 World Congress of the USec, the Pabloite methodology--the search for another class, another leadership, another "dynamic," other than the class struggle, to carry out socialist revolution--has been carried over into the 1967 USec position on the 1967 war. The USec resolution, "Fourth International Calls for Support to Arab Cause," ends with the following slogans:

"Long live the Arab revolution! Long live the revolutionary conquests of Syria and Egypt! Down with the Zionist State of

Israel and its imperialist partners and allies!"

--reprinted in World Outlook,
30 June 1967

A revolution is usually directed at a specific political entity, i.e., the ruling class of a specific state. But here we are presented with a revolution which appears to be a linguistic-cultural rather than a political entity (like calling for a "Hispanic Revolution" in Latin America or a "pan-Slavic revolution" in the Balkans). What does such a slogan mean to the 70 million people of the Near East who do not speak Arabic and who constitute a majority of the population of the area? What does "Arab Revolution" mean to the Kurds, South Sudanese Blacks, etc.? Furthermore, unlike the Cuban and Algerian Revolutions which actually occurred and therefore provide a material possibility for a long or short life, the "Arab Revolution" has not occurred, unless one identifies what has occurred in the bonapartist-militarist "republics" of Syria, Iraq and Egypt (and more recently the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen) with "Arab Revolution." Of course, "Arab Revolution" in the rhetoric of the Ba'athist and Nasserite regimes, like the catchword "African Socialism," is simply obscurantist-nationalist demagoguery and raison d'etat.

A later FI statement, "Fourth International Resolution on the Middle East Conflict," was even clearer in its equation of "Arab Revolution" with the "revolutionary conquests of Syria and Egypt." This resolution states:

"The fundamental feature of the June 1967 conflict was the confrontation between a capitalist state with very specific sociological and ideological traits, integrated in the imperialist system on a regional and world scale, and an ensemble of countries of colonial and semicolonial structure, in which the most dynamic element was represented by states that had at different stages adopted spectacular anti-imperialist measures. "The imperialist forces,...utilized the occasion to deliver a blow to the Arab states, particularly Egypt and Syria, in order to force back the freedom movement and postpone the settling of accounts in certain crucial instances."

--reprinted in World Outlook,
14 July 1967

The document goes on to mention "the gradual consolidation in Syria of a government in the vanguard of the progressive movement" and further:

"The perspective of the Arab revolution, in general, can only be that of a very hard and prolonged struggle which will probably take the most diverse forms, ranging from new military conflicts between states to guerrilla actions and a genuine people's war."

--reprinted in World Outlook,
14 July 1967

Clearly the USec position had nothing in common with revolutionary defensism, which poses that the proletariat, while maintaining their complete political independence, enter into a temporary military bloc to crush a common enemy (e.g. CCP-KMT against the Japanese). Nowhere in the resolution is there a hint of proletarian political independence through the building of Trotskyist parties in the Near East as the crucial task on the agenda. Instead, it is precisely those regimes which have crushed any working-class organizational independence (Egypt and Syria) which are hailed for their "revolutionary conquests" and their "spectacular anti-imperialist measures." (Except for the nationalization of the Suez Canal, with compensation, the latter simply do not exist.) The USec saw the petty-bourgeois bonapartist castes of the old bourgeois army leading the "Arab Revolution," not the Arab proletariat. As Ronald Segal, a commentator not unsympathetic to the Arab side, has noted: the USec's "vanguard" of the progressive Arab movement was "a Syrian regime of passionate revolutionary pretensions but with so tenuous a revolutionary content that the arming of the populace could scarcely have been contemplated for a moment..." (Whose Jerusalem: the Conflicts of Israel, p. 61, Bantam, 1974). Thus the USec's maximum program of "people's war," à la Algeria, was not even a possibility. The armed people would have "turned their guns the other way," i.e. against the bonapartist-military regimes, leaving only the minimum USec program of "conflicts between states."

Let us examine the USec resolution more closely. To begin with, is not the "ensemble of countries of colonial and semi-colonial structure" referred to in paragraph 1 (which includes everything from the Hashemites to Ba'athist colonels), also capitalist? Do they not also have "specific sociological and ideological traits" (namely a fellahin which is disenfranchised and whose emiseration grows in direct proportion to the enrichment of the "new" capitalist class, recruited from families of the military, the old "aristocracy" and the state bureaucracy)? Is not their "colonial and semi-colonial structure" a direct product of their integration into the imperialist system on a regional and world scale? But of course the resolution obscures these very questions with sociological jargon and vague formulations. Its justification for support of the Arab side leans on the revolutionary transformation of the Arab states on the one hand and the designation of Israel as simply a tool of imperialism on the other.

Healyite Response to the 1967 War

It is interesting to note that the Healyite response to the June 1967 conflict was to discover, along with Maitan and Pablo, the "Arab Revolution." But this position was adopted only after the June conflict. Immediately prior to the Six Day War, the SLL's Newsletter stated:

"In the same way that Nasution and Suharto used the confrontation with Malaysia to strengthen the Indonesian army against the Communists, so too in Egypt the ultra-reactionary officers entertain similar ambitions against the trade unions and the land hungry peasants. Israel is a good diversion, provided it isn't carried too far, is their motto.

"The corrupt and reactionary Arab bourgeois of Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Jeddah, Amman and Beirut hope to utilize the crisis as a bargaining lever to get concessions from the US imperialists in the form of loans, technical assistance and tariff cuts--not to mention surplus food deliveries.

"That is why they resort to the most reactionary methods in the conduct of their campaign against Israel: The calling of a 'holy war,' which was made by the leader of the Palestine Liberation Army, Shukairy, in Cairo, reveals the wretched and bankrupt policy of the Arab rulers today.

"...The only way to unify the Arab homeland is not by 'holy wars,' but by social revolution....Let us hope that if the war is not prevented by revolution, then at least the war will be followed by revolution."

--Newsletter, 3 June 1967, "Middle East Crisis, US Shows Its Hand"

However, in the very next issue of the Newsletter, dated 10 June 1967, a front page "Statement by the Political Committee of the Socialist Labor League" is headlined: "Hands Off the Arab Revolution." Here we read that "On Monday morning, June 5, 1967, the third round of the Arab Revolution began as Israeli and Egyptian jets screamed across the Arabian sky and tanks rattled across the desert." Thus "holy war" is converted into a revolutionary war. In a companion article by Michael Banda, also on the front page of this issue, we learn that the Nasser who was last week compared to Suharto and placed at the head of the "ultra-reactionary officers," is this week compared to Sukarno, Nkrumah and Ben Bella and his overthrow "will be a significant victory for imperialism in the Middle East."

As we mentioned elsewhere, the adaptation of Healy-Wohlforth simultaneously to Arab nationalism, Maoism and Vietnamese Stalinism, represented their definitive break with genuine Trotskyist continuity. The fact that the USec and the Healyites are the waste products of the Pabloite degeneration does not mean that we can place a minus wherever they place a plus and come up with the right position. Nonetheless, one should examine very carefully how this decisive political event united the entire spectrum of Pabloism and the Healyites in a fundamental revision of the 1948 Trotskyist position.

We are aware of the objections you raised at the time to the USec resolutions. In particular you objected to their characterization of Egypt and Syria as "progressive" regimes, their failure to point out that the national bourgeoisie are incapable of carrying out a consistent and effective struggle against imperialism, and their failure to denounce Stalinism for using Arab anti-imperialist struggles as pawns in the game of "peaceful co-existence."

In the case of the USec, it was a failure because they claimed that the national bourgeoisie could consistently and effectively carry out the struggle against imperialism. Your objection to their failure to criticize the Soviet Union assumes that the 1967 war was a struggle against imperialism, as in Vietnam, and therefore the Soviets were remiss in not lavishing even more military hardware on the Nasserite and Ba'athist regimes. Our position is that Soviet mili-

tary aid to the Nasserite and Ba'athist regimes is not different from Soviet aid to the Bandaranaike and Gandhi regimes, that is, "aid" to prevent the real struggle against imperialism which is first and foremost a struggle against those regimes by their respective working classes.

The only conceivable analysis consistent with support to the Arab regimes in the 1967 war is the analysis of USec-Healy that the bourgeois-nationalist regimes had in fact taken up the struggle against imperialism and for national liberation and therefore imperialism needed to strike back at these regimes through its "imperialist outpost" Israel. In 1956 we had a concrete anti-imperialist act to defend, the nationalization of the Suez Canal. In 1967, what was there to defend but the "revolutionary conquests" of bonapartist statification (not at all threatened by Israel which has a highly statified economy itself), and a vague promissory note co-signed by the Pabloites to "settle accounts in certain crucial instances"?

Whose Territory?

In your critique of the USec resolution you state: "It is imperative for revolutionary Marxists to state categorically that, while the Arab People's struggle to get back their territory, wrested from them by military aggression by Israel must be supported, that we do not deny the right of Jewish people to self-determination." But, in the main, the territory wrested from the Arab people by Israel's military aggression was land wrested by some other Arab people, namely the Arab people of Egypt and Jordan, from the Arab people of Palestine. We are opposed to the Israeli annexations and raise the imperative and unconditional demand of "no annexations; Israel out of the occupied territories." But we do not support the "Arab people's struggle to get back their territory" in the abstract, that is, the struggle of the Arab regimes of Jordan and Egypt to re-annex Palestine. We support only the right of the Palestinian Arabs to get back their territory and reconstruct their nation, not the Hashemite throne or the Egypt of the Mamelukes or the Syria of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Imperialist Outpost" and Palestinian Nationalism

I would like to discuss now the ideological role that the characterization of Israel as an "imperialist outpost" played in the Palestinian nationalist movement which rapidly grew in response to the defeat of the Arab regimes in the 1967 conflict. Prior to the September 1970 civil war in Jordan, the entire Palestinian nationalist/guerrillaist movement shared a common outlook toward the relationship between imperialism and Israel, on the one hand, and Palestinian national liberation, on the other. For example, the main political document of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Habash group states:

"The battle of liberation is directed firstly against Israel as a political, military and economic entity trying to mobilize approximately 2.5 million people to defend its racist-aggressive-expansionist entity and prevent the Palestinians from regaining their land, freedom and rights.

"...Through Israel, imperialism can fight the Arab revolutionary movement which aims at exterminating the imperialist presence in the Arab homeland. Thus Israel becomes a base and a power through which imperialism defends its presence and interests. Such a situation generates an organic unity between Israel and the Zionist movement on the one hand, and world imperialism on the other..."

--"The Political, Organizational and Military Report of the P.F.L.P.," February 1969, reprinted in Basic Political Documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement, Kadi, ed., pp. 185, 186

What follows from this characterization is a conception of Israel and imperialism as the "main enemy," the "primary contradiction." The reactionary Arab regimes are the "secondary contradiction" which can be dealt with only after Israel is destroyed. Israel is pictured as a society without conflicts with imperialism or internal social conflicts (e.g. class struggle), a uniform society commanding the unquestioning obedience of its inhabitants in its dirty work for the imperialists. Therefore, imperialist Israel can only be defeated the way that the U.S. army was defeated in Vietnam, through "protracted people's war," which, before September 1970, never advanced further than irregular partisan or guerrilla war. But it was "Arab reaction" in the guise of the Hashemite throne which crushed the Palestinian commando movement, not "imperialism and Zionism."

Following the June 1967 war, a situation of "dual power" is said to have existed in Jordan. The Hashemite throne was totally discredited, the country was bankrupt due to the loss of the West Bank and the flight to Jordan of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. In fact, Palestinians came to make up a majority of the population of Jordan. Following the September massacre of 2,000 Palestinian commandos and 20,000 civilians, by Hussein's army, the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a left split from the PFLP led by Nayef Hawatmeh, published two scathing critiques of the Palestinian resistance movement. One was entitled "September: Counter-Revolution in Jordan" and the other was a speech by Hawatmeh before the General Union of Palestinian Students in Iraq, March 1971. I quote from the latter speech:

"The resistance movement program of the 'unpoliticized gun,' and of fighting only Israel under the slogan of 'no interference with the internal affairs of the Arab states' led to its turning its back to developments in the region and to the masses of the East Bank and the Arab region. Its slogan of making the primary contradiction with Israel and imperialism take precedence over the secondary contradiction with the reactionary regime in Amman would have been correct had the reactionary regime agreed to abide by the necessities of this contradiction and accept it in order to build a united front against imperialism, Zionism, colonialism and the state of Israel....Reaction could not and would not tolerate opposition

to imperialism and Zionism. It could not and would not tolerate a national liberation movement. Reaction itself is tied flesh and blood to imperialism.... We all remember the strike against and repression of the 'Sumou' uprising, we remember the tens and hundreds of commandos who were in Jordanian prisons the morning of June 5, 1967. We remember that the first martyr of the Palestinian resistance was killed in the hands of the repressive forces not in Israel but in the Central Prison of Amman. We remember that the attempts to strike against and squash the resistance started right after June of 1967. Reaction has historically refused to co-exist with the resistance and it gave the secondary contradiction the precedence over the primary contradiction. It insisted on solving the secondary contradiction first. That is, it attempted the liquidation of the resistance and the national movement first without thinking for a minute of fighting Israel and colonialism."

"Reaction itself is tied flesh and blood to imperialism" is the poignant cry of truth from this Palestinian commando leader. Even within the narrow, petty nationalist, two-stage revolution framework, Hawatmeh came to realize that for the reactionary regime in Amman there is no conflict with imperialism, but there is a total and irreconcilable conflict with the national aspirations of the Palestinians. His throne was just as much created out of the dismembered Palestinian nation as was the Zionist state. Where, then, was the conflict with imperialism in 1970 between this feudo-capitalist regime ("exploited" by imperialism) and imperialism and its "outpost"?

Because they view Israel as an "imperialist outpost," the Palestinian nationalist groups, including the DPFLP, their most left-wing expression, have written off the possibility of an alliance with the Israeli working class. Since "Arab reaction" can only betray, the other Arab regimes are weak and unreliable and Israel is militarily strong and backed by imperialism, Hawatmeh concludes his speech on a note of profound pessimism: Israel, the impregnable fortress, cannot be destroyed by assault from without; assault on the Zionist fortress from within is impossible. Therefore, his group has moved rapidly to the right, adopting individual terrorism which they once repudiated in their split with Habash as their main tactic. Their hope is merely to pester Israel and dramatize to the rest of the world that the Palestinian problem still exists so that they may be squeezed into the peace table at Geneva and have a voice, if not a vote, in the game of big power politics. Further, the DPFLP has recently agreed to the "Bantustan" solution to the Palestinian question: a bifurcated Gaza-West Bank mini-state. Thus, the conception of Israel as an "outpost of imperialism" has been a major roadblock to even the most left wing Palestinian petty bourgeois nationalists finding their way to a proletarian perspective for the Near East.

Jordan and Saudi Arabia

I would like to deal briefly with the character of the other Arab states and the Permanent Revolution in the Near East. First, we have states like Jordan, which are, at least as much as Israel, "armed fortresses" of imperialism in the Near East, in the analogous

sense I mentioned earlier. These are states which came into existence under the direct sponsorship of imperialism and can only survive in the service of imperialism. Jordan, like Israel, was created out of the dismembered Palestinian nation. It was Jordan, not Israel, which physically liquidated the first independent mobilization of the Palestinian people for their national emancipation since the 1936 general strike. Of course both Israel and the U.S. would have willingly intervened if Jordan had proven unable to carry out the job. The Jordanian army is totally equipped by American and British imperialism and partially financed by American and German imperialism. Its army is led by U.S. military "advisors" who play the same role that the British officers played in the Arab Legion. Today the Jordanian Royal Army is in Oman, fighting beside Pakistani and Iranian troops, suppressing the rebellion led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG).

Saudi Arabia and the "Oil Boycott"

You contend in your reply to Robertson that the recent oil boycott "assumed the character of an anti-imperialist (U.S.) confrontation." Twenty-three percent of the known world reserves of oil are in Saudi Arabia as against 10.5 percent in Kuwait and 9 percent in Iran. Therefore, one could say that Saudi Arabia led the so-called "oil boycott." Saudi oil is completely controlled by the Arabian-American Oil Co. (Aramco), which in turn is owned by Standard Oil of California, Esso, Texaco and Mobil as well as the Saudi Arabian government. All of these oil firms are in turn American owned and had record profits after the so-called "oil boycott." How can you claim that the "oil boycott," which reaped enormous profits for the U.S. oil trusts, was a confrontation with U.S. imperialism? U.S. imperialism is Socon, Esso, Texaco, Mobil, in short, it is Aramco (i.e., the "economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie").

Saudi Arabia has a rather closed "native bourgeoisie"; it consists of the 500 princes who are members of the royal family. Occasionally there are minor "conflicts" between imperialism and members of the royal family. When Ibn Saud died in 1953 he was succeeded by his son, Saud, who attempted to assert some meager independence by circumventing Aramco and signing an agreement with the Greek billionaire and shipbuilder, Onassis, to build a Saudi-owned tanker fleet. The U.S. government immediately squashed the deal and launched an investigation into Onassis' investments in the U.S. Saud was dethroned as "incompetent" and replaced with his brother Faisal. In 1960 Saud formed an alliance with some other disenchanted members of the royal family around Prince Talal, who called for a constitution and elections, and Abdullah Ibn Tariqi, who was the first Minister of Petroleum and Minister of Resources and who called for Saudi control of oil production, transport and marketing. By 1962 Talal was sent into exile, Tariqi was replaced with Harvard-educated and U.S.-favored Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani, who is Minister of Petroleum to this day. By 1964 even King Saud had been exiled. (He went to Cairo where he broadcasted pro-Nasser propaganda.) Faisal was then restored to the throne. As far as I know, the aborted contract with Onassis and the intra-palace rivalry between Saud and Faisal are the only recorded "conflicts" with U.S. imperialism engaged in by these feudo-capital-

ist rulers.

A plan called "participation," where the Saudi government was gradually to acquire control of Aramco, was actually fostered by U.S. imperialism and the oil trusts in order to make the royal family junior partners of imperialism. As Sheik Yamani said in an interview:

"I think we have a mutual interest in dealing with each other. The U.S. is the biggest market and we are the biggest supplier. That is why I proposed a special privilege for Saudi Arabia in the U.S. market, a privilege that will subsequently guarantee a continuous flow of our crude into that market... We are thinking in terms of economic co-operation. Once you establish a mutual relationship between countries in the economic field, you immediately establish a very solid political relationship."

--quoted in Newsweek,
20 November 1972

Thus, the strategy of U.S. imperialism, as expressed through its handpicked and carefully groomed and educated Saudi broker Sheik Yamani, is to increasingly integrate the Saudi government (i.e., the Saudi royal family) into the various aspects of oil production and marketing in order to: (1) recycle oil royalties back into the oil industry as capital investment and (2) further ensure a steady supply of oil resources to the imperialist countries in which the Saudi family, with an interest both in marketing as well as extraction, have an increasing stake. Thus, "participation" has become an important component of the imperialist struggle for consolidating a monopoly of raw materials by integrating the native bourgeoisie directly into foreign capital.

The "oil embargo," which strengthened the competitive advantage of U.S. imperialism against Japan and Europe (which are more dependent on Near East oil than the U.S.), also strengthened U.S. imperialism's grip on the Near East. The enormous oil profits accruing to the feudal sheiks and kings will not, in general, be invested into the sheikdoms and emirates. These sheiks and kings are dependent on economic backwardness because they are dependent on pursuing their highly repressive and oppressive societies based on nomadic Bedouin tribes. Saudi Arabia was the last country in the world in which chattel slavery was enshrined in the legal codes. Now, while no longer "legal," the practice continues. The instruments of this repression are a 36,000-man regular army "advised" by a 141-man U.S. military mission, a 3,500-man air force (the core of which are pilots recruited from the British RAF), a "White Army" recruited from pro-Saudi Bedouin tribes used for internal repression, a Royal Guard which defends members of the royal family, a regular police force and a religious police force which enforces the Koran and the additionally strict rites of the Wahhabis. Further, Saudi Arabia has a huge air "defense" system supplied by British and American firms and manned by a mainly British "civilian" team of 2,000.

Where are the confrontations with imperialism between the Saudi feudo-capitalist rulers and imperialism? The fact is that the Saudi

army is used to defend imperialism in the Arab states--not just in Saudi Arabia but also in the oil-rich emirates, Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman. These Arab feudal kings are not adversely affected by imperialism, they are completely dependent on imperialism. How is it, in the 20th century, that the Arabian peninsula is still ruled by desert kings, nomadic "warriors" and the obscurantism of the Koran? Retaining these countries in a state of economic backwardness is essential to the survival of the royal families. For them the billions in oil profits create a dilemma. They cannot be invested in the sheikdoms and emirates without upsetting the fragile infrastructure of social backwardness upon which they are dependent. Such profits must be invested in the imperialist countries. The real result of the "oil boycott" was the channeling of foreign exchange from countries without oil resources back to U.S. banks and U.S.-owned oil companies via the sheikdoms. Here the worst off were precisely the colonial and neo-colonial countries of Africa, Asia and South America.

These backward countries of the Near East cannot move out of their state of economic stagnation without sweeping away all of the feudal institutions, eliminating the sheiks and shahs, the emirates and sultanates which are not "exploited" or "adversely affected" by imperialism, but which are essential components of imperialist domination within the region.

Certainly it is imperative that Marxists support such anti-imperialist actions as the Cardenas oil nationalizations and Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. But the 1973 "oil boycott" is not such an anti-imperialist action. It can be contrasted to Mossadegh's nationalization of Iranian oil in 1951 which rapidly assumed the character of confrontation with British imperialism and as such was initially supported by the U.S. However, when Mossadegh refused to sign agreements which would have paved the way for Iran to become an American sphere of influence, the U.S., through the CIA, directly aided the August 1953 coup which restored the Shah. Soon thereafter, Iranian oil concessions, traditionally dominated by the British, were restructured to give the U.S. a 40 percent interest and on 3 November 1955 Iran joined the Baghdad Pact. And who is this Shah, this "King of Kings" and "light of the Aryans"? He is the son of Reza Khan, a Cossack commander who was given the Persian throne for his military support to the British-backed coup of 1921. Where are his confrontations with imperialism? He was handpicked by the CIA to succeed the slightly more nationalist Mossadegh. In 1973 alone, the Shah spent more than \$3 billion on military hardware including laser-guided bombs and KC-135 aerial tankers to refuel his fleet of 144 Phantom jets. His 160,000-man army is equipped with 800 Chieftan tanks and 600 M-47 tanks, the largest hovercraft fleet in the world and so on and so forth. Are these weapons being obtained for a final confrontation with imperialism, or are they being obtained to guard for imperialism the Strait of Hormuz through which passes 65 percent of Europe's oil and 80 percent of Japan's? No doubt the Shah has aspirations to become an imperialist power in his own right (the Brazil of the Near East), but as a late starter in the race to become an imperialist power he can really hope only to become a junior partner of another imperialism.

For these regimes there is a state of interdependence, not conflict, with imperialism. As an "imperialist fortress," Iran, which can pay for its own huge military apparatus, is much more important to U.S. and world imperialism than the little schnorrer Israel. It is not Israel which is putting down the rebellion in Dhofar, but Iran, Jordan and Pakistan. To maintain its credentials among the Moslem nations, Iran does not give Israel diplomatic recognition. But the SAVAK, Iran's ubiquitous 60,000-man secret police force, is trained by Israeli as well as American police officers and is equipped by Israel as well as the U.S. "military-industrial complex." At the same time, the U.S. military mission in Iran trains Israeli as well as Iranian pilots on the latest Phantoms.

Where are the anti-imperialist actions and confrontations carried out by the Pahlevis, Hashemites and Saudis? Every genuine anti-imperialist action or confrontation sweeps these fragile regimes aside as so much dust. How are they adversely affected by imperialism? Quite the contrary, they are as completely dependent on imperialism as are the Rockefellers and the Rothschilds. Of course they struggle to get the best deal from imperialism, but this "struggle" takes place within clearly defined guidelines established by imperialism during the real confrontations such as the Mossadegh nationalization.

But there is jihad, the holy war against Israel, a war which supposedly turns these feudo-capitalist rulers into "anti-imperialist" forces. This poses a fundamental question. If, after the October 1973 war, U.S. imperialism is richer, its position in the Near East is even more secure, it lavishes economic assistance and even promises nuclear reactors to Egypt as well as to Israel, and yet Israel suffered a partial military defeat, what was the "anti-imperialist" character of the war? Prior to the war, the Sadat regime was bankrupt, it was rocked by massive workers' strikes (e.g., at the Hewan steel plant) and huge student demonstrations. Now all of this has been dissipated in war-chauvinism. Was this not the real motivation behind Egypt and Syria's launching the 1973 war? What blow against imperialism has been struck by the fact that the "imperialist fortress" relinquished (under U.S. pressure) a piece of the Golan Heights and a strip of the Sinai Desert? Did thousands of Arab soldiers die so that Nixon could march triumphantly through the streets of Cairo?

Revolutionary Defeatism

Events since the October War, culminating in the Nixon junket, have only underlined our position of revolutionary defeatism in this conflict as well as 1948 and 1967. Israel's partial military victory has only facilitated the re-entry of U.S. imperialism into Egypt and Syria. Egypt yearns to become an "outpost" of U.S. imperialism: kicking out the Soviet Union, carrying out a campaign of "de-Nasserization," in order to facilitate the re-entry of U.S. capital and begging for U.S. military aid. The Sadat regime has been stabilized at the expense of the Egyptian class struggle in contrast to Israel, where the regime has been shaken by the October War and class struggle renewed. (Notice the dispute between the Histadruth and the government over cost-of-living wage increases.)

The characterization of Israel as the "fortress of imperialism" in the Near East, claiming that Israel is qualitatively more reactionary than Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iran, can only serve to divert the real struggle against imperialism, the struggle against one's own bourgeoisie, into periodic holy wars against Israel.

These "little" holy wars, among little states, threaten to become a very big war among the "super powers." Kissinger's comparison of the Near East to the Balkans is both instructive and ominous, coming from this Metternichian. The role of the Soviet Union in the Near East is indeed treacherous. Not because it does not wish to carry the war against Israel to its conclusion, but because it has become a captive of its attempt to turn "revolutionary nationalist" Arab regimes into "nonaligned, neutral" nations through military bribery as part of its world strategy of "peaceful co-existence." In order to defend these "outposts" of non-alignment, its client states, it may very well be dragged into a nuclear confrontation with the U.S. In order to defend these reactionary, anti-communist, anti-working class regimes, the Soviet Union may very well spark World War III. And it is for this reason that your comparison of the 1948, 1967 and 1973 Israeli-Arab wars, with Vietnam, is most unfortunate.

Building the Israeli Vanguard Party

The crystallization of a Trotskyist nucleus in Israel is a very important development. The creation of a bi-national Palestinian-Israeli workers party on both sides of the Jordan, committed to replacing both the Zionist and Hashemite regimes, could break the deadlock of suppressed social struggle and petty wars among small states. A democratic and socialist solution to the balkanization of the Near East must begin with the realization that the Zionists have indeed created a "state like any other capitalist state." It is a state which must be smashed from within, by its "own" working class, led by a revolutionary party. Such a party can be built only if it strives to reach out to the Palestinian masses, both the workers in Israel and Jordan and the dispossessed in the refugee camps, as champions of their national emancipation. Such a party contains the possibility of unlocking the situation and opening the road to a Socialist Federation of the Near East.

Fraternal Greetings,

Reuben Samuels

NATIONAL QUESTION:
RWP-SL/U.S. DIFFERENCES

by Samarakkody, for the RWP

Our differences on the Arab-Israel, Bangla-Desh and Irish questions flow from differences on the national question. It is also our orientation that, to a large extent, the differences are methodological. On the latter question, we note, that often, impressionism and a pragmatic approach have flawed SL's analysis and conclusions on the national question.

In our view, the differences could well be discussed under the following heads: (I) National movements in the imperialist epoch; (II) Oppressed nations and oppressors; (III) National movements and geographically interpenetrated people; (IV) Nature of the state of Israel; (V) Unconditional support of national liberation struggles.

I. NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

It would be relevant at the outset, to note the basic elements that constitute the Marxist view on the national question.

The historico-economic factors that led to bourgeois national movements, and the tasks of revolutionary Marxists appear to be set out in the following passages from Lenin's writings in this regard:

"The awakening of the masses from feudal lethargy, and their struggle against all national oppression, for the sovereignty of the people, of the nation, are progressive. Hence, it is the Marxist's bounden duty to stand for the most resolute and consistent democratism on all aspects of the national question. This task is largely a negative one. But this is the limit the proletariat can go in supporting nationalism, for beyond that, begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism.

"To throw off the feudal yoke, all national oppression, and all privileges enjoyed by any particular nation or language, is the imperative duty of the proletariat as a democratic force, and is certainly in the interests of the proletarian class struggle [our emphasis--E.S.], which is obscured and retarded by bickering on the national question."

[--Lenin, "Critical Remarks
On the National Question,"
Collected Works, Vol. 20,
Moscow, 1972, pp. 34-35]

Lenin makes a sharp distinction between bourgeois nationalism, which revolutionary Marxists must not support but consciously fight against, and national oppression which revolutionary Marxists must consistently and unconditionally support.

"The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support."

[--Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Vol. 20, p. 412]

The above appear to be the framework of the Marxist position on the national question. We can now proceed to consider our differences under the respective heads earlier proposed.

National Movements in the Imperialist Epoch

SL appears to adopt a position that democratic national movements in the 20th century are illusory and utopian and that therefore revolutionary Marxists cannot support such movements.

In a brief note in Workers Vanguard No. 3 in which it concludes that "the just Bengali struggle" for independence is "subordinat[ed] ...to the ambitions of the Indian bourgeoisie" it states:

"The bourgeois nation building era of capitalism's youth is long past. In the 19th century one might have given cold-eyed critical support to a drive by the Indian bourgeoisie to unify the subcontinent under its hegemony correspondingly advancing the growth, organization, and power of the proletariat. But in the era of imperialism only proletarian revolution offers the masses a road forward." [our emphasis--E.S.]

The same concept of the utopian character of national movements in the 20th century is more categorically stated in WV No. 7, in the article entitled "Irish Upsurge":

"The twentieth century, the time of the utter exhaustion of the old progressive role of the bourgeois states, is not the time to complain of the 'divisive' and partly utopian character of such moves toward independence; at the same time we urge these minorities to resist a separatist course, but acknowledge and defend their right to do so."

In our view, this position of SL is in conflict with the Marxist position in this regard.

It may be recalled that the main opposition to the Marxist position of support for self-determination of nations at the London International Congress of 1896 came from Rosa Luxemburg: Luxemburg's position briefly, was that in the epoch of imperialism national independence is illusory, utopian and therefore disorienting, and should not be supported.

Lenin's answer to Rosa Luxemburg is in a summary form in the following passage:

"But did this mean that at the beginning of the twentieth century the International could regard the principle of political self-determination of nations, or the right to secede, as unnecessary to Eastern Europe and Asia? This would have been the height of absurdity, and (theoretically) tantamount to

admitting that the bourgeois-democratic reform of the Turkish, Russian and Chinese states had been consummated; indeed it would have been tantamount (in practice) to opportunism towards absolutism.

"No. At a time when bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia have begun, in this period of the awakening and intensification of national movements and of the formation of independent proletarian parties, the task of these parties with regard to national policy must be twofold: recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination, since bourgeois-democratic reform is not yet completed and since working-class democracy consistently, seriously and sincerely (and not in a liberal, Kokoshkin fashion) fights for equal rights for nations; then, a close, unbreakable alliance in the class struggle of the proletarians of all nations in a given state, throughout all the changes in its history, irrespective of any reshaping of the frontiers of the individual states by the bourgeoisie" (our emphasis--E.S.).

[--Lenin, op. cit., Vol. 20,
p. 434]

Rosa Luxemburg's position which was supported by Bukharin, Piatakov and Radek, that democratic national movements in the 20th century are illusory and utopian was rejected formally by the Bolshevik Party when it adopted Lenin's "Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (Vol. 22 [pp. 143-160]).

Section 6 of the Theses dealt with three types of countries with respect to the right of self-determination of nations. This particular question of national movements in the 20th century was specially dealt with, in the following section [Section 6, p. 151]:

"Secondly, Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries, both in completing their bourgeois-democratic reforms, and rendering assistance to the socialist revolution in other countries, cannot be carried out without championing the right of nations to self-determination" (our emphasis--E.S.).

On this same question it is relevant to quote Trotsky, who as recently as 1939, re-stated the Marxist answer to Rosa Luxemburg:

"Luxemburg, Bukharin, Piatakov and many others used this very same argument against the program of national self-determination: under capitalism it is utopian; under socialism, reactionary. The argument is false to the core because it ignores the epoch of social revolution and its tasks. To be sure, under the domination of imperialism a genuine stable and reliable independence of small and intermediate nations is impossible. It is equally true that under fully developed socialism,

that is to say, with the progressive withering away of the state, the question of national boundaries will fall away. But between these two moments--the present day and complete socialism--intervene those decades in the course of which we are preparing to realize our program " [our emphasis--E.S.],

--Trotsky, "Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddle-Heads" [Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-40)], Pathfinder 1973, pp. 49-50]

Our position in this regard is that we support all struggles of oppressed nations for self-determination waged in the present imperialist epoch. We cannot agree that such struggles should not be supported because they are utopian in character.

II. OPPRESSED AND OPPRESSOR NATIONS

You remind us that

"Marx' and Engels' distinction between 'whole reactionary nations' which become 'outposts' of Russian reaction and 'revolutionary nations' [is] no longer applicable.... To claim that Zionism of 1973 equals tsarism of 1848-1871--'the bulwark of reaction'--or that Israel is an imperialist outpost the way the South Slavs were Russian outposts, is to deny the existence of imperialism as the political and economic bond between foreign capital and the native Arab and Jewish bourgeoisies."

[--Samuels, "Draft Letter to Comrade Samarakkody"]

This argument has no relevance to the issues in dispute. Revolutionary Marxists do not view Marxism as a dogma, but, as a method for scientifically understanding social phenomena and as a guide to action. Our position of revolutionary defeatism on the side of the Zionists (Israel) and revolutionary defensism on the side of the Arab states (1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973) in the last four wars that took place has nothing whatever to do with a "claim that Zionism of 1973 equals tsarism of 1848-71--'the bulwark of reaction'." Our position stems from a historically concrete analysis of the socio-economic-cum political factors that led to the creation of the Zionist state of Israel in the context of the reality of imperialist penetration and domination of the region of the Middle East. It is from this methodological approach that we have concluded that Israel has basically functioned from 1948 up to the present as an instrument of imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism. It is this position of the RWP that SL must refute.

In this regard SL has taken pains to disprove that Israel is an "imperialist outpost," "imperialist fortress," taking the terms "outpost" and "fortress" at their literal meaning, i.e., as an army barracks, a military fortification.

"To equate Israel with Trincomalee or the Sixth Fleet can be highly misleading indeed. For then one must, as you do, assert that since there can be no contradiction between imperialism and its outposts (whether the Sixth Fleet or the state of Israel), there can be no conflict between imperialism and the people of Israel."

[--ibid.]

Continuing on this point the SL has placed evidence to establish (!) that there are workers and peasants in Israel, that the class struggle is a living reality!

While this could well appear an interesting debating point, it does not help come to grips with the real issue, whether or not Israel was an instrument in the hands of the imperialists in the relevant period (1948-1973).

In this regard, it is necessary to move away from semantics, to come to grips with the real issues. It is our view, that with the exception of Israel, the countries of the Middle East are semi-colonial countries.

But, does SL concede that these countries of the Middle East, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, are semi-colonial countries and as such are within the category of oppressed countries; countries oppressed by the oppressor imperialists?

It would appear that SL does not recognise these countries as oppressed countries. On the contrary, SL has placed all these countries in the camp of the imperialists on the basis that "the main source of the force of imperialism in the Near East is neither the warships of the Sixth Fleet in the waters of the Mediterranean, nor the 'imperialist outpost' of Israel, it is the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie." [ibid.]

Referring to the Arab states, SL has ruled out conflict between these states and imperialism. "For these regimes, there is a state of interdependence, not conflict with imperialism." [ibid.] Again we have:

"Where are the confrontations with imperialism between the Saudi feudo-capitalist rulers and imperialism? The fact is that the Saudi army is used to defend imperialism in the Arab states--not just in Saudi Arabia but also in the oil-rich emirates, Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman. These Arab feudal kings are not adversely affected by imperialism, they are completely dependent on imperialism." [our emphasis--E.S.]

It is in this orientation that SL is unable to recognise that on the side of the Arab states, in the Arab-Israel wars (1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973) there is any question of struggle against imperialist oppression.

From a correct Marxist position that the native bourgeoisie in the backward colonial and semi-colonial countries are agents of imperialism, and as such reactionary, SL comes to the wrong conclusions that the regimes in these countries could have no conflict

with imperialism, and places these countries in the camp of imperialism, and therefore, have seriously erred in regard to the national question, in these specific cases of the Arab countries in the Middle East, in Ireland, and in Cyprus.

The error is not factual but methodological. SL limits its understanding of imperialism to a single element, and disregards other fundamental factors in that regard. A fundamental requirement of Marxist analysis is the need to take into account all factors in regard to a phenomenon. Failure in this regard has led to SL's insufficient appreciation of the important aspects of imperialism, and in this regard, the SL finds itself in error from a failure to guard against the danger of relying on a very brief definition of imperialism.

"Imperialism is a highly powerful force in the internal relationships of China. The main source of this force is not the warships in the waters of the Yangtse Kiang--they are only auxiliaries--but the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie."

--Trotsky, "The Chinese Revolution and the Theses of Comrade Stalin," 1927, Problems of the Chinese Revolution [Univ. of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 21]

And here is Lenin's warning when he was discussing this very question of imperialism in his book on imperialism:

"But very brief definitions, although convenient, for they sum up the main points, are nevertheless inadequate, since we have to deduce from them some especially important features of the phenomenon that has to be defined."

--Lenin ["Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism," Vol. 22, p. 266]

An important feature of imperialism which is not brought out at all in Trotsky's brief definition of imperialism is a feature arising out of the extreme antagonisms, both on the international and national scale, generated by imperialism. In his brief definition Trotsky sought to bring out specifically one essential feature of imperialism--"the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie." Trotsky was polemicalising with the Stalinists and Bukharinists who sought to give a progressive role to the native colonial bourgeoisie in regard to the struggle against imperialism.

But it is a grave error to lose sight of the fundamental contradictions that must continue to get aggravated between imperialist oppressors and the colonial or semi-colonial nations, despite the fact that the regimes in these countries are regimes that have links

with imperialism--the compradore or national bourgeoisie, and that these contradictions must inevitably lead to conflict and confrontations, forcing, even the so-called national bourgeois agents of the imperialists in certain situations, to launch struggle against their masters--the imperialists.

Lenin gave special emphasis to this feature of imperialism, when he was dealing with the national and colonial questions (in his "Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, Second Congress of the Communist International," 1920 [Collected Works, Vol. 31, pp. 240-241]).

"The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world, as we now see, being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces. The vast majority of the world's population, over a thousand million, perhaps even 1,250 million people, if we take the total population of the world as 1,750 million, in other words, about 70 percent of the world's population, belong to the oppressed nations, which are either in a state of direct colonial dependence or are semi-colonies.... This idea of distinction, of dividing the nations into oppressor and oppressed, runs through the theses, not only the first theses published earlier over my signature, but also those submitted by Comrade Roy."

In regard to this same question of nationally oppressed nations, Lenin pointed out the elements of Marxist method. Marxist party

"must base its policy, in the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles but, first, on a precise appraisal of the specific historical situation, and primarily of economic conditions; second, on a clear distinction between interests of the oppressed classes, of working and exploited people, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class; third, on an equally clear distinction between the oppressed dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations."
(our emphasis--E.S.)

Anti-Capitalist Struggle Postponed?

But, contrary to Marxist method SL appears to have based its policy in regard to the national question on the one-sided identity of interests between the imperialists and the native bourgeoisie, and leaving out of consideration the contradictions between the imperialists and native bourgeoisie as well as between the imperialists and the oppressed nations.

Our contention that imperialist (U.S. in particular) domination and oppression in the Middle East is real and that the struggle of Arab people against U.S. imperialist oppression is a fundamental factor in the socio-economic-cum political problems in this area has

led SL to suggest that we are advocating a position of postponing the anti-capitalist struggle in the Arab countries:

"I would like to discuss now the ideological role that the characterization of Israel as an 'imperialist outpost' played in the Palestinian nationalist movement which rapidly grew in response to the defeat of the Arab regimes in the 1967 conflict....

"What follows from this characterization is a conception of Israel and imperialism as the 'main enemy,' the 'primary contradiction.' The reactionary Arab regimes are the 'secondary contradictions,' which can be dealt with only after Israel is destroyed" (your reply [Samuels, "Draft Letter," pp. 26-27]).

From the fact that the petty-bourgeois Palestinian nationalist guerrillas have agreed with our characterization that Israel is an imperialist outpost, and had adopted a position of fight imperialism first, SL draws a completely wrong conclusion, that our method of fighting imperialism can be equated to the methods of the petty bourgeoisie. This is a non sequitur. In any event, we (RWP), categorically reject the position of the Palestinian guerrillas--of fighting imperialism first, and the Arab bourgeoisie later.

Main Enemy

However, we cannot agree to your questioning the validity of the concept that imperialism is the main enemy of the world working class.

In this regard Lenin has left the question beyond any doubt. In fact it is the concept that runs through the theses on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International. However, it is Trotsky who had occasion to address himself to this specific question:

"We supported Abyssinia not because the Negus was politically or 'morally' superior to Mussolini but because the defence of a backward country against colonial oppression deals a blow to imperialism, which is the main enemy of the world working class." [our emphasis--E.S.]

--Trotsky, "Balance Sheet of Finnish Events," 1940 [In Defense of Marxism, Pathfinder 1970, p. 177]

Imperialist Agents

From the correct Leninist-Trotskyist position that the national bourgeoisie are agents of imperialism, SL draws the wrong conclusion that there is no contradiction between the national bourgeoisie or such feudo-capitalist rulers and the imperialists. Thus, SL concludes that the agent of imperialism--the national bourgeoisie--in an oppressed country is imperialism itself, and that the only struggle in the colonial and semi-colonial countries is the anti-

capitalist struggle, that there is no anti-imperialist struggle.

We have again a methodological error. Marxist analysis of imperialism commences from the objective reality that the deepest contradictions of capitalism are reproduced in a more acute form at the stage of monopoly capitalism or imperialism, leading to the intensification of antagonisms, included in which are the antagonisms between the native bourgeoisie (imperialist agents) in colonial and semi-colonial countries and the imperialists.

And this question of underplaying or ruling out conflicts between the imperialists and native bourgeoisie, runs through many paragraphs of the SL draft reply [Samuels, "Draft Letter," pp. 29-30]

"As far as I know, the aborted contract with Onassis and the intra-palace rivalry between Saud and Faisal are the only recorded 'conflicts' with U.S. imperialism engaged in by these feudo-capitalist rulers. A plan called 'participation,' where the Saudi government was gradually to acquire control of Aramco, was actually fostered by U.S. imperialism and the oil trusts in order to make the royal family junior partners of imperialism."

To support this theory of "participation" SL quotes an interview of Sheik Yamani, the Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia, to Newsweek of November, 1972.

"I think we have a mutual interest in dealing with each other. The U.S. is the biggest market and we are the biggest supplier. That is why I proposed a special privilege for Saudi Arabia in the U.S. market, a privilege that will subsequently guarantee a continuous flow of our crude into that market.... We are thinking in terms of economic co-operation. Once you establish a mutual relationship between countries in the economic field, you immediately establish a very solid political relationship."

And this is the SL's comment in this regard:

"Thus, the strategy of U.S. imperialism, as expressed through its handpicked and carefully groomed and educated Saudi broker, Sheik Yamani, is to increasingly integrate the Saudi government (i.e., the Saudi royal family) into the various aspects of oil production....

"Thus, 'participation' has become an important component of the imperialist struggle for consolidating a monopoly of raw materials by integrating the native bourgeoisie directly into foreign capital."

[--Samuels, op. cit.]

It is in this orientation that SL has placed the Arab states in the Middle East in the camp of the imperialists:

"Even within the narrow, petty nationalist two-stage revolution framework, Hawatmah came to realize that for the reactionary regime in Amman there is no conflict with imperialism, but there

is a total and irreconcilable conflict with national aspirations of the Palestinians" [our emphasis--E.S.].

[--ibid., p. 28]

And this orientation has brought SL to the position of rejecting, in opposition to Marxism, support for national liberation struggles. Concretely, in the Middle East, the SL has rejected as non-existent, the struggle of the Arab people in the Arab states against U.S. imperialism. It is this same concept of harmony between the imperialists and national bourgeoisie that has led SL to similar policies re the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. And, in regard to Ireland, SL has not even made any mention of the struggle of the Irish people against British imperialism. The furthest it has gone is the slogan "English out of Ulster" (WV No. 7).

Dangerous Conclusions

SL's rejection of the reality that the Arab states in the Middle East fall into the category of oppressed nations, and its theory of non-conflict between the imperialists and the native bourgeoisie, has led the SL to dangerous conclusions.

SL will not agree with the RWP that the "oil boycott" of the Arabs, after the 1973 October Arab-Israel war, was a conflict in the nature of a confrontation between the states led by feudo-capitalists or "National Bourgeoisie," and imperialism.

In the view of SL, this was indeed a conflict, but not a conflict between the semi-colonial Arab states and imperialism, but one between capitalists and landlords (["World Oil Tangle,"] WV No. 34):

"In one very general sense, the oil boycott is a conflict between industrial capitalists and landlords over the division of surplus value between profit and land rent. It is the first such conflict of major political importance since the industrial revolution in early 19th century England.

"Thus the historical conflict between landlords and industrialists is being revived on an international plane. The sharpest (but not the only) current expression of this conflict is the employment of the 'oil weapon' by the Persian Gulf sheiks."

If indeed, we believe that the conflict between the Arab states and imperialism manifested in the oil boycott is a continuation of the 19th century conflict between landlords and capitalists, then progress is on the side of the capitalist--i.e., the imperialist countries--especially U.S.!

However, it is not very clear whether SL's sympathies in this conflict are on the side of the imperialists and capitalists against the feudal landlords, or whether it is an attitude of neutrality. The logic of this would be, that even if U.S. imperialism intervenes militarily, directly with its own forces, against

the Arab states on the oil issue, SL would, either remain neutral or express sympathy for U.S. imperialism!

This is the SL's further comment in that regard:

"The easiest solution would be a pro-American coup against Faisal. Analogies to what happened to Mossadegh when he nationalized the Iranian oil fields in the early 1950's are now being bandied about in diplomatic circles. The influential conservative London Economist (17 November) is openly calling for an anti-Faisal coup....

"A reverse economic boycott, including the confiscation of Arab financial assets in the West, is also being bruited about in ruling circles. Total economic war against the Arabs, backed up by comprehensive rationing and other wartime-type measures might well work. Losing most of their money and finding their nations economically dependent on the Soviet Union, the sheiks would probably capitulate."

[--ibid.]

SL concludes: "Thus the real prospect, far from being a lasting peace, is for sharp conflicts between the imperialist powers and their upstart former clients." [WV No. 37, our emphasis--E.S.]

And, in the same issue of WV SL appears to be most concerned about the grave problems (international financial crisis) posed before advanced countries by these upstart landlords. But who indeed are these upstart clients? Are they not feudo-capitalist regimes in the oppressed countries of the Middle East?

In its view, additional costs to oil importing countries through oil price hike

"could send all the advanced capitalist countries into substantial balance of payment deficits simultaneously, with Japan exhausting its monetary reserves by the end of 1974, giving the Arab oil sheiks the power to cause an international financial crisis as well. The U.S. would be far less affected than the other major capitalist powers, but even so, both the American and Western European bourgeoisie will certainly find such a power in the hands of upstart landlords intolerable."

But the sheiks and emirs, "upstart landlords," could well proceed to nationalise the oil companies as they have, through the organisation of oil producing countries, recently threatened. This could well mean direct and open war by U.S. against the Arab states. And what would be the position of revolutionary Marxists--support for the "upstart landlords"? In that case would we not be supporting landlords against capitalists? Or are we to be neutral?

Thus the theory of a conflict between upstart landlords and capitalists would lead the SL to either advocate abstentionism in a direct conflict with the Arab states and imperialism, or to call for support of imperialism!

However, revolutionary Marxists are not unfamiliar with this type of conflict. Among other such cases we have the conflict between feudal Abyssinia (Ethiopia) ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie and Italian imperialism. Revolutionary Marxists had no hesitation to categorically denounce Italian imperialist aggression and give unconditional support to the struggle of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) under the leadership of the feudal class (landlords) with its emperor.

SL's failure to accept the reality that the Arab states are semi-colonial oppressed countries--oppressed by imperialism--has led the SL to ignore conflicts and confrontations arising out of this oppression.

In this regard, the answer to your question "where are the confrontations between the Middle East states and imperialism" is found in your own reply.

The following are of course not instances of confrontations, but evidence of acute antagonisms and conflict between the Middle East states and imperialism:

- (a) 1951 - Oil nationalisation by Mossadegh in Iran.
- (b) 1953, August - U.S. engineered coup and the restoration of the Shah who had been earlier overthrown by a palace revolt.
- (c) 1956 - Nasser's nationalisation of Suez Canal and the UK-French-Israel imperialist war against the UAR.
- (d) 1958 - Landing of 14,300 U.S. marines including U.S. soldiers and invasion of Lebanon in answer to overthrow of the pro-U.S. monarchy in Iraq.
- (e) 1953 - Saudi Arabia. The dethroning of Saud, son of Ibn Saud, by U.S. imperialism, and replacing by Faisal his brother.
- (f) 1962 - After Saud returned with support of a section of the royal family and called for a constitution and elections, and above all, when his first Minister of Petroleum and of Resources called for a Saudi control of oil production, transport and marketing, U.S. imperialism replaced Tangi by their stooge Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani.
- (g) 1964 - U.S. imperialists succeeded in sending King Saud into exile and replaced the reigning King Faisal to the throne.

More Recent Conflicts

- (h) 1959 - When the oil majors (seven big oil companies) cut the posted prices of oil, the oil producing countries created the OPEC whose core is Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf Sheikdoms and Iran, in order to increase their bargaining power against the companies.
During the 1960's the major oil companies dominated the weak OPEC. Both the posted prices and royalty shares remained

unchanged, so that, with inflation, their real income per barrel fell.

- (i) 1967 - In this context the 1967 attempt to use the oil weapon, "oil boycott" against U.S. imperialism, and the countries supporting Israel was ineffectual (because at the time U.S. oil companies were dominating the OPEC. This is not the case now--in 1975).
- (j) 1970 - Colonel Qaddafi "demanded both a rise in the posted price and in state royalty. Qaddafi threatened to prohibit oil to the American government" (WV No. 34).

WV comments in this regard:

"Qaddafi's challenge provoked consternation within the Nixon administration, with some officials advocating a coup against the upstart Libyan fanatic. After much debate and diplomatic goings-on in Europe, the American government capitulated to the Libyans."

Since the event, the OPEC becomes confrontation minded.

"Qaddafi's victory put backbone into the OPEC. Since 1970, there has been a continual spiral in the posted price of Arab crude oil and therefore the Arab's share of it."

The OPEC, among other matters, used successfully the trade rivalry between U.S. and European powers and Japan. The latter preferred "to replace the oil companies and deal directly with the sheiks...."

It was in this context that the Arab states called for an oil boycott of the U.S. and other countries that were on the side of Israel in the Arab-Israel war.

While the oil majors (seven big oil companies) benefitted by the oil boycott this was by no means a conspiracy between the oil trusts and the Arab governments. It is true the boycott was carried out under the leadership of the pro-U.S. Faisal, who along with the emirs controls the largest part of the Arab oil. But the theory of conspiracy does not explain how Algeria, Syria and Libya which have been in relative opposition to the policies of the oil trusts, participated in the oil boycott.

In any event SL (WV No. 34) accepts that the oil boycott was directed against the U.S.

"While the oil companies would like to steadily jack up prices, the present politically motivated boycott directed against the U.S. government is the last thing they wanted....

"Since American imperialism is currently not in a position to simply smash Arab nationalism, the oil majors have a strong incentive to reach compromises with the sheiks." [our emphasis--E.S.]

One need not have illusions regarding the abrupt reversal of Faisal's pro-U.S. policy. What is driving Faisal and his regime into a conflict and confrontation with U.S. imperialism is the need to obtain more and more control over the oil wealth in the Arab states, and to edge out the foreign oil companies--to exercise control over Arab territories, while at the same time to stem the tide of the Arab-socialist revolution by obtaining a few concessions from Israel--e.g. West Bank in return for the recognition of the Zionist state by the Arab states. Thus, the arch-reactionary Faisal could well get himself the image of the liberator of the Palestinians and the Arabs presently under Israel-U.S. domination.

The reaction of U.S. imperialism to the oil force escalation resulting from the action of the Arab States, reveals that U.S. imperialism cannot tolerate any assertion of independence by these states in which it has a vital interest--i.e. its oil wealth.

All spokesmen for U.S. imperialism, including President Ford, have expressed frenzied opposition to the use of the "oil weapon" by the Arab states in the Arab-Israel war. Besides, well-informed U.S. journalists have revealed that military intervention was being considered as recently as in the first week of November (1973). "The most talked about options" according to Newsweek magazine include (a) "terror squads to attack travelling Arab oil barons...." (b) "Assassinations--accompanied by blunt hints to other Arab leaders that they could be next--might be carried out." (c) Another "option" mentioned by this magazine was direct military intervention.

According to the well-informed journalist Jack Anderson, "There is also talk in the backrooms about giving Israel the green light to take over Kuwait's oil fields. The secret assessment is that no combination of Arab armies could stop an Israel march upon Kuwait."

Thus, what is relevant from this threat of U.S. military intervention against the Arab States in order to get them to lower the price of oil at the well head, is that the principal and overriding factor in regard to the socio-economic-political cum military situation in this region is the reality of U.S. imperialist economic, political and military dominance in the Middle East.

It is in this concrete reality that Israel war against the Palestinian and other Arab states could be evaluated. And, if in this war, U.S. imperialism was actively and openly on the side of Israel, then it can only mean that U.S. imperialism was committing military aggression, through the state of Israel, for the complete economic, political and military dominance of this region.

Now, where does SL stand in regard to its posers in the question of confrontations?

"Where are the confrontations with imperialism between the Saudi feudo-capitalist rulers and imperialism? The fact is that the Saudi army is used to defend imperialism in the Arab states not just in Saudi Arabia, but also in the oil-rich emirates, Yemen and Sultanate of Oman" (reply [Samuels, op. cit.]).

Again:

"Are these weapons being obtained for a final confrontation with imperialism, or are they being obtained to guard for imperialism the Strait of Hormuz through which pass 65 percent of Europe's oil and 80 percent of Japan's....

"For these regimes, there is a state of interdependence, not conflict, with imperialism." [---ibid.]

Again:

"How are they [Arab regimes Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, etc. --E.S.] adversely affected by imperialism? Quite the contrary, they are completely dependent on imperialism as are the Rockefellers and the Rothschilds."

[---ibid.]

Arab States--Imperialist?

It would appear that the SL questions our characterisation of Arab and other countries of the Middle East as semi-colonial. In this regard it is relevant to examine the implications of the accumulations of millions of petro-dollars by some of these states which seem to support the theory that the Arab states are imperialist.

It is the fact that there is new wealth to the credit of some of these states, estimated at nearly 75,000 million dollars.

The following facts have been brought to light in an article in the Intercontinental Press:

- (a) Iranian bourgeoisie, through their share-holding in the Krupp Trust in West Germany, will be represented in the administrative council of this Trust.
- (b) Kuwait Investment Co., founded in 1961, has bought the island of Kiawah in the United States for a big tourist centre. The same company has bought shares in redevelopment projects in the centre of the city of Atlanta, Georgia, in the U.S. It has made a gigantic public offer of 280 million dollars for a property corporation in London. It has acquired control of two maritime companies, one linking Cyprus and Britain, the other linking England to Ireland.
- (c) In Arab countries, finance companies, associated with big imperialist capital (with Arabs often holding financial and political control) are engaged in a whole series of industrial projects--i.e. with American, Japanese and West German groups.
- (d) Emirate of Abu Dhabi is launching 300 million dollar project to build a liquified gas factory in Das Island in association with an American and Japanese group.
- (e) Saudi Arabia is building a 1,000 million dollar nitro-grain

factory with a German trust and also a petro-chemical complex with the Japanese Mitsubishi trust.

- (f) building of 500 million dollar petro-chemical factory in Iran.
- (g) banking and investment companies (in which Arab and Iranian finance capital is generally dominant) have been created with the greatest names in imperialist finance capital in order to finance industrial and other projects.

Arab and Iranian companies are creating industrial and financial enterprises in the Middle East and Africa. Investment societies have been created in Egypt, Sudan and Senegal.

The question that is posed is what is the correct evaluation in this regard. We see no reason to disagree with the conclusions in this article in the Intercontinental Press:

"This is clearly activity of enterprising financial capital. But it would be premature to conclude from the emergence of a new autonomous Arab and Iranian finance capital that the social character of Arab countries and Iran has changed--that they have been transformed from semi-colonial countries into new imperialist powers. Financial ownership of the principal industrial companies of a country is only one of the criteria of determining its character as a semi-colonial or imperialist country" (our emphasis--E.S.).

III. NATIONAL QUESTION AND GEOGRAPHICALLY INTERPENETRATED PEOPLE

SL has ventured a new interpretation of the Marxist theory on the national question through restricting or narrowing down the category of "struggles against national oppression" to exclude the struggles of "geographically interpenetrated people."

This new interpretation is spelled out in the following passages of an article "[Birth of the Zionist State: A Marxist Analysis,] Part 2/The 1948 War," WV No. 45.

"It was clear that the establishment of an independent nation-state, either by Palestinian Arabs or the Jews, would occur in Palestine only at the expense of the other nation. When national populations are geographically interpenetrated, as they were in Palestine, an independent nation-state can be created only by their forcible separation (forced population transfers, etc.). Thus, the democratic right of self-determination becomes abstract, as it can be exercised only by the stronger national grouping driving out or destroying the weaker one. "In such cases, the only possibility of a democratic solution lies in a social transformation. For example, the decomposition of the old multi-national Turkish empire precipitated a period of intensified murderous national conflicts in the Balkans. The centuries of national hatreds and massacres, for example, the Serbian and Croation people, exceeded the history

of national strife between the Hebrews and Arabs in the Near East. The only basis for the unity of the Serbs and Croats (and other peoples) of Yugoslavia was the triumph of the partisan armies, against all of the nationalities, following World War II in a struggle which broke the bounds of capitalism and resulted in the creation of a deformed workers state in Yugoslavia." "

According to SL, it does not recognise the right of nationalities in such countries to have their independent nation-state: "under capitalism, the right to self-determination in such a context is strictly negative, that is, against the abuses of national rights of either the Arabs or Hebrew-speaking people."

When the national question was discussed at the SL Fourth National Conference the main reporter Comrade Reuben Samuels ruled out the right of self-determination for the people of Palestine, Northern Ireland and Cyprus. The presentation by Comrade Reuben Samuels emphasised that the democratic and national rights of such "interpenetrated peoples" can be achieved only in the framework of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Commenting on this same category of "interpenetrated people," Comrade Robertson ([unpublished] letter to Edmund, 18 January 1974) seems to think that Marxist theory on the right of self-determination of nations applies only to exceptional cases which fell outside of the category of interpenetrated people. "Seen this way, Lenin's self-determination is that happy special case in which there is not such an essential collision" (our emphasis--E.S.).

This new limitation to the right of nations to self-determination is in conflict with the Marxist-Leninist position. In this regard, Lenin specifically dealt with the category of cases of national movements which the SL mentions, without arriving at the conclusions of SL.

In reply to Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin referred to the Balkans in which SL reminds us, there were murderous national conflicts.

"The example of the Balkan states likewise contradicts her, for anyone can now see that the best conditions for the development of capitalism in the Balkans are created precisely in proportion to the creation of independent national states in that peninsula" (Lenin, [op. cit.,] Vol. 20, p. 400).

Of course, Lenin would have readily agreed that the only basis for real unity of Serbs and Croats was through a struggle which broke the bounds of capitalism leading to the creation of a workers state and the establishment of socialism.

Incidentally, it may be noted that the "Thesis on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" adopted by the Bolshevik Party, defines the tasks of revolutionary Marxists in regard to people in the Balkans (interpenetrated people).

"The tasks of the proletariat in these countries, both in

completing their bourgeois democratic reforms and rendering assistance to the socialist revolution in other countries, cannot be carried out without championing the right of nations to self-determination."

It would appear that the SL's rejection of support for the right of self-determination of the nationalities in "interpenetrated people" is based on two objections:

"It was clear that the establishment of an independent nation-state, either by Palestinian Arabs or the Jews, would occur in Palestine only at the expense of the other nations. When national populations are geographically interpenetrated, as they were in Palestine, an independent nation-state can be created only by their forcible separation (forced population transfers, etc.). Thus, the democratic right of self-determination becomes abstract, as it can be exercised only by the stronger national grouping driving out or destroying the weaker one" (WV No. 45).

The two objections may be formulated thus:

1. These are demands for privileges by each or one of the nationalities asking for separation at the expense of the other.
2. Due to problems of transfer of populations, etc., the right of self-determination in such cases is not practical.

The question of demand of privileges by the bourgeoisie in a national movement over other groups is not a new question for revolutionary Marxists in regard to the national question. Lenin has specifically dealt with this aspect of the question.

"The bourgeoisie, which naturally assumes the leadership at the start of every national movement, says that support for all national aspirations is practical. However, the proletariat's policy in the national question (as in all others) supports the bourgeoisie['s policy] only in a certain direction, but it never coincides with the bourgeoisie's policy. The working class supports the bourgeoisie only in order to secure national peace (which the bourgeoisie cannot bring about completely and which can be achieved only with complete democracy), in order to secure equal rights and to create the best conditions for the class struggle.... What every bourgeoisie is out for in the national question is either privileges for its own nation, or exceptional advantages for it [our emphasis--E.S.]; this is called being 'practical.' The proletariat is opposed to all privileges, to all exclusiveness [our emphasis--E.S.]. To demand that it should be 'practical' means following the lead of the bourgeoisie, falling into opportunism."

Lenin reminds us that revolutionary Marxists support the demands for self-determination of a particular nation "without giving guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give anything at the expense of another nation" (Lenin, ibid., p. 410, our emphasis--E.S.).

With regard to the objection that self-determination is not "practical" in regard to a particular country, in the sense that it may not be a solution to the problem of national oppression, Lenin gives the answer.

"This may not be 'practical,' but it is in effect the best guarantee for the achievement of the most democratic of all possible solutions. The proletariat needs only such guarantees, whereas the bourgeoisie of every nation requires guarantees for its own interest, regardless of the position of (or the possible disadvantages to) other nations" [our emphasis--E.S.].

[--ibid.]

Thus, in terms of Marxist theory on the national question, SL's limitations of the right of self-determination of nations through a new category of "interpenetrated people" has to be rejected. This means that the right of self-determination for the Jewish people in Israel, for the Palestinian Arabs in Israel or outside, the right of self-determination for the people of Ireland as a whole, for the people of Ulster as a whole or for its Protestant majority or Catholic minority, or the right of self-determination of the people of Cyprus as a whole, or for the Cypriot Greek majority, or Cypriot Turkish minority, cannot be rejected because people in all these countries fall within the category of "interpenetrated people."

We shall now examine this question of privileges in regard to the concrete cases of Ireland, Israel and Cyprus.

Ireland

The completion of Ireland's independence has yet to be achieved. The smashing of imperialism in Ulster and the unification of Ireland in a single state, is progressive and should be supported. We do not support any privileges for the Irish bourgeoisie of the present Irish Free State. But it is inevitable that this bourgeoisie would seek to get privileges for themselves at the expense of the Protestant majority in Ulster. This must be prevented and fought against. Revolutionary Marxists stand for equal rights for the Protestants with the Catholics in a unified Irish state. But the possibility, or even probability, of the Irish bourgeoisie and the leaders of the present Irish movement for complete independence, seeking to oppress the Protestant majority in Ulster, will not deter revolutionary Marxists from supporting the just struggle of the Irish people to complete their political independence.

Self-determination for Ulster cannot be supported because it is through this Protestant majority that British imperialism is maintaining Ulster as its enclave. In the circumstances, self-

determination for Ulster would mean only a formally "independent" Ulster, which would continue to remain an enclave of British imperialism.

Israel

Self-determination of the Hebrew people in Israel cannot be supported or defended not because it is a country of interpenetrated people but because the national movement of the Hebrew people has become an instrument of U.S. imperialism for aggression against the Arab people in the Middle East.

On the other hand, the struggle for self-determination of the Palestinian Arabs must be supported because their struggle is a just struggle against U.S. imperialist oppression through the Zionist movement, installed as a state in Israel. But revolutionary Marxists do not support any privileges for the Palestinian Arab bourgeoisie, or petty bourgeoisie, or bourgeoisie of other Arab states at the expense of the Hebrew people in Israel. It is possible, and even probable, that the Palestinian Arab bourgeoisie will indeed get such privileges for themselves at the expense of the Hebrew people. But that possibility cannot and will not deter revolutionary Marxists from supporting the just struggle of the Palestinian Arabs, which must necessarily end with the dismantling of the present state of Israel, which functions as an instrument of U.S. imperialism.

Cyprus

The fundamental question in regard to Cyprus is to free this island from the grip of imperialism. British imperialist bases developed over the years, still remain in the country. U.S. imperialism used these bases with the consent of the British in the last Arab-Israel war (October 1973) to supply war materiel to Israel. U.S. imperialism itself was maintaining a control over the Cyprus government through the Greek militarists up to the time of the recent coup that overthrew the Makarios regime.

Since the coup, Turkish imperialists are maintaining a military control over a considerable part of the island.

Thus, the freeing of Cyprus from imperialist control and dominance is imperative. This is the over-riding question in relation to the people of Cyprus for self-determination. This struggle must end, not only with the driving out of the Turkish army from the country but also with the removal of British military bases from the island. This is the basic fact in the just struggle of the Cyprus people, and must be supported by revolutionary Marxists.

It is possible, and even probable, that in an independent Cyprus the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie, will as before, seek to get privileges at the expense of the Turkish Cypriots. Revolutionary Marxists must consistently oppose such privileges of the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie. But the possibility, or probability, of the oppression of the Turkish Cypriot minority, will not deter revolutionary Marxists in supporting the just struggle of the Cypriot people

for complete independence.

It is possible, and even very probable, that self-determination for Cyprus will only become a reality with the socialist revolution in the Middle East, in Greece, and Turkey. Of course, national independence in the present context is no solution to the Cyprus problem. We can well agree with the SL that "'The Cyprus Problem' cannot be solved under capitalism, that is under social and economic conditions which necessarily set one nationality against another"; that the solution can come "only through the establishment of a proletarian state power and laying the basis for a socialist economy, in which the fruits of labor would be used for the benefit of all, is there any hope of social justice for such interpenetrated peoples" (WV No. 50).

It is necessary in this connection to quote Trotsky.

"Luxemburg, Bukharin, Piatakov and many others used this very same argument against the program of national self-determination: under capitalism it is utopian; under socialism, reactionary. The argument is false to the core because it ignores the epoch of the social revolution and its tasks. To be sure, under the domination of imperialism a genuine stable and reliable independence of the small and intermediate nations is impossible. It is equally true that under fully developed socialism, that is to say, with the progressive withering away of the state, the question of national boundaries will fall away. But between these two moments--the present day and complete socialism--intervene those decades in the course of which we are preparing to realize our program" (our emphasis--E.S.).

--Trotsky, "Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddle-Heads" [Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40 (Pathfinder, 1973), pp. 49-50]

We may add that while revolutionary Marxists will unconditionally defend deformed workers states against capitalist states, the oppression of nationalities has not ended even in these states. On the contrary, we have seen national minorities in such states being deliberately discriminated against and oppressed.

What Trotsky means is clear: that is, in the present period when the proletariat is struggling in capitalist-imperialist conditions, the questions of national self-determination are real and cannot be by-passed; the struggle against national oppression and the achievement of national independence is a part of the struggle to end all capitalist imperialist oppression--i.e., the struggle for socialism.

IV. NATURE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

The answer to the question, what is the state of Israel appears at first quite simple; that, it is the realisation of self-determi-

nation of the Hebrew people in the major part of former Palestine. And it would appear that this aspect of self-determination of the Hebrews has formed the content of the orientation of SL in regard to the character of the state of Israel.

"This Hebrew nation came into existence through force and violence, through the suppression, forced expulsions and genocide of other peoples. Communists must oppose this brutal national oppression. Yet once this historical fact is accomplished, we must certainly recognize that nation's right to self-determination, unless we prefer the alternative, namely genocide."

--WV No. 45

SL cites the case of the United States, as well as other bourgeois states that have come into existence through "the most brutal and untimely genocidal despoliation" of nationalities, etc. And in this regard, SL correctly points out that we do not, for all that, deny the right of the U.S. and other bourgeois states to the right of self-determination.

Thus, according to SL, the over-riding and principal factor in regard to the question of the characterisation of the state of Israel, is that the Hebrew people have set up their state and their right to remain as a state has to be recognised. In the view of SL, it is the need to recognise the right of the Hebrew people for self-determination that is paramount in determining our attitude to the Arab-Israel conflicts.

This orientation of SL has found clear manifestation in its explanation of its change of attitude on the 1948 Arab-Israel war, which it held up to about May 1974. In this regard, SL, till recently, held

"that the intervention of the Arab Legion following Israel's proclamation of independence transformed the 1948 war into a struggle to defend the survival of the Hebrew people and its right to self-determination. While opposing partition and fighting for the return of the expelled Palestinians, nonetheless, we would have called for the victory of the Haganah over the Arab Legion."

[--ibid.]

SL changed this position on the 1948 war allegedly in the light of "new factual material" on the 1948 war. According to SL this material "makes it quite clear that at no point in the 1948 war were the Arab armies in a position to challenge the survival of the Hebrew nation."

Thus, the over-riding question for SL in regard to the 1948 war was the need to recognise and support the right of the Hebrew people to set up its own state. This means that the content of the 1948 war on the side of Israel was the realisation by the Hebrew people to set up its own state.

Concretely in this war, SL would have been defensists on the side of the Zionists if there was a possibility of the Arab armies defeating the Zionist forces. But if however there was no such danger for the Zionist forces being defeated, then in the view of SL, defensism on the side of the Zionist forces was wrong.

But, according to SL's orientation, a correct policy in regard to the 1948 war was not possible until after the outcome of the war! For, how could revolutionary Marxists know in advance whether the advancing Arab armies were too weak to endanger the newly proclaimed state of Israel, or that they were, on the other hand, sufficiently strong, and could well destroy this state? Thus, it would appear, for revolutionary Marxists, neutrality in this war was the correct course of action!

It is our view, that SL is in this dilemma, because it has sought to consider the question of the Hebrew nation in isolation and without relating, this phenomenon to the role of imperialism in the Middle East.

Role of Imperialism

SL has disposed of the role of imperialism by reference to "Balkanisation."

"To determine what position to take in the present war it is useful to look at the whole process of balkanization in the Near East which resulted in the formation of the Zionist state side by side with a series of artificial royal states and 'republics' led by the petty-bourgeois military cliques, all of them (to different degrees) subject to imperialist domination."

--Workers Vanguard No. 33

"The classic phrase to describe the role of imperialism in Africa, Asia and the Near East is balkanization." SL seeks to support its position with a quotation from Trotsky on "The Balkan Question":

"The mere existence of Austria-Hungary, this Turkey of Middle Europe, blocks the way to the national-self-determination of the people of the South East. It compels them to keep constantly fighting against each other, to seek support against each other from the outside, and so makes them a tool of political combination of the Great powers."

--[Trotsky,] War and the International, 1915

While "Balkanisation" i.e., the helping to create small states and promoting conflict among them is an aspect of imperialism as pointed out by Trotsky, yet, it is a gross understatement to seek to equate British and U.S. imperialism to the Turkey of the Ottoman Empire or pre-1914 Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which was promoting conflicts among Balkan states for their own annexationist policies.

The role of imperialism in the Middle East or elsewhere, was not just "Balkanisation" i.e., promotion of conflicts between small states. The expansionist policy of finance capital and the expansionist policies of feudo-capitalist monarchies of Austria-Hungary or pre-1914 Turkey, are policies falling into two epochs: the feudo-capitalist period of capitalism--the early period of formation of national states, and the period of imperialism.

"Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established ...in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed."

--Lenin, "Imperialism, The Highest State of Capitalism," Vol. 22, pp. 266-267

SL's definition of the role of imperialism leads to clouding the issue of national oppression and the resulting anti-imperialist struggles. Let us turn again to Lenin.

"Hilferding rightly notes the connection between imperialism and the intensification of national oppression. 'In the newly opened-up countries,' he writes, 'the capital imported into them intensifies antagonisms and excites against the intruders the constantly growing resistance of the peoples who are awakening to national consciousness; this resistance can easily develop into dangerous measures against foreign capital. The old social relations become completely revolutionized, the age-long agrarian isolation of "nations without history" is destroyed and they are drawn into the capitalist whirlpool.'... 'This movement for national independence threatens European capital in its most valuable and most promising fields of exploitation, and European capital can maintain its domination only by continually increasing its military forces.'"

[--ibid., p. 297]

Through narrowing of the role of imperialism to "Balkanisation" i.e., the creation of small states and promoting of conflicts between small states, SL turns its face away from the ripening of conditions, in imperialist-dominated backward countries, for the oppressed nations without history to struggle against imperialism, which opens the real possibilities of the mobilisation of the masses against not only the imperialist aggressors but against capitalist rule in these countries. The limitation of the role of imperialism to "Balkanisation" is one of the factors that has prevented SL from assessing correctly the part played by U.S. imperialism in regard to the question of the partition of Palestine.

For instance, in regard to the partition issue, it is the view of SL that U.S. President Truman took a position opposed to (!) the

interests of U.S. imperialism in supporting partition, and giving support to the Zionists, when the U.S. oil companies which had 41 percent of the oil in the Near East "were solicitous of Arab good will." We believe SL is seriously in error in this regard. On the contrary, U.S. administration led by Truman easily understood that the Middle East could be successfully penetrated and exploited by U.S. imperialism not through the "good will" of the Arab people, but through establishing its military strength in the region, and for that, it was necessary to be in a position to use the Zionist movement for its own purposes, especially in a situation when British imperialism moved out of Palestine.

And even after hindsight has revealed the motivation of U.S. imperialism in regard to partition, SL is "doubtful" of the real needs and aims of U.S. imperialism with regard to Palestine:

"But, while the U.S. was moving in to replace the British it is doubtful that Truman wished to step up the pace, considering the unrest in France and Italy, not to mention nearby Greece. The main interest of U.S. imperialism in the creation of a Zionist state in Palestine was rather as a contributory force to balkanizing the Near East, as a lightening rod to deflect the aroused national and class aspirations of the Arab fellahin and proletariat" (our emphasis--E.S.).

--WV No. 35

However, SL's view of the real aim of Truman and U.S. imperialism is contradicted by the fact that U.S. not only supported partition but followed up, by sending the Zionists military equipment including bombers and fighters in their war against the Palestinian Arabs and other Arab forces, regardless of the "aroused national and class aspirations of the Arab fellahin and proletariat."

In our view, especially in the light of the policies followed by U.S. imperialism since 1948, the real aim of U.S. imperialism in regard to Israel was not just to help in the Balkanisation of this region but to "step up the pace" in replacing British imperialism in Palestine. And in this regard, we may ask the question what indeed was British imperialism doing in Palestine? It maintained one-third of its army at the cost of 35 million pounds sterling per year in Palestine, not to keep peace between the Zionists and the Arab people, but for imperialist aggression, for expansionism and for annexations of Middle East territory. Of course, especially since World War II, Britain was compelled to change its policies in this region in the face of her growing weakness in relation to her colonial possessions.

If SL even grudgingly accepts that U.S. was in fact moving to replace Britain in Palestine (though not so speedily), then it means that U.S. imperialism aimed to maintain Palestine (Israel) as its own instrument through control of the Zionist movement. And this is why Truman differed from U.S. oil corporations which were seeking to

maintain good relations with the Arab rulers for the safeguarding of oil interest. Nor were Truman and the administration unconcerned in regard to U.S. oil interests in the region. On the contrary, it was these vital interests that Truman and the administration had in mind when they supported the Zionist movement, the partition of Palestine, when they openly supported with funds and war materiel to the Zionists in the 1948 war against the Arabs. While the oil companies were concerned with their short-term interests, Truman and the administration were guided by the long-term needs and interests of economic exploitation and political control of this whole region, not only for guaranteeing profits but more, for strategic reasons, the Middle East is at the doorstep of USSR.

Your reply accepts the reality that U.S. imperialism replaced British imperialism as the dominant power in the Middle East after World War II.

"Prior to World War II the Near East was primarily a British 'sphere of influence.' The 'barriers (legal, contractual or otherwise)' referred to above were presented by the British. The postwar history of the Near East is one of the successful replacement of the British by the penetration of U.S. capital and 'influence.' For example, prior to World War II, U.S. firms controlled 10 percent of the oil resource in the Near East and the British firms 72 percent. By the June 1967 Israeli-Arab war, U.S. firms controlled 59 percent and the British 29 percent. The U.S. systematically replaced the British in Greece and Turkey in 1947, in Palestine in 1948, in Iran in 1951 and Jordan in 1957. Saudi Arabia has been a battleground of inter-imperialist rivalries between the U.S. and the British, with the U.S. dominant, since 1943."

[--Samuels, "Draft Letter to Samarakkody," IDB No. 7, p. 19]

However, on the issue of the real aims of American imperialism in Israel, SL orientation is in conflict with the views of Y. Rad, one of its own co-thinkers, who has undertaken recently some research in regard to the politics of this region at the time of the 1948 war.

"The decay of British and French imperialism in the Near East confronted the American bourgeoisie with the question of how to rule this region without the necessity of direct military control.

"A part of the American bourgeoisie expressing itself through military circles and the State Department, called for using the system of British imperialism: supporting the Arab bourgeoisie and feudal elements while strengthening the British army in the area. Another part of the bourgeoisie expressing itself through Truman, maintained that the existing Arab governments were collapsing and that it would not be possible to support them. The solution supported by Truman was to strengthen

Zionism, which was likely to play the key role in maintaining the imperialist order against all popular struggles in the area.... against British and French imperialism and the local bourgeoisie tied to them" (our emphasis--E.S.).

--WV No. 35

Whatever Y. Rad's final conclusions on the 1948 Arab-Israel war are, it is our view that not only Truman and the then (1948) U.S. administration, but all presidents and administrations thereafter pursued policies of "strengthening Zionism to play the key role in maintaining the imperialist order against all popular struggles, etc."

Zionism

There is enough evidence to establish that Zionism as a political movement was a product of imperialism, and has ever since functioned as an arm of imperialism.

At the outset, the Zionist movement in Palestine functioned as an arm of British imperialism. But this situation sharply changed with the end of World War II. SL accepts as the reality the political, economic and military changes that took place in this region after 1945. "The U.S. systematically replaced the British in Greece, Turkey and Palestine in 1947" (our emphasis--E.S.).

This meant that, concretely, the Zionist movement in Palestine has come under the influence of U.S. imperialism since 1945. This meant that since 1945, the U.S. began to use Zionism and its armed forces--the Haganah--as its own movement for its own imperialist purposes. And, on the side of the Zionists, their policies became a part of the policies of U.S. imperialism.

In any event, through the Zionist movement, the national movement of the Hebrew people for self-determination became subordinated to the needs of imperialism in the Middle East. The policies of revolutionary Marxists in such a context are beyond controversy. Let Lenin speak in this regard:

"The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not absolute, but only a small part of the general democratic (now general socialist) world movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected. It is possible that the republican movement in one country may be merely an instrument of the clerical or financial-monarchist intrigues of other countries; if so, we must not support this particular, concrete movement."

[--Lenin, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up," Vol. 22, p. 341]

Contradictory Phenomenon

SL poses a question in regard to the state of Israel in reply to the RWP letter:

"Thus our understanding of your position is that the people of Israel are both oppressed and not oppressed by imperialism, that they constitute a Hebrew nation whose national rights are unresolved in a state for which there are no unresolved democratic rights. This is indeed a 'unique' and contradictory phenomenon."

[--op. cit., p. 8]

We shall proceed to answer your question in the first instance, by reference to your own characterisation of the state of Israel which we quoted in our document of February 9, 1974.

"Israel, and particularly its ruling class, represents the transplanting to the Near East of a relatively advanced European capitalist order. Its society is comparatively stable, with a strong middle class. However, Israel lacks the industrial and economic resources to support such an order. This combination gives Israeli capitalism its aggressive, vulnerable and sometimes independent character."

| [--Spartacist, March-April
1968]

We find you have hit the nail on the head. Israel is a relatively advanced European capitalist order. A society which is a projection (transplanting) of the advanced European capitalist order means a socio-economic organisation in which there are no basic unresolved bourgeois democratic tasks. It would indeed be a contradiction to say that a country is a "relatively advanced European capitalist order" which still has its basic bourgeois democratic tasks unresolved.

In this regard it is relevant to refer to self-determination (movement for separate states) movements in advanced capitalist countries.

Particularly in the period of the decline and decay of capitalism we have seen frequent manifestations of separatism by linguistic or racial minorities. We have before us concretely, the case of the French-speaking Quebecois in Canada, which has long been in the category of an imperialist country.

It cannot be the Marxist position that there could not be any demands of a democratic nature in Canada or in any of the advanced capitalist imperialist countries. In fact, we have seen how the crisis of bourgeois parliamentarism, has posed serious threats to democratic rights in these countries. And in this regard, the oppression of the black and coloured people in the U.S. has been a phenomenon long before the stage of decline of capitalism commenced.

In any event, the withdrawal of democratic rights through repressive and emergency legislation is a reality in many advanced capitalist countries. Hence, the demand of the Quebecois for a separate state, which is a democratic right of the Quebecois. But French-speaking Canada is not an oppressed nation with unresolved bourgeois democratic tasks.

The following passages from the chapter on "The Class Character of Israel Society" from the book The Other Israel appear to be relevant in regard to the nature of the state of Israel, whether it is a colonial or semi-colonial country or whether it is an advanced country without unresolved democratic tasks.

"Israel society is not only a settlers' society shaped by a process of colonizing an already populated country, it is also a society which benefits from unique privileges. It enjoys an influx of material resources from the outside of unparalleled quantity and quality; indeed, it has been calculated that in 1968 Israel received 10% of all aid given to under-developed countries. Israel is a unique case in the Middle East; it is financed by imperialism without being economically exploited by it" (our emphasis--E.S.).

Here is what Oscar Gass, an American economist, who at one time acted as an economic adviser to the Israeli government, wrote in the Journal of Economic Literature (1969).

"What is unique in this development process...is the factor of capital inflow.... During the 17 years 1949-1965 Israel received 6 billion more of imports of goods and services than she exported. For the 21 years 1948-1968 the import surplus would be in excess of 7-1/2 billion dollars. This means an excess of some 2,650 dollars per person during the 21 years for every person who lived in Israel (within the pre-June 1967 borders at the end of 1968). And, of this supply from abroad, only about 30% came to Israel under conditions which call for a return outflow of dividends, interest or capital. This is a circumstance without parallel elsewhere; it severely limits the significance of Israel's economic development as an example to other countries.

"Seventy percent of this 6 billion deficit was covered by net unilateral capital transfers, which were not subject to conditions governing returns on capital or payment of dividends. They consisted of donations raised by the United Jewish Appeal, reparations from the German government and grants by the United States government.

"Since 1967, this dependence on foreign capital has increased. As a result of the changed Middle Eastern situation military expenditure has risen. According to the Israel Minister of the Treasury, in January 1970 military expenditure was estimated as 25% of GNP for 1970 which was twice the U.S. ratio in 1966: three times the British ratio and four times that of France.

"It thus appears that the dependence of Israel on the United States has changed significantly since the 1967 war. Fund raising among Jews all over the world (by cashing in on their

sentiments and fears) no longer suffices to support the enormously increased military budget. The rough average of 500 million dollars from fund raising has now been [doubled], and on top of this, the United States government has been asked to provide directly an additional 500 million dollars (U.S. has since made this provision).

"If Israel is viewed in isolation from the rest of the Middle East there is no explanation for the fact that 70% of the capital inflow is not intended for economic gain and is not subject to consideration of profitability. But the problem is immediately solved when Israel is considered as a component of the Middle East. The fact that a considerable part of the money comes from the donations raised by Zionists among Jews all over the world does not alter its being a subsidy by imperialism. What matters is rather the fact that the United States Treasury is willing to consider these funds, raised in the United States for transferring to another country, as 'charity donations' qualifying for income tax exemptions..." (our emphasis--E.S.).

V. UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR STRUGGLES AGAINST NATIONAL OPPRESSION

SL has not taken up a categorical position that it will not support struggles against national oppression in regard to (a) Arab struggles in the Middle East, (b) People of Bangla-Desh or (c) Irish struggles, because they were bourgeois or petty-bourgeois led, or because the leaderships are opportunist in character. Nevertheless, such a position appears to be the content of SL documents on these specific questions.

In the view of SL, revolutionary Marxists could well have supported the just struggle of the Palestinian Arabs in the 1948 war against Israel aggression, but that this was not possible in view of the treacherous character of the leaderships of the Arab states that participated in this war on the side of the Palestinian Arabs:

"Thus, had there been an independent armed force of the Palestinian Arabs in the 1948 war, Marxists could have given it military support in the struggle against the expansion of the exclusionist Zionist state and the onslaught of the Arab League armies, which together suppressed the national existence of the Palestinian Arabs."

[--WV No. 45]

In SL's view, while each member state of the Arab League "truculently denounced the Zionists and championed the cause of the Palestinians and Arab unity, nonetheless, each was interested only in how much of Palestine it might carve out for itself...."

SL, perhaps correctly, points out that the Iraqi Prime Minister, Salah Jabir "needed the diversion of a 'Holy War' against Zionism" because of the state of mass opposition to the feudo-capitalist regime in that country.

Thus, it would appear that SL has taken this element of the motivation of the Iraqi rulers in their participation in the 1948 war on

the side of the Palestinian Arabs as a factor in concluding that military support for Palestine Arabs was not justifiable.

In the case of King Abdullah of Transjordan, SL also, perhaps correctly, exposes that an element in the motivation was his dream of re-establishing a Greater Syria under Hashemite rule, and that therefore, his aim was to capture that "part of Palestine allotted to the Arabs, especially Jerusalem, the third-ranking Holy City of Islam and a suitable site for his throne" [WV No. 45]. This treacherous aim of King Abdullah was, for SL, a factor in its view of no military support for the Palestinian Arabs.

With regard to Syria, SL states that there was reason to suspect its motives: "Syria too, may have dreamed of a reborn Greater Syria, yet it had but one poorly equipped division while Abdullah had the crack Arab Legion" ("The 1948 War," WV No. 45).

As regards the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, he was no less treacherous than some of the other leaders on the side of the Arabs: "The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem quite naturally wanted no regular armies to intervene, especially Abdullah's, for the Hashemite kingdom could only be built at the Mufti's expense."

[--ibid.]

It would appear, that in regard to the subsequent Arab-Israel wars, SL has allowed the question of the character of the leadership of the Arab states to become a factor in determining the progressiveness or otherwise of the war waged by the Arab states against Israel.

Although a categorical position in this regard has not been taken, the content of the references (to the bourgeois class character of UAR and Syria in the SL document of 1968 ["Arab-Israeli Conflict--Turn the Guns the Other Way," Spartacist, March-April 1968]) is that the war on the side of the Arab states cannot be supported because of the bourgeois character of the leadership of these states.

In regard to the Irish struggles also, SL has allowed the reality of the petty-bourgeois reformist-cum-terrorist character of the leadership of the two wings of the IRA to weigh with it in regard to its position of no critical support to the Irish liberation movement, which is largely under the leaderships of the two wings of the IRA.

SL throws more light on this question in WV No. 7:

"Today the IRA, with substantial mass support, bombs and shoots British troops, and others besides. They have succeeded in making life in Ulster extremely uncomfortable for British soldiers and much more of the populace as well, but they have not dislodged the troops. The focus for organized resistance is restricted largely to the secret armies of the IRA, which among its other decisive weaknesses is pursuing a policy of virutally indiscriminate mass terrorism."

It is in this context, that SL has decided that no support could be given to the national independence struggles led by the IRA. The slogan raised by SL in this regard is "Down with mass terrorism--not only the Orange but also the Green." This means in reality, "Down with the IRA." Thus SL's correct disapproval of IRA policies and methods of struggle, has led it to place the IRA in the same camp as that of the agents of British imperialist./Paisleyite Protestant terrorists!

The reactionary character of the southern Irish state, or Eire, looms large in SL's assessments of the Irish struggle. This is the meaning of the references to the reactionary policies of this theocratic state.

The Marxist position was restated by Trotsky as recently as 1937. In his letter to Diego Rivera (September 1937), Trotsky rejected the position of the Oehlerites and Eiffelites who called for revolutionary defeatism on the Chinese side in the Sino-Japanese war, because Chiang Kai-shek's leadership was treacherous:

"But Chiang Kai-shek? We have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party or the whole ruling class of China.... Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is probable. It is even inevitable. But today, he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels, or complete imbeciles can refuse to participate in that struggle."

[--Trotsky, "On the Sino-Japanese War,"
Trotsky Writings 1937-38,
p. 107]

In our view, unconditional support for struggles against national oppression, means, for Marxists, support of such struggles irrespective of the policies of such leaderships. Besides, generally, such struggles are led by petty-bourgeois or so-called national bourgeois leaderships or anti-working-class reactionary dictatorships.

Revolutionary Marxists will support such struggles without giving any support to the politics of the petty-bourgeois or national bourgeois leadership. Further, revolutionary Marxists support such struggles by the methods of the class struggle putting forward our transitional program. It is in this way we seek to win the leadership of national struggles from the hands of the treacherous petty-bourgeois or national bourgeois leadership, by exposing their weaknesses and treachery.

Edmund Samarakkody
for
Secretary, RWP
31 October 1975