

## Fascist Menace or GOP Dirty Tricks?

# Watergate Scandal Shocks Liberals

In recent weeks the capitalist "Establishment" has been professing dismay over the so-called Watergate scandal. Democrats in the Senate screwed up their courage to the point of stalling confirmation of Nixon's nominee for FBI director. Republican congressional leaders, with an eye to the sinking credibility of the Administration, began to abandon ship, calling for a full investigation of Watergate, presidential statements, etc. Meanwhile one of the conspirators agreed to talk, and implicated everyone from the FBI director, the former Attorney General and head of Nixon's reelection committee, the President's personal lawyer and the White House "chief of staff" on down.

Backed into a corner, Nixon suddenly "discovered" new (old) evidence and attempted to dissociate himself from his closest personal advisers, agreeing to cooperate with the Senate investigation after months of refusing to let Democrats question White House officials. According to the polls, most of the public didn't believe his professions of innocence. As we go to press, the role of "heavy" in this show appears to have been assigned to former Attorney General Mitchell.

Accompanying the main act there are several side shows, notably the ITT-Chile affair, the battle over the Nixon doctrine of executive privilege and similar affronts to liberal sensibilities. But the backdrop to the whole comic opera is a deteriorating economic situation, with a precarious balance of payments, skyrocketing inflation (food prices up at an annual rate of 30 percent in the first quarter), the expiration of major union contracts affecting more than five million workers and a recession predicted for late fall. The combination of major political scandals and an explosive economic situation spells difficult times ahead for the Nixon government.

### Fascist Menace?

The liberal press responded with its predictable cry for a return to the

innocence of years gone by. The *New York Times* (20 April) wrote:

"Ten months after the case first broke, it is still astonishing that senior officials in the confidence of the President



Mr. "Law and Order," former Attorney General John Mitchell, accused of approving illegal espionage against Democratic headquarters at Watergate.

should have contemplated the systematic subversion of the American political order by espionage, sabotage, theft and surveillance. But it is even more astonishing—and more distressing—that once a small part of this dreadful story became public knowledge, the same highly placed persons began a systematic and well-financed campaign to obstruct justice and subvert the judicial order."

One would think from this earnest editorial that all that bourgeois politics usually amounts to is kissing babies.

A section of the left press responded in approximately the same language of liberal outrage. The Communist Party demanded "Impeach Nixon!" The 21 April *Daily World* declared:

"The Watergate conspiracy is not limited to spying, sabotage and other CIA-

type 'dirty tricks' against the Democratic candidates. It was a plot against the democratic process itself.

"It was a fascistic-type of conspiracy, and had the character of a dress rehearsal for the taking over of power 'legally' but through a rigged election."

In a similar vein, the Workers League, with its usual hysterical style, proclaims that:

"The Watergate conspiracy reveals the preparations now being made by the ruling class for dictatorship.... The Republican Party is ruthlessly preparing civil war [!] and is ruthlessly kicking the Democratic Party aside like a corpse that blocks its way.... The Watergate conspiracy is without parallel in the political history of the U.S.... It is clear that Watergate stands as a watershed in American bourgeois democracy. It marks the end of the two-party system as the ruling class, conscious of its weakness in the face of its most fundamental economic crisis, consolidates its forces in preparation for the establishment of a Bonapartist dictatorship [!]."

—*Bulletin*, 6 November 1972

What the Watergate scandal and ITT-Chile affair actually show is quite different, namely that corruption, espionage and subversion continue unabated in the Nixon administration just as under any bourgeois government. What are the ITT, CIA's half-hearted efforts to prevent the Allende election in Chile compared to the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala (Eisenhower), Bay of Pigs invasion (Kennedy) or the Santo Domingo invasion (Johnson)? What is the Watergate affair compared to the Teapot Dome scandal in the 1920's? Simply more of the same. Watergate conspirators and ITT officials defended their actions by claiming that they are common

practice in Washington politics. They are right! Only they were caught while most are not.

### Bonapartist Appetites

There is no doubt about Nixon's appetites for a strong state, which could raise itself above the control of the various factions of the ruling class, achieving a *relative* independence in order to better control and if necessary smash the workers and socialist movements. If any proof were needed, it could be found in his proposal to reintroduce the death penalty, the bills to abolish strikes in the transportation industries, the proposed laws to prevent union memberships from voting on contracts, the expansion of the FBI, the attempts to muzzle the bourgeois press, the use of espionage against the Democrats and countless other examples.

But Nixon does not completely control the context in which he operates. Appetites are not enough. Thus on Watergate he has effectively been stymied by the liberal outcry and defections in his own ranks. His new doctrine of unlimited "executive privilege" to ignore Congress has apparently been temporarily shelved. Similarly, while his wage-control program may have been motivated by a desire to break the unions, the results have not gone beyond the limits of traditional bourgeois democracy.

Nixon's economic policies up through late 1971 were clearly oriented toward deflation through unemployment, a hard line on wage increases and similar policies aimed at disciplining the labor movement. But from

*continued on page 10*

- U.S. Left Hails "Peace," Jailed Viet Cong Face Death ..... 2
- Workers League Withdraws Debate Challenge ..... 3
- NCLC "Reconstructs" the NWRO ..... 4
- Van Arsdale Forces Pay Cut on N.Y. Cabbies ..... 10
- PSP Nationalists Hold U.S. Conference.. 12
- Social Democrats Raise Heads in NMU Elections ..... 12

## Which Program for Auto Workers?

## Business Unionism vs. Class Struggle page 8

# Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam....page 6

# Editorial Miscellany

## Wounded Knee

Native Indians are one of the most oppressed groups in the United States. Suffering from astronomical rates of unemployment (65% at the Pine Ridge reservation), malnutrition, infant mortality, poor schools and every other imaginable social evil, the government-run reservations are virtual prisons for forced indigents, presided over by a corrupt, brutal and self-serving bureaucracy. Urban Indians, the majority, are forced into poverty-bred ghettos, restricted to the poorest-paying jobs and subject to infinite forms of discrimination along with other oppressed race-color and language groups such as blacks and Spanish-speaking minorities. *As much as any other exploited sector of the population, Indians have a vital interest in destroying capitalism and replacing it with the rule of the working class.*

To call instead for "self-determination for Native Americans" or to proclaim the independence of the "Oglala Sioux Nation" as have the leaders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) during the occupation of Wounded Knee is a sick joke. Even if all the land stolen from the reservations since 1890 were returned, Indians would be unable to achieve a productive and prosperous life in these hell-holes. After three centuries of genocide and exploitation, the "Indian nations" have been destroyed. To call for a return to some idyllic past, symbolized by the appointment of an official medicine man at Wounded Knee, is not only utopian but reactionary.

Likewise, to call for investigations by Senators Kennedy and Fulbright of conditions on the reservations will have about as much positive result for their inhabitants as the "Right Honorable" Senators' investigations in Vietnam have had for Vietnamese refugees and political prisoners, namely none. These

YOUNG SOCIALIST

Young Socialist



SWP/YSA hails "great Sioux leader," Sitting Bull.

capitalist politicians have more powerful interests to serve.

Coming from AIM leaders, such proposals are a betrayal of the interests of the oppressed Indian population they wish to represent. Coming from ostensible Marxists such as the *Guardian* (which supports the call on Kennedy and Fulbright) and the Socialist Workers Party (which calls for self-determination for Indians and terms Sitting Bull a "great Sioux leader"), such nonsense is downright obscene.

The Spartacist League vehemently denounces the government repression of Indian protests at Wounded Knee, as well as the decades of governmental neglect and racial oppression institutionalized in the reservation system. But the only alternative to this degradation is the unity of all the oppressed behind the leadership of the working class in the struggle for socialist revolution.

## French Pop Front

For several years following our expulsion from the 1966 conference of the International Committee, the Spartacist League was forced into a temporary national isolation, standing apparently alone against the relatively imposing IC and United Secretariat (U.Sec.). This isolation was a direct result of our insistence on the crucial role of programmatic clarification in the struggle for the rebirth of the Fourth International. Both the U.Sec. and IC were federated rotten blocs of disparate elements, we insisted, while noting that the Mandel-Frank-Hansen crew of the U.Sec. was united at least in its open revolt against Trotskyism.

Subsequent events have amply proved the truth of our assertions. Most obvious, of course, was the split of the IC in fall 1971. As sections of the United Secretariat continue to split between pro-Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and pro-European wings in country after country (Argentina, Australia, Peru, Canada, Spain so far), an open split of the U.Sec. as well becomes more and more likely.

We have noticed, in this respect, that in the hundreds, perhaps by now thousands, of lines devoted to the French elections in the various organs of the SWP, not once has Hansen put forward his own position. An unsuspecting reader of the *Militant* or *Intercontinental Press* would get the impression that the appearance of a new popular front in Europe's most politically volatile country was of vital interest to everyone except the SWP, which just observes.

In fact, Hansen no doubt is gearing up to do an "orthodoxy" job on his erstwhile friends of the Ligue Communiste. Both know perfectly well, of course, what the Trotskyist position on popular fronts is. But Frank, in his lust to snuggle up to the CP, simply shrugs this off as the petty concerns of the "Old Trots" who are unable to understand new realities. Hansen will presumably settle for some orthodox-sounding centrist position, like denouncing the popular front and then voting for it by voting for the CP or SP.

This will naturally give the impression that the reformist SWP is to the left of the centrist Ligue Communiste, thus providing Hansen a handy cover for a split, if this seems to be in the cards. But equally naturally, the SWP is certainly not interested in fighting popular frontism. After all, ever since 1965 it has done everything possible to entice eligible bourgeois politicians (the bigger the better) into its anti-war pop front. But it follows a pattern.

At the 1969 U.Sec. congress Hansen put on a similar show of Trotskyist orthodoxy, objecting to the Mandel-Frank-Maitan majority's guerillaist line. For all his pious words about building a working-class party, Hansen's own real line was bigger and better student demonstrations! If facts had any relevance in this facetious shadowboxing, it would be notable that the SWP's main Latin American ally, the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST, Workers Socialist Party), calls for a "workers and peoples government," has an open maximum and minimum program, calls for the democratization of the armed forces under capitalism and similar anti-Marxist gems. Hansen's main difference with the European majority is that he wants to engineer some respectable social democratic parties into existence, while they still want to tail after the more radical guerillaist milieu.

Meanwhile, back at the ("Reorganized"?) "International Committee," in-

## WORKERS VANGUARD

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## U.S. Left Hails "Peace" Jailed Viet Cong Face Death

Last December the Spartacist League discussed the Vietnam "peace" proposals and warned: "...the Hanoi/NLF cabal, in contrast even to the 1954 sellout, did not even insist on the release of political prisoners held in the South. These will be murdered when ARVN and U.S. prisoners have been released" (see *WV* No. 14, December 1972).

It appears that our dire prediction may be coming true at this very moment. According to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 27 March, a Swedish news agency has reported *thousands* of floating bodies off the South Vietnamese shoreline. The responsibility of all professed proletarian revolutionaries is now, even more than ever, to follow the lead of the Spartacist League in proclaiming "The Civil War Goes On—Down With the Robbers' Peace." But the U.S. left, continuing its prostration before the Hanoi Stalinists, continues to prate about "peace" and even to proclaim the terms of the Vietnam settlement as a pure and simple "victory" for North Vietnam and the NLF.

Even the bourgeois press has maintained more of a figleaf of concern for the political prisoners held in South Vietnam than have most of the opportunist U.S. "Marxists." Not quite drowned out by the welter of homecoming ceremonies for returning American war prisoners and the Pentagon-staged press conferences detailing atrocities supposedly visited on "our boys" by the Communist captors, a few "humanitarian" exposés of the Thieu régime's treatment of its political prisoners (whose number has been variously estimated as between 20,000 and 200,000) have found their way into some of the glossy news magazines.

Many of the prisoners held in South

teresting things seem to be happening. The 3 March *Workers Press* of Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL) printed an IC statement entitled "French Workers Must Reject Popular Front." It called for votes for the CP or SP but "on no account should workers vote for the bourgeois radicals." We have dealt elsewhere with the implications of this policy which is similar to that of the French OCI (see *WV* Nos. 17 and 18).

But when we read Wohlforth's *Bulletin*, it appears that the Workers League has a distinctly different line. The 12 March issue states: "The illusions of the workers can only be exposed by first electing the Left Union." There is no mention of the Radicals or a popular front. In fact, this is the same line as the Ligue Communiste in France. But with one difference: the LC ran its own candidates as a fig leaf to cover this betrayal of the most elementary principles of Trotskyism. The WL opposes this "ultra-left propaganda"—no fig leaves for Wohlforth!

We are at a loss as to how to interpret this. On the one hand, it could be an interesting split in the IC. But perhaps the distinction of denouncing the popular front and then voting for its major components (CP/SP) was a little too subtle for Wohlforthian dialectical method and they simply missed their cue.

Vietnam are liberal politicians, student activists, members of the anti-government "Buddhist struggle movement" and the like, but a substantial proportion are supporters of the NLF or actual Vietcong cadres. As has been known generally in the U.S. since 1970, the Saigon government jams such political opponents into tiny cells—actually trenches with bars on top (the so-called "tiger cages")—and subjects them to the most barbaric torture: protracted daily beatings, forced ingestion of soapy water, electrical shock. Many have already died of malnutrition and torture, and there have been persistent rumors that Thieu has simply been waiting for public attention to shift to some other theater before undertaking the wholesale physical extermination of those now barely maintaining life in his jails.

The Stalinists of the DRV and NLF have largely sacrificed these political prisoners, although included in their number are certainly some thousands of their supporters; while the Paris accords provide for the release of *military* prisoners on both sides, the "civilian" prisoners (in a struggle which is a *civil* war!) were explicitly abandoned by the Hanoi leadership, which prefers to sacrifice thousands of its own supporters in the interest of consummating a relatively favorable deal with imperialism (a deal to which the U.S., as is certainly evident, has no intention of adhering).

Only the Spartacist League, in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism, has consistently upheld a position of unconditional military support to the Indochinese revolution, demanding that working-class militants in the U.S. reject and struggle against the robbers' peace imposed upon North Vietnam by U.S. imperialism and acquiesced to by the NLF-DRV Stalinists. The bulk of the U.S. left has once again exposed its abandonment of elementary socialist principle. Despite their various protestations of support to the Vietnamese revolution, neither the SWP, nor the Workers League, nor the International Socialists saw fit to participate with the Spartacist League in a united front demonstration called in Boston to highlight revolutionary opposition to the robbers' peace and expose the Stalinist apologists who present a partial sellout as a great victory, demanding simply, "Enforce the Treaty."

In a disgusting display of American chauvinism—which views the Vietnam conflict as unimportant once the massive military commitment of "our boys" so deplored by the pro-imperialist liberal bourgeoisie is ended—most of the organized U.S. left has managed to overlook the torture and probable mass extermination of imprisoned Vietnamese Communists whose struggle they all, in the abstract, claim to support.

The demand for the immediate release of all political prisoners now held in Thieu's barbaric jails, along with the demands for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from S.E. Asia and for military victory for the NLF-DRF forces in revolutionary struggle which has been repeatedly undermined and betrayed by its Stalinist misleadership, is an elementary duty of all those who profess to stand for international class solidarity. ■

# Workers League Withdraws Debate Challenge

In a startling reversal of its standing policy for the last seven years, the Workers League suddenly challenged the SL to a political debate earlier this month. In a back-page editorial of the 2 April *Bulletin* we read:

"Spartacists are specialists in back alley politicking. Will Spartacist appear openly before the working class public in a freewheeling debate over basic strategy? We are waiting to hear. No reasonable proposal will be turned down."

Two weeks later the offer is brusquely withdrawn. "Spartacist Refuses Debate Challenge" announces the 16 April *Bulletin*. "In the interim," it seems, "Spartacist has stepped up its hysterical campaign at UCLA.... At the same time they write our Los Angeles branch to reject the proposal for a debate at UCLA.... The negotiations are over. The matter is closed."

This is nothing but lies and slanders, the standard stock-in-trade of a group whose political banditry leads it to constantly change its positions, distort the policies of other groups and refuse to debate political opponents. Here are the real facts:

—April 1966. Immediately after being thrown out of the International Committee's London Conference, Spartacist proposed a joint meeting with the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI), WL's predecessor, to discuss the conference (letter from Jim Robertson to ACFI, 19 April 1966). Although ACFI and Spartacist had been conducting unity negotiations prior to the conference, Wohlforth turned down the challenge, replying "your organization has broken politically with the world Trotskyist movement." ACFI instead proposed a debate on the topic, which the SL accepted, setting the date for 21 May 1966 (letter from Jim Robertson to ACFI, 2 May 1966). ACFI wrote back, postponing the debate and then... silence for the next seven years.

—July 1970. We repeated the challenge in "The Wohlforth League: Counterfeit Trotskyism": "... In addition we hereby challenge Wohlforth as we have many times in the past to a public debate on the history of our two groups and their political differences" (*Spartacist*, July-August 1970). No reply.

—February 1972. On the occasion of our expulsion from a WL workshop at a Student Mobilization Committee conference (the Workers League having endorsed the participation of the bourgeois politician Senator Vance Hartke in the National Peace Action Coalition, as well as the SWP-led violence against PL and the SL at an NPAC conference only a few months previously), we issued a leaflet, "For Workers Democracy!", which said in part: "To the Workers League:... We hereby challenge you to a public debate on the key questions of class-collaboration and exclusionist violence in the workers movement. You need only name the time and place." No reply.

So, you can imagine our surprise to learn that we have been lurking in the back alleys all the time!

## Spartacist League Agrees to Debate Workers League

The two letters sent by the SL to the Workers League over the debate proposal (see elsewhere on this page) ex-

pose Wohlforth's claim that we rejected the offer as the complete fabrication that it is. You say "appear openly before the working class public.... No reasonable proposal will be turned down"? We proposed a time, date and place which clearly meet these standards. The WL response? "The negotiations are over. The matter is closed."

Moreover, a week previous to this peremptory announcement, the WL essentially repeated its traditional accusation that the SL is the "fingerman for the world capitalist class" (*Bulletin*, 2 December 1968), implying that we fingered two WLeers to the police:

"This demonstration was in essence an anti-communist demonstration which under conditions in Los Angeles to which the Spartacists are completely oblivious could have led to police provocation.

"Any doubts of this were expelled that evening when the West Coast organizer of the Workers League and the Young Socialist editor were picked up in Watts."

—*Bulletin*, 9 April

Similarly, Wohlforth has for years actively discouraged WLeers from having any contact whatsoever with the SL, talking to our members, reading our press and certainly from debating. The "rat group" which is the Spartacist League, he claims, is nothing but the consummate expression of petty-bourgeois scum. Coincidentally, we must therefore be related to all other petty-bourgeois scum, and Robertson is the "granddaddy of them all."

Not only has the Workers League refused to talk to us, they also refuse to talk to anybody who talks to us! When the ex-Maoist Communist Working Collective of Los Angeles discovered that its political development was in the direction of Trotskyism and began investigating the allegedly Trotskyist groups, Wohlforth wrote them: "This organization [the SL] is completely hostile to the Fourth International and bears no relation whatsoever to Trotskyism.... You cannot have joint discussions or joint actions with us while at the same time maintaining relations of any sort with Spartacist" (letter to Marvin Treiger, 29 April 1972). The CWC subsequently fused with the Spartacist League.

Last November Wohlforth told the Buffalo Marxist Collective, which had followed a similar development, that he was "speaking under protest" and that "after our discussion any further contact with the SL would mean a break in our relations." The BMC went on to fuse with the RCY.

Comrades, this is not the approach of revolutionary Marxists who seek to win the leadership of the class through political clarification and struggle for the working-class program. No, this is the approach of "Third Period" Stalinism, the implication of "social fascism." The corollary, for the WL as for the Stalinists, is that political differences must be "settled" not through debate but by physical violence against other tendencies in the workers movement.

## Workers League Stagnates

While Wohlforth attacks the CWC, BMC and similar regroupments, saying "what all these various factions and individuals have in common with Spartacist is the desire to avoid the new requirements posed by the struggle of the working class," it is precisely the recent growth of the Spartacist League which reaffirms the correctness of the Leninist tactic of regroupment and forced Wohlforth to a temporary suspension of his traditional "no talk, no listen" policy.

The debate proposal was a response to the recent action of the SL Los Angeles local: After we were excluded from a "public" YS meeting called to "Stop the Budget Cuts" on 24 March, 60 of our supporters decided to picket the meeting. This so-called "anti-communist" demonstration included placards demanding "Free Discussion in the Workers Movement," and "Smash Anti-Communist Exclusionism." (The YS meeting itself drew far fewer people

than the picket line outside.)

No longer able to hermetically seal off new recruits from the SL's Marxist criticism, Wohlforth evidently panicked and offered to debate. On reflection he no doubt realized that such a debate would expose the WL's fabled "method," which amounts to constantly shifting positions—including terming cops and prison guards part of the working class, calling for "critical support" to the Indian bourgeoisie in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war, pressuring the union bureaucracy to create a reformist labor party and claiming that wage struggles are by themselves revolutionary.

Finding no convenient excuse for cancelling the debate, Wohlforth simply decreed that the SL had refused. The facts are irrelevant to the Workers League, but not to the working class.

△

Los Angeles, Ca.  
5 April 1973

Labor Publications  
P.O. Box 1717  
Inglewood, Ca. 90308

To the Los Angeles branch  
of the Workers League:

Dear Comrades:

We are extremely eager to have this debate that we have been seeking for so many years, and that you for so many years have prevented from occurring, even excluding us regularly from your public meetings to avoid the possibility of, in the course of the floor discussion, our confronting you politically. We cannot understand your insistence that it occur on a week night at UCLA—nor have you advanced any reason for it. Your proposal to debate us on a Tuesday or Wednesday night at the upper-middle class UCLA would make it impossible for many of our worker comrades to attend. They would not be able to get to UCLA on a week night in any appreciable numbers as many of them work long hours at grueling industrial jobs. The hardship your proposal would place on comrades working night shifts would be enormous.

You state in the *Bulletin* of April 2, 1973, "Will Spartacist appear openly before the working class public in a free-wheeling debate over basic strategy?... No reasonable proposal will be turned down." We propose that the debate be held on a Saturday night at a more central location. We will need two weeks notice to prepare adequate publicity. In particular we suggest Saturday, April 28, 1973. The Embassy Auditorium comes to mind as an appropriate site since both of our organizations regularly hold major public meetings there. In particular we have found that our forums attract a much larger and more general audience there, including the generally working class youth from Los Angeles City College and Trade Tech, while the forums we have held at UCLA have drawn a rather narrow section of the UCLA student body.

We eagerly await your reply. If your challenge to debate published in the *Bulletin* is issued in good faith, we believe that you must accept our offer.

Fraternally,

Tweet Carter  
Political Chairman, Los Angeles  
Spartacist League

△

New York  
9 April 1973

Tim Wohlforth  
National Secretary,  
Workers League

We noticed with considerable interest the abrupt and complete change in your hitherto invariant policy of eight years standing toward the Spartacist League. We refer particularly to your back-page editorial in the 2 April *Bulletin*, "We Challenge Spartacist to a Debate." Considering that we have sought repetitively over the last eight years to secure an open political con-

frontation with your tendency, it doubtless comes as no surprise to you that we accept your public offer with alacrity, especially in view of your evolved and systematic practice of seeking to exclude Spartacist supporters from every one of your "public" conferences and meetings, even to the point of using physical means to seek to prevent us from showing our support to the Juan Farinas defense campaign. It is in the light of this consideration, together with your apparent awareness of our rapid growth in membership, in strength in the labor movement, and in the size and frequency of our public press, that we judge your comment, "Spartacist are [sic] specialists in back alley politicking." (How our situation compares with the mixture of hysteria and stagnation that comprises the existence over the past year of the WL/YS is doubtless best known to you.)

(1) Our Los Angeles organization has entered into negotiations with the Workers League LA organizer, seeking to arrange for a debate at the earliest opportunity consistent with adequate preparation and publicity. Your organizer has stalled the negotiations by insisting the debate take place on a Tuesday or Wednesday at UCLA (Is UCLA the best location for the issues to be thrashed out—as stated in your editorial: "openly before the working-class public"? Fairly upper-middle-class student "working-class public," don't you think?). We have proposed that the meeting take place on a Saturday night, preferably in a central Los Angeles location.

We hear that in the 9 April issue of the *Bulletin* you state that we want the debate Saturday night at UCLA! Not only is UCLA inappropriate in general, but for all we know it's not even open for meetings on Saturday nights, and this is but a transparent evasion on your part. However, if you really insist on the UCLA area, and if direct UCLA facilities are not available, there are presumably other locations in the Westwood area adjacent to the campus that might be available for Saturday evenings.

In order for us to fully mobilize our supporters we need a Saturday evening because many of our comrades are working in industrial jobs involving night shifts and/or heavy overtime. Therefore, we are compelled to insist strongly on a Saturday evening. Are you willing to admit that it is not in your interest for your spokesmen to present your views before those Spartacist supporters who are industrial workers? And in any case, you conclude your editorial by stating, "No reasonable proposal will be turned down."

(2) Why exclude "the working-class public" in the rest of the country from hearing a debate on "the issues which differentiate our organizations"? We propose two additional debates: one in the Midwest, in Detroit or Chicago, and one in New York City. We do not propose a debate in the South in either New Orleans or Atlanta because to our knowledge you have no supporters in the region.

We look forward to hearing from you shortly.

For Rebirth of the 4th International!

James Robertson  
National Chairman, SL/U.S.

RCY FORUM

## From Maoism to Trotskyism

Speaker: JOHN FISHER, formerly of  
Buffalo Marxist Collective

TUESDAY, MAY 8 at 8 p.m.

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LOS ANGELES



# NCLC "Reconstructs" the NWRO

Of all the decomposition products of U.S. New Leftism, perhaps the most peculiar is the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Born out of the illusions and panacea-mongering of the distraught petty bourgeoisie that acted as culture-medium for the New Left, the NCLC has spent its 4-5 years of existence bouncing back and forth between the most ludicrous utopian posturing and the grossest social-democratic reformism. Its lurchings, however, have tended more and more toward an approximation in microcosm of old fashioned Popular Frontism, while its ideological eccentricities have begun to run totally out of control (see "Scientology for Social Democrats" on this page).

In its continuing consolidation around reformism, the NCLC has begun to run up against the hard fact that the Communist Party, as the U.S.'s largest and most experienced reformist organization, poses an insurmountable obstacle to the NCLC's get-rich-quick aspirations. Accordingly, during the past year the NCLC began increasingly to combine its usual delusions of grandeur with a heavy emphasis on the CP, featuring numerous articles in its press posing the CP and itself as the only really significant groups on the left. The gross disproportion between the small, unstable NCLC and the CP, with the latter's network of liberal fronts and fellow-travellers among the "progressive" union bureaucrats (as well as a continuing if inactive base among older workers and an expanding youth organization), has apparently begun to get through to the NCLC, unleashing an anti-CP frenzy.

## NCLC "Transforms" NWRO

The latest NCLC reformist gimmick, the Committee to Reconstruct the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), is an effort to turn NWRO—a government-funded "counter-insurgency operation" (*New Solidarity*, 4-9 March)—into an organization of the working class! This is the kind of "creative Marxism" that is more commonly known as Bernsteinism: the idea that the bourgeois state can be transformed to serve the needs of the working class.

The old NWRO, a front group for the government's poverty program (as even the NCLC sometimes admits), collapsed recently when Nixon began to dismantle Johnson's "Great Society" program. Created not through a struggle of unemployed working people, but as an agency of the bourgeois state (and funded by the Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare and the OEO), NWRO's ideology has always been pure liberalism, strongly flavored with anti-communism. In the past, NWRO has been at best a pressure group for higher welfare payments; in fact, it has stood for "redistribution of income" from employed workers to welfare recipients—a scheme deliberately designed to divide employed from unemployed workers.

Nixonism, with its continual appeals to anti-welfare sentiments, has use only for an NWRO of cockroach managers of small-time slave-labor schemes (like the WIN program, which forces welfare recipients to work at starvation wages for their welfare checks). Such is the role of what little is left of the old NWRO, which the CP and Progressive Labor have disgraced themselves by supporting.

According to the NCLC, the "campaign to rebuild NWRO could alone unite the employed and unemployed in common organization to fight Nixon's recycling offensive" (*New Solidarity*, 16-20 April). Since, the NCLC reasons, workers in the trade unions reflect the bourgeois consciousness of

narrow sectional interests, these institutions will be unable to unite the class or defend its gains. Instead, NCLC poses uniting the class on the basis of total lumpenization.

The "reconstructed" NWRO represents merely a highly unstable bloc between the NCLC, seeking a more convincing-looking building block for its attempts to enlist the favors of dissident labor bureaucrats, and old NWRO organizers such as Jennette Washington, who are trying to hold some shell of an organization together while seeking new funding from the liberal bourgeoisie. Its program is only quantitatively different from the CP-backed NWRO which the NCLC labels as fascist.

## Same Old "Anti-Poverty" Hustle

The Urban League and the National Council of Churches were specifically invited to the 31 March conference to found a National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization (NU-WRO), as well as all other "church and civic groups." At an early meeting, Washington outlined an organizational perspective of "permanent well-planned coalitions" with, among others, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the NAACP (*New Solidarity*, 5-9 February).

The NCLC tailed Washington to the recent conference of the NYC New Democratic Coalition, the liberal version of Tammany Hall; there, the NCLC requested that these liberal capitalist politicians endorse the Committee to Reconstruct the NWRO. The New Democratic Coalition refused to listen to the NCLC proposal; however, it did take time out to listen politely to a request for funding from Jennette Washington, between the real business of the convention: the purchase and sale of delegates, nominees, "principles" and other negotiable commodities. It did this because, as *New Solidarity* delicately phrased it, "Jennette Washington is respected and well-known among liberal activists in New York." It forgot to add that this "respect" was gained by Washington's role in the attempt to break the 1968 NYC teachers' strike (a strike the NCLC claimed to support!).

As its contribution to the NU-WRO bloc, the NCLC was able to hook Louis Smith of the executive committee of the United National Caucus of UAW, who appeared personally to give his blessing to the conference; the head of the Colorado AFL-CIO (on the outs with Meany for endorsing McGovern) sent a letter of greetings.

The lowest-common-denominator reformist program of the NCLC served nicely to paper over differences. The "Bill of Rights of the Unemployed"—whose main provisions are tax reform, the "guaranteed annual income" (an old NWRO standby) and "turn the swords into plowshares" economic reconversion schemes—is decorated with such vital class issues as "an end to the ugly multiplication of toll-gates" and "dental service with a minimum of wasteful paperwork." An indication of how poorly slapped together this "program" was: it required an amendment from the floor to get the question of day-care centers (absolutely vital for welfare mothers who want to work) included at all.

Only bureaucratic high-handedness kept the whole thing from exploding in the NCLC's face. The workshops resembled Punch and Judy shows, invariably chaired by an NCLC member, with a "real" NWROer sitting beside him for back-up at nervous moments. In the New York and Midwest workshops, SL members were specifically prohibited from speaking after one representative had spoken.

When the Spartacist League pointed out that the NWRO "program" contained

no demands to fight racial oppression, an NWRO speaker could only respond by calling the SLer a racist and ending, "You're trying to make us look like fools." When the SL denounced NU-WRO's attempts to ally with the liberal bourgeoisie, the response of NCLC candidate for NYC mayor, Tony Chaitkin, was that the Democratic Party was dying and bankrupt, and "We will chew

it up and spit it out again."

Attempts by the IWW and Vanguard Newsletter to amend the program to give it a more "revolutionary" cover (among them, a VNL amendment to the NU-WRO constitution calling for exclusion of the bourgeoisie, and an IWW amendment demanding that no NU-WRO official accept government grants) were contemptuously turned down by this

## Scientology for Social Democrats

In 1971 the Spartacist League derisively termed the Labor Committee of Lyn Marcus "crackpot social-democracy" (see *RCY Newsletter* No. 9, October-November 1971). If any of our readers thought at the time that the characterization might have partaken of some polemical exaggeration, the subsequent course of this organization should lay any such doubts to rest once and for all. As the social-democratic reformism of the Labor Committee continues to be incontestably confirmed by the latest of Marcus' grandiose reformist schemes—the most recent gimmick being the "Committee to Reconstruct the National Welfare Rights Organization"—the crackpot side of the Labor Committee has suddenly reached truly bizarre proportions. Long marked by one of the most grotesque leader cults among the petty-bourgeois radical organizations, the Labor Committee has now run right off the rails as Marcus' self-inflating posturing reaches heights which can only be termed mystical, and perhaps downright clinical.

In a document entitled "Whoa, Boy" (Labor Committee internal bulletin, 20 March 1973) Marcus achieves the dubious distinction of being the first ostensible socialist in recent memory to rival L. Ron Hubbard, founder of "Scientology," a quasi-religious cult which professes to give its followers a mastery of the universe by teaching them a new double-talk jargon in exchange for a substantial fee. Marcus, at least, provides this service for free to members of the Labor Committee. We will let Marcus speak for himself:

"You are a revolutionary cadre because you are 5-6% human and only 95% or so muck. We attracted working-class potential leaders... mainly because they are 4-5% human, as distinct from the 96% of them that is muck... You are going to be shocked and dismayed as soon as you begin to really know most of the welfare organizers and other working-class cadre-types with whom we come to work [only a hysterical petty-bourgeois could demonstrate such contempt for the working masses!]."

"If you must have adolescent sexual acrobatics, have them—but never call them love... do not use my words on the merits of unmediated relationships to make a mockery of life and Mind itself... You see, this is not a personal affair but a profound political question."

"I have repeatedly used a pedagogic device which appeals to me because it so precisely captures the poetry of capitalist life, the cruel commedia of capitalist culture."

"Imagine yourself, I repeat myself yet again, returned once again to your old neighborhood..."

"They do not see you when you speak. They do not hear you. You even strike an old friend; he continues chatting to someone else. It occurs to you that you do not exist... It is that terrible fear, that nightmare, which you have all experienced repeatedly in life. You think not? I tell you you live through that agony a thousand times each day. I have seen each of you in just that agony each time I have watched you—especially at internal meetings and public meetings."

"Many times, I have talked with an individual member or group of members. Because I demand it, and because I am compassionate [and, we might add, modest too!]. There is no need to lambaste ourselves. Excepting those remarkable qualities which can be generally attained only under conditions of mass upsurge, our organization is already the relatively perfect model for any other organization in the world in its internal humanity... I do not censure you, I love you..."

Another Labor Committee internal document, entitled "The Proto-Swamp: the Phenomenology of a Recurring Disease and its Cure" by one Steve Pepper, pays Marcus the homage which he has always felt was his due:

"Only Lyn has achieved that relationship to creative mentation where death alone can destroy his capacity... I experienced Lyn's recent letter to the Germans like a powerful tonic from which I drew deeply, succoring myself from the confident flow of his creative energy."

Only space considerations compel us to curtail this exercise in comic relief from the serious work of building a proletarian vanguard party.

Yet even the incredible degeneration of this insignificant crackpot cult is not without its lessons for serious revolutionists.

Marcus himself was, of course, always something of an eccentric, with a strong tendency toward petty-bourgeois personalism. His experience as an SWP oppositionist, existing for a time in a symbiotic relationship with Tim Wohlforth as the latter's accepted theorist on "Marxist" economics, led him to adopt the theory so characteristic of the Labor Committee (codified in Marcus' pamphlet "Centrism as a Social Phenomenon") that the true determining factors in the life of political organizations are not program, principles and the material conditions of the class struggle which they reflect, but rather organizational routinism, bureaucratism and ultimately the personal qualities of the leading cadre. Marcus dubs a dialectical materialist understanding of political life "Shachtmanism," but in fact Marcus' view was fundamental to the conceptions of the Mensheviks in the 1903 split and to the Burnham-Abern-Shachtman bloc against Marxism in the SWP in 1939-40. The elevation of bourgeois moralism and personalism above a class analysis was one of the reasons why Trotsky termed the Shachtmanites the "petty-bourgeois opposition" in the SWP.

It is, in fact, the fundamental philosophical tenet of the petty-bourgeoisie to examine social phenomena from the standpoint of the individual and not the class. This conception has always served as a convenient rationale for renegades from the class struggle. It was central for the Mensheviks as they took their first steps towards the ranks of the White Guards, for Burnham's flight from Marxism which led him onto the editorial board of William Buckley's semi-monarchist *National Review*, for Shachtman's uninterrupted evolution toward and into the rabidly pro-imperialist "Socialist" Party and for Marcus' path, apparently, into raving lunacy.

conglomeration of NCLC cynics and anti-communists.

## New Leftism Run Amok

This latest scheme of the NCLC is part of an entire history of grandiose reformist projects, each posed as the one-and-only, quick-and-easy road to organizing the class to defeat the imminent threat of fascism. Welfare recipients are only the latest in a series of constituencies which, it was hoped, could be cajoled or duped into becoming the NCLC's conduit to the instantaneous conquest of the masses. (For example, one of the NCLC's short-lived schemes was a project to organize a foolproof city-wide rent strike in New York

1971 strike wave represented a surge by the workers directly toward state power, which the Labor Committee coalitions could capture and lead simply by denouncing the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and counterposing themselves as the alternative. When Nixon imposed the wage freeze and halted the strike wave, the SLC naturally fell apart.

The other side was the more cynical NCLC with its "Strike Support Committee" strategy, the idea of which was that if a union bureaucrat could be suckered into forming such a coalition with the NCLC in the course of a strike, hegemony over the workers would naturally pass to the NCLC when the struggle was betrayed. The real effect, of course, was merely to offer the bureau-

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NCLC proclaimed the "beginning of history" at its NU-WRO conference. The new welfare organization asks for money from bourgeois groups such as the New Democratic Coalition and has a reformist program of tax reforms and an end to "the ugly multiplication of toll booths."

through the novel idea of collecting pledges from tenants who would agree to strike when a million of them had been so organized.) Each of these campaigns, of course, is presented with great fanfare, only to be hastily dropped when it becomes apparent that it has succeeded only in making the NCLC a laughingstock.

The Labor Committee was founded at Columbia University, based on the illusion that the 1968 Columbia strike steering committee was a soviet. It devoted its efforts for the next year to the publication of *Solidarity* and leafletting in the NYC garment center, confidently insisting that this would touch off a "mass strike" despite the fact that the Labor Committee had no forces in the shops or in the labor movement in general.

When this first attempt to "lead" the class flopped, the other pillar of Marxism appeared. Labor Committee leader Tony Papert had an article printed in *New America*, the CIA's contribution to American "socialism," denouncing the Labor Committee's opponents in SDS essentially as proto-fascists. At a time when the bourgeoisie was viciously persecuting SDS, with of course *New America* yapping at its heels, publishing such an article in such a place was objectively an act of solidarity with the bourgeoisie against the left. When sharply called to account by the Spartacist League for this red-baiting, the Labor Committee explicitly refused to disavow this action.

It was soon afterwards that the "coalition" strategy was devised. An April 1970 *New Solidarity* article transparently reveals the role of one of the earlier attempts, the Transit Crisis Coalition:

"So successfully did we propagate our programmatic analysis of the situation that when the subway fare was raised ... we began to hear our program fed back to us, debated in various political clubs of the Democratic party, and mooted in the public press. Around what was essentially the Labor Committee's original program more than 50 groups have come together in the Transit Crisis Coalition!"

These 50 groups included "several Reform Democratic clubs."

The Labor Committee's vacillation between cynical reformism and bizarre schemes totally unconnected with the real world has continued ever since, generating a split in 1971. One side became the hysterical Socialist Labor Committee, which maintained that the

crats a cheap left cover against rising militancy in the ranks (and an alternative to fighting for the kind of support that counts—sympathy strikes by other unions). This strategy "succeeded" brilliantly in the Newark Teachers' Union strike, where the Labor Committee managed to tail Orrie Chambers and the NTU leadership right into the arms of ultra-rightist Anthony Imperiale.

## NCLC Finds a New Panacea

Finally, a supporter of the Baltimore Strike Support Coalition issued a leaflet mildly criticizing the union president, who had briefly supported the coalition, and nearly got himself red-baited right out of the plant. This disaster necessitated a change in strategy. An NCLC internal bulletin ("How Mass Work Works," 16 May 1972) asked:

"How often does our Strike Support work come on like a carnival barker, 'Can't win without outside support—Get your outside support here.' ... Today, the only way we can actually realize any sort of substantial victory is if we are able to bring massive forces to bear on a particular strike situation ... a visible show of force."

So the Labor Committee set off hunting for something new and found NWRO. Having allied itself with what it thinks is a real mass organization, it has gone off into paroxysms of hysteria which make the old SLC look downright rational by comparison. The 4-9 March *New Solidarity* editorial solemnly advises its readers that:

"History has placed on the shoulders of a few hundred welfare organizers the burden and honor of setting up the first line of humanity's defense against Phase Three. ... there is a class struggle waging in the land; there is history being made by the tempered proletarian leaders emerging from the welfare ranks."

Forced to concede that the NU-WRO is currently in no position to organize anything (until it has "encompassed more strata of the class"), the NCLC terms the NU-WRO a new IWW, which will in the best SLC fashion counterpose itself to the AFL-CIO. The results, however, promise to be more comical than the tragic dual-unionist mistakes of the IWW syndicalists.

## Catastrophism vs. Marxism

The "theoretical" justification for the NCLC's turn to welfare recipients

*continued on page 10*

# Petty-Bourgeois Frenzy: NCLC at the End of the Road

From its inception, the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) has flitted from one get-rich-quick scheme to another, always promising to conquer the world in the next few years. First it was the student-tenant "soviets," then the "class-wide" (meaning everyone except workers in the unions) strike-support committees, and now the "reorganized" welfare rights movement. Predictably the net result of all these gimmicks is failure.

The resulting frustration had to lead somewhere. Combined with the delusions of grandeur and systematization of insanity apparent from recent NCLC internal documents, it has resulted in the current kamikaze "Operation Mop-Up," aimed at physically destroying the Communist Party inside a month. Given the relative size and stability of the two groups, the CP is in no danger of imminent destruction; the Labor Committee is.

One must remember what the Communist Party is politically. An agent of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement, the CP does everything to tie the working class to the bourgeois state, from wartime no-strike pledges to campaigning for "lesser evil" capitalist politicians. The CP has no qualms about calling on the bourgeois cops and courts against other tendencies in the workers movement, and has already begun to do so against the NCLC. Playing at destroying the CP "physically" will certainly involve arrests, indictments and in general taking on the capitalist

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Attacking the NCLC as "fascist," the CP, SDS and various church groups participated in a race-baiting picket defending the "old" NWRO, a government-funded counterinsurgency operation.

state directly, which the NCLC is hardly capable of doing on its own.

In addition to the fact that the NCLC is not in a position to physically wipe out the CP, this is in any case not the way to eliminate the Stalinists' reformist influence. Marcus occasionally puts on self-styled "Trotskyist" airs, but the NCLC is now explicitly rejecting the entire Trotskyist tradition of *workers democracy*. Only the Stalinists, who themselves murdered Trotsky's supporters and own family, ever claimed that Trotsky resorted to or sought terrorist means against the Stalinists. Today, if the Labor Committee sometimes invokes Trotsky's name, it defiles everything he fought and died for. The only way to wipe out the agents of the bosses in the workers movement is to defeat them *politically*, by demonstrating decisively to the masses that such policies can only mean a continuation of capitalist exploitation.

The NCLC prates about the CP as a "fascist" organization, insists that we are already in a cataclysmic depression and categorically proclaims that the Democratic Party (like the CP) is dead. Labor Committee members, however, should reread Trotsky's writings on Germany which they claim to

support. It was Thaelmann and Stalin, not Trotsky, who characterized the Social Democrats as "social fascists" and saw the depression as an automatically revolutionary period. But the parallel is not exact, for the NCLC is not a mass organization with sizeable influence in the working class, as was the German CP, but a relatively small sect oriented to petty-bourgeois and lumpen elements. If history repeats itself, first as tragedy and later as farce, then "Operation Mop-Up" is "Third Period" Stalinism—as farce.

As Trotskyists, we categorically oppose the use of violence within the workers movement. We would defend meetings called by the CP, physically if necessary, against attacks by disruptive elements. We would do this not out of any illusions about these reformists, the assassins of Trotsky, but because any manifestation of gangsterism in the workers movement inevitably hinders the struggle to win the masses to the revolutionary program. However, the CP's reliance on the cops for defense makes our physical support moot. We defended the Weathermen against bourgeois state repression, despite their misguided adventurism, because their terrorism was directed primarily at the bourgeoisie. The NCLC's attacks on another working-class tendency, however, are indefensible.

We note that the record of other supposedly socialist organizations on the issue of workers democracy is far from consistent. Typically their positions depend on whose ox is being gored. The Communist Party had a willful policy of physically attacking Trotskyists during the 1930's, and in 1941 actually supported the anti-Communist Smith Act, under which the Socialist Workers Party was being prosecuted. (When the government used the same act against the CP in the late 1940's, of course, the CP called for the defense of *its* own democratic rights.)

Among supposedly Trotskyist organizations the record is only slightly cleaner. When the MPI (predecessor of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party) beat up a Workers League member, the WL wrote a perfectly principled call for proletarian democracy. But this did not prevent the WL from siding with the SWP in July 1971 when the latter group beat up and expelled PL and SL supporters from an NPAC meeting, or from forcibly excluding other tendencies from its "public" meetings. The Spartacist League, in contrast, has been absolutely consistent on this point. As an example, we defended the SWP when Progressive Labor members attacked SWP supporters in Boston in 1970; at the July 1971 NPAC conference we defended PL against attack by the SWP's Fred Halstead and his goons.

To the members of the NCLC: We warn you that there are elements in the politics of the Labor Committee which can take the NCLC, or a section of it, straight out of the workers movement altogether: the anti-communism involved in physical attacks on other left tendencies; the technocratic "socialism" characteristic of Labor Committee economic programs; consistent hostility to the trade unions; and pseudo-humanistic superman theories leading to the conception of Marcus as the Nietzschean ultimate. Now the assault campaign directed at the CP is crystallizing these elements into a consistent pattern.

The Labor Committee's cynical contempt for workers democracy is symptomatic: "If other socialist organizations cross the line and actively join the CP's alliance with Nixon and the fascists in the name of 'workers democracy' they will be treated similarly," threatens a *New Solidarity* supplement (16 April). The SL will not be intimidated by this bombast. The only result of the NCLC's incredible new policy will be its own self-destruction—physically and politically. ■

# Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam

John Sharpe

[Editors' Note: This article is little more than a sketch of the history of Vietnamese Trotskyism. Only a brief account of the movement and sporadic issues of its newspapers are available to us at this time. Nevertheless, the facts that are known serve to underline doubly the historic importance of the struggle for the Marxist program of permanent revolution, the struggle to resolve what Leon Trotsky referred to as the "crisis of revolutionary leadership." The price of Stalinist betrayals is measured not only by their deliberate murder of hundreds of Trotskyist militants in the aftermath of the September 1945 insurrection (which the latter helped lead and the former helped defeat), but also by the subsequent deaths of more than two million Vietnamese workers and peasants in their heroic battle against French and U.S. imperialism. Most of these could have been avoided if the Stalinists, and in the first instance Ho Chi Minh, had not been able to sell out the struggle at crucial periods with their policies of appeasement of the bourgeoisie.]

As was the case throughout the world, the Trotskyist movement in Vietnam was forged in the struggle against the errors and betrayals of the Stalinists. However, unlike most other areas, the Vietnamese supporters of the Fourth International succeeded in achieving a mass base during the late 1930's. In fact, both of the competing groups claiming to be Trotskyist were publishing daily newspapers before or just after World War II.

Nevertheless, both groups, the centrist La Lutte group led by Ta Thu Thau, and the more leftist International Communist League (the October group) led by Ho Huu Tuong, were paralyzed by French repression and ultimately decapitated by the Stalinists. These defeats were in part the result of certain erroneous policies, notably a tendency toward perpetual united fronts with the Stalinists and a failure to draw a sharp line against popular fronts. We honor the memory of these martyrs and their determined battle against French colonialism and against reformism in the workers movement, but we must also learn from their mistakes.

## Formation of the Indochinese Communist Party

The history of the Vietnamese Stalinist movement is inseparably bound up with the life of Nguyen Ai Quoc (later known as Ho Chi Minh), its founder and principal leader.

He emerged as one of the leaders of the Communist International in the Far East after his journey to Moscow in 1923 as the delegate of the French CP to the "Peasant International" and his participation in the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, where he delivered a report on the colonial question. An important factor in his development was the fact that he became involved in the Comintern only after it had already begun to degenerate seriously under the Stalin-Zinoviev leadership. The "Peasant International," for example, was one of Zinoviev's more dubious maneuvers, designed to seduce populist peasant leaders such as the Croatian Radić into support for Russia. Not only was it a phantom organization from the beginning, but it was necessarily based on Stalin's policies of the "democratic dictatorship of the peasantry and proletariat." For Marxists, who seek to organize the workers' international, there could be no question of building a peasants' international, that is, of organizing another class.

Nguyen Ai Quoc also participated in the "Intercolonial Union," which included several

left bourgeois nationalists from the Middle East, hardly a model of communist organization. Thus it is not surprising that when he reached Canton in 1925 as an associate of Borodin (chief Comintern representative in China at the time) he set up not a communist party, but instead a socialist-oriented nationalist grouping, the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association (Viet Nam Cach Menh Thanh Nien Hoi, or Thanh Nien for short).

This was the kind of "Marxism" which Nguyen Ai Quoc learned from Stalin, who at the time was instructing the Chinese Communist Party to liquidate itself into Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, turning over membership lists and even arms to these "anti-imperialists." Shortly after Stalin made him an honorary member of the Communist International, Chiang turned on his Communist allies and butchered thousands of militant workers in Shanghai in April 1927.

Despite this graphic object lesson in the consequences of opportunist policies (as a result of which he had to leave first Canton

## Part I

and then later Hankow also), Nguyen Ai Quoc refused to learn. Thus for the first several years the Thanh Nien concentrated on consummating a fusion (which never came off) with the strictly bourgeois Revolutionary Party of New Vietnam (the Tan Viet). At the first congress of the Thanh Nien in May 1929, his supporters on the presiding committee obstinately opposed the formation of an explicitly communist party. A minority, small (3 out of 17 delegates) but influential (it was the entire delegation from the interior), walked out of the congress and set up the Indochinese Communist Party (Don Duong Cong San Dang), sharply condemning the Thanh Nien leadership as petty-bourgeois nationalists.<sup>1</sup>

The new party experienced immediate success, appearing to the masses as the more revolutionary of the two, so in August the Thanh Nien switched gears and set up the Vietnamese Communist Party (Annam Cong



QUATRIEME INTERNATIONALE

In a report to the French Colonial Council in October 1937, the Governor of Cochin China wrote: "The political character of these strikes is even more apparent than with those at the beginning of the year. Long and careful preparation, breaking out suddenly, tendentious articles in the newspapers LA LUTTE and LE MILITANT, creation of strike funds, support coming from workers of other companies with the purpose of demonstrating working class solidarity...."

—from "Action Program," LA LUTTE, No. 213, 14 April 1939

1. Fight against war preparations, break the blockade which is strangling the Chinese revolution and favoring Japanese imperialism through mass action, through boycotting Japanese merchandise.
2. For direct action to force promulgation of social legislation in Indochina: a 40-hour law, collective bargaining, control over hiring and firing, sliding scale of wages.
3. Against the fascists, form action committees in factories, the civil service and the army to throw out fascist personnel and have them fired.
4. Against the Stalinists who preach "voluntary" submission! Popularize the slogan: "Unconditional National Independence."
5. Build real alliances of workers, peasants and the middle classes in action committees, in factories, in neighborhoods, among peasants and soldiers to prepare for the workers and peasants government, to expropriate the capitalists and feudalists and to assure the well-being, peace and freedom for all workers—in factories, offices, fields, commerce and the army.

Down with the Fascists, Capitalists and Feudalists!  
Down with the Stalinist Leaders, Lackeys of Imperialism!  
Long Live a May 1st Dedicated to Class Struggle!  
Long Live the Fourth International!



San Dang). This was in part the result of Stalin's "left turn" internationally (the so-called "Third Period"), as the Comintern had refused membership to the Thanh Nien, called for the formation of a unified CP and criticized the program of the Nguyen Ai Quoc faction. The unified party, also called the Indochinese Communist Party, was formed in October 1930 and affiliated to the Third International the following April.

The first Communist efforts were directed at spearheading a desperate peasants' revolt centering on central Vietnam during 1930-31. In the Annamese provinces of Ha Tinh and Nghe-An the ICP broke up the large estates and set up peasant "soviets" on the order of the border-region soviets set up by Mao in southeastern China during the period 1927-29. Like the latter, however, they were brutally liquidated by the government forces.

In contrast to its adventurist policies in the countryside, the CP tactics in the cities were restricted to "democratic" demands and "peaceful" demonstrations, thus leaving the masses unprepared for the bloody repression by the French colonial regime. Mercenary soldiers machine-gunned the defenseless masses, as the Foreign Legion terrorized the Annam peasant districts which had risen in revolt. The repression cost the lives of some 10,000 workers and peasants, with another 50,000 deported to the prisons at Poulo Condor. In June 1931 the Central Committee of the ICP was arrested in Saigon.

### Formation of the Trotskyist Groups

It was in these circumstances that the two principal groups claiming to support Trotskyism were formed, the Nhom Thang Muoi (October) group and the La Lutte (Struggle) group. The International Communist League, usually called the October group after the name of its newspaper, *Thang Muoi*, was led by Ho Huu Tuong and founded in 1931. Due to the fact that it was illegal to publish left newspapers in Vietnamese, this group led a clandestine existence from 1931 to 1936 when the popular front led to a slight liberalization. It went over to a weekly legal French paper, *Le Militant*, in 1937, which, however, was prosecuted and then banned. They reverted to a semi-legal paper before beginning publication of what was probably the first daily Trotskyist paper in the world (Gerry Healy, please note), the *Tia Sang* (Spark), in 1939. Due to its clandestine existence, its more leftist positions and the fact that its material was published mainly in Vietnamese, little is known about Ho Huu Tuong's group. What is known is that it opposed the united front between the Stalinists and the Thau group which lasted from 1933 to 1937.

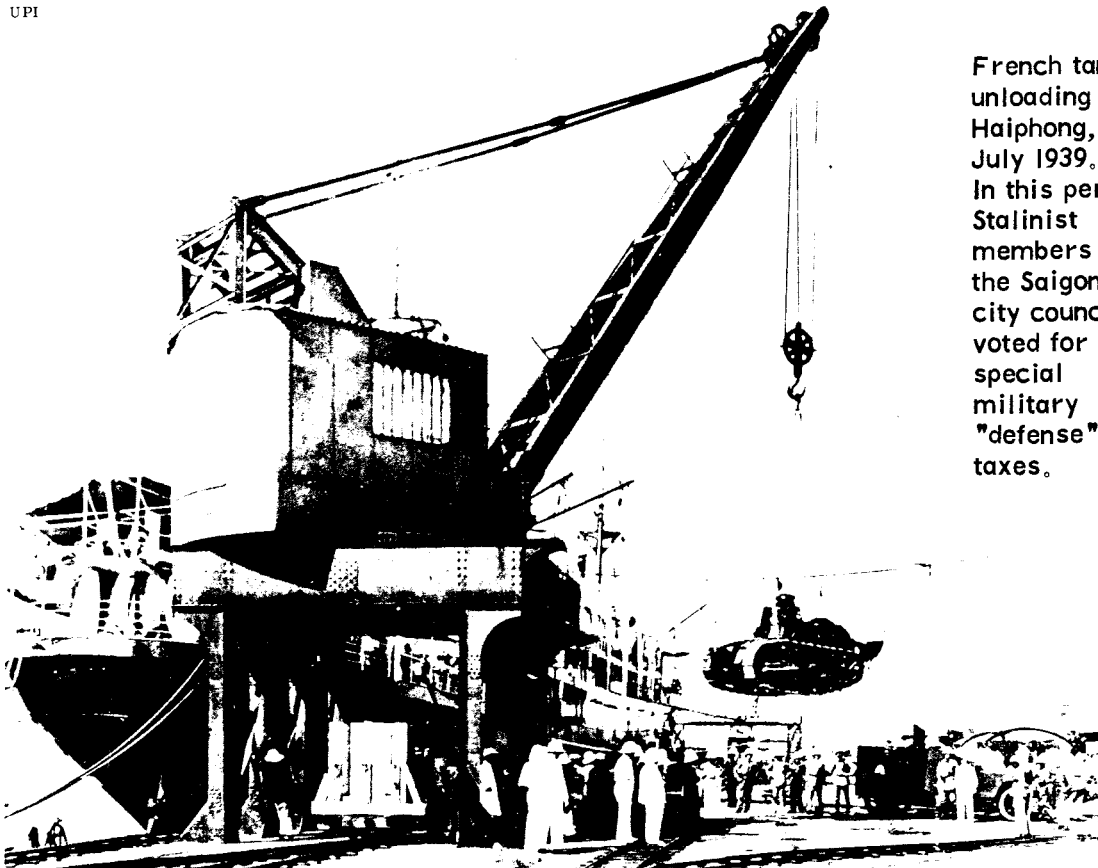
The other group was centered around the person of Ta Thu Thau, a student returned from Paris who had been active in the Left Opposition in France. Its leadership had been arrested in August 1932 during the White Terror and tried in May 1933. However, some of the comrades were liberated in early 1933 and formed a united front with the Stalinists in Saigon led by Tran Van Giau in order to present working-class candidates in the May 1933 elections to the Saigon city council. Their official joint newspaper was called *La Lutte* (Struggle).

The coalition had an enormous electoral success. On the first ballot (of two rounds, as in France), the candidate of La Lutte with the least votes still received more votes than the leading bourgeois candidate. On the second

ballot, two working-class candidates were elected, the Stalinist Nguyen Van Tao and the Trotskyist Tran Van Trach. The coalition continued its existence and joint newspaper until 1937. The united front was limited to the legal activities, while the illegal organizations of both groups operated separately.

It is unclear whether this united front was simply a no-contest pact, or involved joint propaganda around a lowest common denom-

UPI



French tanks unloading in Haiphong, July 1939. In this period, Stalinist members of the Saigon city council voted for special military "defense" taxes.

inator program. If it were the latter, this would certainly represent an opportunist retreat from one of the basic principles of Leninism, the need for the independent organization of the vanguard. A common program obliterates the line between Bolshevism and centrism. In any case, by its very nature, a joint newspaper and an ongoing united front could only lead to political confusion in the minds of the masses and the cadre themselves. Why was there a division between Trotskyists and Stalinists if the two could work together for years, the workers would ask? Moreover, for a period at the beginning of the French popular front, the Stalinists monopolized the newspaper and thereby effectively suppressed the objections to this class-collaboration by the Ta Thu Thau group.

The Thang Muoi group of Ho Huu Tho, however, was opposed to any collaboration with the Stalinists and restricted itself to underground work in this period. To oppose limited joint actions directed against the bourgeoisie and the colonial regime, for instance common demonstrations or in certain circumstances a no-contest agreement in elections, is to attempt to raise a Chinese wall between the revolutionaries and the workers in reformist or centrist organizations and to weaken the proletariat in its battle against the common class enemy. The united front tactic is a permissible "compromise" where it is possible to draw a class line. But things were quite different during the popular front.

### The Popular Front

With the formation of the Radical-Socialist-Communist popular front in 1935, the Stalinists made a sharp turn to the right, forming their

own Indochinese popular front. They allied themselves not only with the Vietnamese section of the SFIO (Socialists), but with bourgeois nationalists such as Nguyen Pham Long and Bui Quang Chien, whom the joint Stalinist-Trotskyist *La Lutte* had bitterly denounced a few years earlier. Not content to form an alliance with the "progressive" comprador bourgeoisie, the ICP went even further and, according to the Stalinist historian Le Thanh

Khoi, "broadened" the popular front to include monarchist parties.<sup>2</sup>

Under Stalinist editorship, *La Lutte* greeted the appointment of the socialist Maurius Moutet as Colonial Minister of the popular front Blum government. A few short weeks after this welcome, Moutet telegraphed officials in Saigon (September 1936): "You will maintain public order by all legitimate and legal means, even by the prosecution of those who attempt to make trouble if this should prove necessary.... French order must reign in Indochina as elsewhere."<sup>3</sup> The Stalinist members of the Saigon city council went so far as to actually vote for military special taxes for "French national defense."<sup>4</sup> Clearly, such taxes could only be used directly against the Vietnamese peasants and workers, as indeed they were soon afterwards.

As the French historian Devillers put it, "in these conditions the break with the Trotskyists became inevitable." By allowing Tran Van Giau and the Stalinists control of the paper, the Ta Thu Thau group was able to continue the united front through the April 1937 elections, in which one Trotskyist (Thau) and two Stalinists (Nguyen Van Tao and Duong Bach Mai) were elected to Saigon city council on the joint ticket.

But in June 1937, the Trotskyists around Thau took editorial control of *La Lutte*, which assumed a distinctly different posture, fomenting strikes and mass protests, along with *Le Militant*, the legal paper of the Ho Huu Thau group.

Thau launched the new line with an editorial entitled "The Popular Front of Treason," which got him two years in jail as a reward from the authorities.

During this time the Stalinists were concentrating their efforts on building an alliance with bourgeois constitutionalists, the "Indochinese Congress." Breaking out of the limited electoral campaigns (the eligible voters included only about 40,000 or roughly 1% of the adult population), the Trotskyists, in contrast, utilized the limited freedoms introduced by the Blum government to push mass agitation in strike movements, campaigns against the repression and in favor of the right to unionization, the *bête noir* of the colonialists. The Trotskyists also set up "action committees" of labor and peasant organizations, as did the Stalinists. Due to their success, especially in the Saigon area, these committees were rapidly banned and brutally repressed by the French governor. In the rural areas, *La Lutte* initiated agitation around the demand of "Land

continued on page 9

—from Ho Chi Minh, "The Party's Line in the Period of the Democratic Front," July 1939

1. For the time being, the Party cannot put forth too high a demand (national independence, parliament, etc.). To do so is to enter the Japanese fascists' scheme. It should only claim for democratic rights....
2. To reach this goal, the Party must strive to organize a broad Democratic National Front. This Front does not embrace only Indochinese people but also progressive French residing in Indochina, not only toiling people but also the national bourgeoisie.
3. The Party must assume a wise, flexible attitude with the bourgeoisie, strive to draw it into the Front, win over the elements that can be won over and neutralize those which can be neutralized. We must by all means avoid leaving them outside the Front, lest they should fall into the hands of the enemy of the revolution and increase the strength of the reactionaries.
4. There cannot be any alliance with or any concession to the Trotskyite group. We must do everything possible to lay bare their faces as henchmen of the fascists and annihilate them politically....

# Which Program for Auto Workers?

## Business Unionism vs. Class Struggle

Faced with a deteriorating competitive position internationally, the auto companies have been attempting to boost their profit margins through productivity drives combining fantastic speedup, long overtime hours and increased layoffs, further aided by the capitalist government's wage-freezing policies. Recent statements by various UAW officers, pledging "reasonable" bargaining and urging voluntary wage-price restraints for the upcoming contract, have the clear purpose of shackling auto workers to the companies' steamroller profit drive.

### Woodcock's Bargaining Program: Don't Tie Me Down

The Collective Bargaining Program, passed with only scattered opposition at the 22-23 March Detroit Bargaining Convention, pleads with management to agree with a "harmony clause" which defines the supposed identity of interests shared by the companies and the union. Despite its 43-page length, the program fails to include any hard bargaining proposals, leaving Woodcock and friends plenty of room to maneuver and sell out, as the bargaining proceeds.

On speedup, the program vaguely pledges to seek "further protection" in line with the UAW's "historic opposition to any attempt to speedup." This "historic opposition" is a complete fabrication since the UAW bureaucracy has consistently over the years allowed the companies total control over line speed, layoffs and working conditions, in exchange for a few cents an hour wage increase.

On overtime, the bureaucrats make a concession to the ranks by declaring that "what workers really want is that overtime be voluntary and not compulsory"—but then leave the backdoor open by emphasizing increased overtime rates, thus suggesting a settlement in which overtime would just cost the companies a bit more.

On wages, the program does not reject the UAW's traditional acceptance of company policies of tying wages to productivity increases plus cost of living raises, and simply suggests that current arithmetic in determining these factors may need "adjustment." Nowhere in this program does the Woodcock regime oppose the government's wage freeze (still in effect, even though price controls have been abolished), much less call for a struggle to break the controls. How could they, with Woodcock himself on the advisory board (and now the parallel board on National Industrial Peace, a polite phrase for strikebreaking and union-busting)?

On working conditions, which are so rapidly deteriorating, the program contains not one single demand, but instead vaguely calls for "management and the union to embark on a joint, cooperative endeavor in which they seek out and mutually implement the ways and means to achieve this next step in the democratization of the workplace—creating job satisfaction for the individual worker, to enhance the quality of work life and give it deeper meaning and significance".

The whole program of the bureaucrats is summed up neatly in their own words that "we will not go to the bargaining table in 1973 looking for a fight." This sweet talk for the companies means a sure sellout for auto workers.

### Class Struggle vs. Sellout

While UAW leaders prepare their cozy deals with the companies, auto-workers must face the rapidly deteriorating working conditions in the plants, the murderous speedup and compulsory overtime, the galloping inflation and the threat of unemployment in the recession already being predicted for the

coming fall. No cozy deals for the ranks! For the mass of the working class the only alternative to the sellout policies of the labor bureaucracy is a program of revolutionary struggle.

The conditions in the auto shops spontaneously throw up a number of demands as an instinctive reaction of self-defense. These include, for instance, strikes against the wage freeze, 30 hours work for 40 hours pay, voluntary overtime, rapid settlement of grievances, lowering the line speed and including it in the contract and international strike action by autoworkers. In different combinations, such demands constitute the program of practically every opposition group in the UAW.

It is the duty of every class-conscious militant to resolutely lead the fight against the capitalists in strikes called on the basis of even such limited class demands. But as communists we must also explain that these demands are by themselves insufficient. Even with speeded-up grievance procedures, for instance, the ultimate power still remains with the company, which means constant harassment by foremen, attempts to increase the speed of production, arbitrary firings, etc. The situation urgently calls for raising the demand of *workers control of production* and the formation of *factory committees* to fight for this demand. Even "30 for 40" is only a concrete application of the demand for *no layoffs*, a *sliding scale of wages and hours* to provide work for all. Since the capitalists will naturally claim bankruptcy when faced with such demands, it is necessary to call for *opening the books* and for *expropriation of the auto companies without compensation*. Clearly such far-reaching demands cannot be won simply by militant plant struggles, and thus it is imperative to take the fight to the political level, by calling for a *workers party* based on the trade unions and for a *workers government* to implement such a program. All of these *transitional* demands start from the immediate conditions facing the workers in the shops, but point to the inescapable conclusion that to change the present dehumanizing conditions it is necessary to change the whole system under which we live. While supporting struggles around even the most minimal class demands, it is the duty of communists to widen the struggle, to raise transitional demands which lead to the achievement of the *real* answer to workers exploitation—socialist revolution. A trade-union program limited to simple trade-union demands, in contrast, is necessarily a reformist program, a program which in this epoch can only lead to *defeat* for the class.

The response of the American left to the crushing defeat planned for auto workers by the Big 3 and the UAW tops is virtually uniform. From the Stalinist CP, to the Maoists, to the social-democratic International Socialists, to the pseudo-Trotskyist Workers League there exists a remarkable consensus: Now is "not the time" for resolutely advancing a program of revolutionary transitional demands designed to break the auto ranks from their treacherous misleaders and prepare them for battle against both their employers and the capitalist state; rather, it is time to string together a hodge-podge of reformist demands restricted firmly *within* the framework of capitalism. This logic prepares virtually every left organization for capitulation to one or another wing of the trade-union bureaucracy or its would-be, look-alike replacements.

The trade-union work of any working-class tendency is a revealing index of its real character: Not only is it here that self-avowed revolutionary organizations present their face directly to the organized working class, but also it is

here that the day-to-day pressures toward accommodation and reformism are greatest. Particularly at contract time, pressures mount enormously "to fight for something we can win *now*." Most of the American left has predictably caved in to these pressures in the current UAW-Big 3 bargaining maneuvers.

### United National Caucus

The only visible national grouping inside the UAW aspiring to "dissident" status, the United National Caucus (UNC), proved itself to be completely impotent in the face of Woodcock's laundry list of ambiguous proposals. UNC co-chairman Pete Kelly spoke from the convention floor noting the "many good things in the bargaining resolution" but expressing skepticism that they would be won. He proceeded to key in on the blatantly class-collaborationist "harmony clause." In effect, Kelly attempted to shame the leaders and delegates into opposing this clause, hinting how difficult it would be to defend it before the ranks, while ignoring the fact that it precisely defined the existing relationship between bureaucracy and company.

Edith Fox was the only other prominent UNC member to speak on the floor. She gave the typical "trade-union militant" speech, predicting a sellout in the bargaining process and calling for "workers control" over conditions. But an examination of what the UNC means by "workers control" is just one illustration of how radical phraseology receives reformist content in the mouths of opportunists.

Writing in 1931, Trotsky explained the revolutionary content of this demand:

"Workers control through factory councils is conceivable only on the basis of sharp class struggle, not collaboration. But this really means dual power in the enterprises, in the trusts, in all branches of industry, in the whole economy."  
—*The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany*

The UNC transforms "workers control" from a demand linked inextricably to the call for expropriation of industry and the construction of a workers government into a formal contractual reform, to be negotiated and enforced as if it were a pension proposal!

Thus both Kelly and Fox continued the UNC's apolitical brand of "militant trade unionism." Even the call for a congress of labor to build a labor party (albeit a proposal with no programmatic content aside from the UNC's reformist pabulum), passed at the UNC's February Production Workers' Conference, was not mentioned at the UAW Bargaining Convention. Just as at the 1972 UAW Convention, when the UNC submerged its "politics" (the call for a labor party and nominal opposition to the Vietnam war) in favor of a bloc with other caucuses to push for referendum election of International officers, the UNC again demonstrated its gross opportunism.

### International Socialists Support Aspiring Bureaucrats

The left social-democratic International Socialists (IS) is the most important "left" cover for the UNC. Having accomplished a turn from New Left middle-class radicalism, the IS is now the foremost bearer of "radical work-erism," a more proletarian-tinted version of its previous opportunist politics. Based on the belief that repeated struggle around shop-floor issues will lead the working class to socialist consciousness while simultaneously assuring its organization a "working-class character," the IS's theories comprise a contemporary re-creation of the revisionist theories of spontaneity, economism and trade-union

reformism that the Marxist movement has continually been forced to struggle against.

Indeed, to discuss the UNC's reformist program is to describe the IS's, for the IS raises no independent positions and limits its public differences with the UNC to tactful advice and polite criticism. Thus, *Workers' Power* No. 75 (30 March-12 April), reporting on the UAW Bargaining Convention, noted the UNC's "excellent alternative program of contract demands" but sighed that the UNC leadership was "unprepared" and without a "clear strategy for a fight against Woodcock."

### Communist Party and Progressive Labor

The Communist Party's approach to the UAW is characterized by a cringing cowardliness even surpassing the UNC and IS. Concerned lest it appear a counterposed leadership, the CP's reportage of events in the UAW varies from slight criticism of Woodcock to glowing reports of his latest proposals to this or that Congressional Committee, masterfully transforming "objective reporting" into tacit approval.

The CP's specific program for the upcoming contract was outlined in the 13 February *Daily World*. The only real points of note were the call for a permanent production workers council and the call for an end to overtime with 30 hours work for 40 hours pay.

The proposal for a permanent production workers council (also supported by the UNC and IS) is clearly meaningless without a struggle for an alternative UAW leadership based on a revolutionary program. The discovery of the "30 for 40" demand is relatively new for the CP. But with the incredible speedup and overtime in the auto plants, and with rising unemployment, the CP was forced to include this demand in its grab-bag, but only at the expense of robbing it of its essential revolutionary thrust, and turning it into a presumably "winnable" reform.

This course is perfectly in line with the CP's "anti-monopoly coalition" strategy: a strategy based on pressuring the liberal wing of the ruling class for a more peaceful, "kind," domesticated imperialism. The CP's recent "left turn" away from overt support to the Democratic Party is only a tactical ploy designed to increase its *own* role in managing a more "liberal" capitalist order. Its work in the trade unions continues to serve its real appetites: blocs with liberal bureaucrats and capitalists for the preservation of "peacefully coexisting" international capitalism.

The Progressive Labor Party (PL), caught in a period of organizational disintegration and rapid rightward retreat, has also latched onto "30 for 40" as a cure-all for the working class. The 22 March *Challenge* lists a multitude of issues confronting the auto workers on the eve of the Detroit Bargaining Convention (layoffs, speedup, inflation, working conditions, etc.) and proudly proclaims: "the answer to ALL these problems? UAW members in Workers Action Movement had one—Thirty Hours Work for Forty Hours Pay."

Like the CP, PL for years opposed the call for "30 for 40" as "Trotskyite" and "utopian." But seeking a single-issue gimmick to arouse its demoralized and confused members, who have been leaving PL in droves, it has now decided that this demand is really only a reform demand—the best reform demand. PL continually stresses that "30 for 40" is "possible" under capitalism, that some unions already have a shorter work week and that the capitalists could still make plenty of profits. Consequently, PL's supporters in the unions say they are for "32 for 40" or "36 for



40" as well; there is no real difference to them.

### Workers League Defends Simple Trade Unionism

In contrast to the previously mentioned groups, the Workers League sports a facade of Trotskyism but only as a cover for its consistently opportunist appetites. Thus the WL calls for a labor party, but proposes that it be built by the present trade-union bureaucracy! Likewise it calls for a Marxist opposition in the unions, while at the same time proclaiming that the key issue is a 20% wage increase.

Earlier this year the WL set up the "Trade Union Alliance for a Labor Party" as a vehicle to coordinate its relatively sparse trade-union work. By its name the TUALP brings to mind the ill-fated "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party," set up by the WL in 1967. At that time, these "Trotskyists" vigorously opposed adopting motions (offered by the Spartacist League) which would give a revolutionary programmatic content to the call for a labor party. (The WL explicitly refused to include in the program any mention of opposition to racial oppression or the imperialist Vietnam war.)

True to form, at the February TUALP conference a program was adopted for a "National Auto Caucus" which contains *not one single demand going beyond simple trade unionism*. Some "Marxist opposition" this, which finds it impossible to mention international working-class solidarity, opposition to racial and sexual discrimination, workers control of production, expropriation of the auto industry without compensation—omitting even the call for a labor party and a workers government! Instead they concentrate on issues such as "30 and out," increased vacations and a 20 percent wage increase (*Bulletin*, 26 March 1973).

In the same issue, the *Bulletin* publishes an "Open Letter to the United National Caucus" by Rudy Sulenta, a supporter of TUALP. Introducing the letter, it writes that "A very important step was taken to build a national caucus in the UAW with a campaign for a 20 percent increase in pay." Sulenta makes it even more explicit, declaring that "contrary to what Woodcock says, the central issue in the upcoming contract is the fight over wage increases.... It is the fight for a 20 percent wage increase... that the political fight is raised." Sulenta rightly accuses the UNC leadership of reducing the struggle to simple trade union policies and ignoring its own demand for a labor party. But then that is precisely what the TUALP auto caucus program does as well!

In short the WL has capitulated to the pressures for a "here and now" program of contract demands, separated from any kind of revolutionary perspective. Moreover, it plays directly into the bureaucracy's hands by proclaiming the wage struggle the "central issue" of the 1973 contract. For years the UAW tops have sold out on working conditions and local grievances in exchange for some limited wage gains.

Well aware of the opportunist implications of the TUALP auto caucus program, and feeling rather unprotected on its left flank, the *Bulletin* took the unusual step of actually replying to an article in the last issue of *Workers Vanguard* on the auto negotiations. According to the WL's front page editorial: "Spartacist says essentially the following about the struggle in auto. Wages, line speed, job security, grievances and the right to strike are all trade union demands. But Marxists, at least according to Spartacist, are for revolution as opposed to winning these 'reformist' demands. Spartacist therefore concludes that the basic demand that must be made is: 'Communism'." Wohlforth is a past master at polemic by non-quotation, a method which permits him the liberty of freely distorting his opponents' arguments out of all recognition. Let us see what the *WV* article actually said:

"One is struck by an amazing similarity between these programs [of the CP, IS and WL], which share a number of elements: higher wages, shorter hours, the right to strike, a range of minor reforms and the complete absence of anything that would qualitatively distinguish them from old-fashioned, 'pure-and-simple' reformist trade unionism.

"Nowhere do any of these groups pose the necessity for a struggle for power. ... Instead, the long-range goal is always separated from, and subordinate to, the immediate economic demands of the next set of contract negotiations. ... Certainly it is essential for revolutionists to participate in the everyday struggles of the workers over wages, hours and working conditions in order to ensure the closest contact between the class and the party.... This does not mean, however, that we attempt to win leadership as simple trade unionists.... We aspire to lead the class as communists, which will often necessarily entail counterposing the historic world-wide interests of the proletariat to its immediate consciousness."

Where in this do you read the Spartacist League opposes winning reform demands, Brother Wohlforth? You can indeed read that we oppose merely raising contract reform demands in separation from the overall revolutionary program. You can read in our press that the SL, together with Trotsky, believes that the transitional program is the program for struggle in the unions, not bits and pieces of the program, or simple trade union reform demands. And it is this which grates on the WL, for it is precisely trade-union reformism which is the methodology of the TUALP auto caucus program and this *Bulletin* editorial.

### Wohlforth Repudiates Transitional Program

The *Bulletin* article goes on to dot the "i's" and cross the "t's" of its opportunism, declaring that "the point is that trade union questions are becoming revolutionary issues.... But the fact is that the fundamental contradiction within capitalism, suppressed for an entire historical period through wild inflation [!], is radically transforming the relations between classes.... That is why simple trade union

demands are so profoundly revolutionary today."

This nonsense clearly reveals the objectivism which lies at the heart of Wohlforth's "dialectics." In this anti-Marxist view, the objective factors completely dominate social struggles and the struggle for the revolutionary program is therefore irrelevant. Earlier, the transitional program was, for Wohlforth, inapplicable because the fundamental contradiction of capitalism was "suppressed for an entire historical period" (shades of Mandel's "neocapitalism"?). And today it has become superfluous; now even simple trade union demands are revolutionary. Thus the WL now formalizes its repudiation of the transitional program.

The WL's logic is that the final "crisis" of capitalism (whose imminent arrival the WL has been heralding since 1962 or so) is now so grave that consistent reformist struggle—e.g., for wage increases—becomes inherently revolutionary. This exactly parallels the petty-bourgeois line of the SWP that "consistent nationalism" (or "consistent feminism," for that matter) is socialism. The purpose of the WL's endless crisis-mongering is to justify an openly reformist program. The WL reasons that trade-union bureaucrats can be forced into building a labor party and aspiring bureaucrats can be supported because they will inevitably be forced to fight for the interests of the working class. This was precisely the logic of Pabloism, the post-war revisionism which shattered the Fourth International: that Stalinists and social-democrats could be forced to lead the proletarian revolution under the pressure of the "objective situation."

Certainly it is true that reform struggles have revolutionary implications. The link is this: In the epoch of declining capitalism (imperialism) it is not possible to win systematic reforms which qualitatively improve the conditions of the working class without destroying the capitalist system itself. Therefore, in fighting for reform demands it is absolutely essential that revolutionaries concretely link these struggles to the fight for socialism. To fight simply for trade-union demands, as the WL does, leaves the class unprepared for the battle necessary to win them, and implies a utopia in which auto workers will have "30 for 40," \$650/month pensions after 30 years, 20 percent wage increases and the like—without smashing capitalism. Transitional demands begin with the concrete needs of the class (for instance, a struggle against the killing overtime, unemployment, inflation and dangerous working conditions), and formulate an alternative which *directly* leads to an attack on the system itself (sliding scale of wages and hours, workers control of production), linking this explicitly to the struggle for power (workers party and workers government). But to the "Marxists" of the Workers League, the struggle for this program is "abstract propaganda" as opposed to their own, very concrete agitation—for a few more crumbs.

Wohlforth's "theories" were answered some 70 years ago by Lenin in *What Is to Be Done?*:

"The economic struggle merely 'impels' the workers to realize the government's attitude towards the working class. Consequently, however much we may try to 'lend the economic struggle itself a political character,' we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of social-democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for that framework is too narrow."

It is not enough to simply have the largest list of demands at contract time, nor to ask for the "most" in the collective bargaining relationship. It is necessary to transcend the strictly economic relation of capitalist to worker to lead to the understanding of the nature of the capitalist order as a whole, and the need for the independent mobilization of the working class to destroy it. This is the approach of the Spartacist League, the Marxist approach, to work in the trade unions. ■

Continued from page 7

## ...Vietnam

to the Poor Peasants," a clear class program as opposed to the "broad national union" being pushed by the Stalinists.

In the 1939 elections to the Colonial Council of Cochinchina, the La Lutte group capitalized on this agitational work and managed to win a resounding victory, with more than 80% of the votes going to their candidates. The masses, faced with the choice between support for French colonialism by the Stalinists and a credible Trotskyist opposition fighting on a working-class program, overwhelmingly chose the latter. In consequence, shortly thereafter, the Indochinese Communist Party in Cochinchina (southern Vietnam) split, the official party being headed by Duong Bach Mai and the dissidents regrouping around Nguyen Van Tao.

The polemics between the two competing groups supporting the Fourth International became increasingly sharp during this period. The Ta Thu Thau group, the official section of the FI, accused the Ho Huu Thuong group of "inventing" its opposition to the united front with the Stalinists years after it was first formed, which is almost certainly not true. However, Thau also condemned them for advocating a joint La Lutte and Stalinist ticket in the 1939 elections. At a time when the ICP was openly backing French imperialism and participating in a popular front (the Indochinese Congress), support for their ticket, however critical, was certainly a serious error. These were the same "communists" who were voting for "defense taxes" in the Saigon municipal council while the government was using the money to ship in tanks for use against Vietnamese workers and peasants.

On the other hand, while the Thang Muoi group did not score the electoral successes of La Lutte, it did manage to bring out its newspaper for some years in Vietnamese before the latter attempted this step and managed to put out a daily newspaper (*Tia Sang*, or *Spark*) during 1939.

While both groups made important errors during this period, and La Lutte appears to have had an overall moderate approach of a centrist character, both vigorously opposed French colonialism and stood sharply contrasted to the Stalinists during the crucial period. Their attraction of a mass base is a tribute to the Trotskyist politics of permanent revolution, even in a muted form.

However, the bourgeoisie regained the upper hand and from October 1939 to January 1940 managed to wipe out the entire legal organizations of both the Communist Party and the Trotskyists. The ICP survived this repression better than did the Trotskyist groups, partly because the latter were more of an immediate threat to the French in the south, partly because the CP cadre were able to retreat to China where (after a period in Kuomintang jails) they eventually received Chinese and U.S. aid and partly because the Stalinists had begun retreating to clandestinity as early as 1938.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

### Spartacist Local Directory

ATLANTA Box 7686, Atlanta, GA 30309	DETROIT..... (313) 862-4920 Box 663A, General P.O. Detroit, MI 48232
BERKELEY- OAKLAND..... (415) 653-4668 Box 852, Main P.O. Berkeley, CA 94701	LOS ANGELES..... (213) 467-6855 Box 38053, Wilcox Sta. Los Angeles, CA 90038
BOSTON..... (617) 661-8284 Box 188, M.I.T. Sta. Cambridge, MA 02139	MILWAUKEE Box 5144, Harbor Sta. Milwaukee, WI 53204
BUFFALO..... (716) 881-3064 Box 412, Station C Buffalo, NY 14209	NEW ORLEANS..... (504) 866-8384 Box 51634, Main P.O. New Orleans, LA 70151
CHICAGO..... (312) 548-2934 Box 6471, Main P.O. Chicago, IL 60680	NEW YORK..... (212) 925-2426 Box 1377, G.P.O. New York, NY 10001
CLEVELAND..... (216) 696-4943 Cleveland WV Committee Box 2492 Cleveland, OH 44112	SAN DIEGO..... (714) 272-2286 Box 22052, Univ. City Sta. San Diego, CA 92122
	SAN FRANCISCO..... (415) 863-1459 Box 40574 San Francisco, CA 94140

# Van Arsdale Forces Pay Cut on N.Y. Cabbies

The semi-annual New York City Taxi Drivers Union (Local 3036) meeting held on 11 April was the death rattle of a union reduced to utter impotency by a narrow, reactionary leadership. At the meeting, the Van Arsdale bureaucracy was finally able to force through a contract which took a year of fake militancy and a resort to binding arbitration in order to shove it down taxi drivers' throats. At the April 1972 meeting where the contract was first presented, the ranks drove Van Arsdale out of the hall. Meanwhile, however, it was implemented by the companies, with the union leadership's permission. This would be bad enough in any union. What is unique about Local 3036 is that the new contract includes a substantial *pay cut* from the previous one, although the cost of living has risen by 30 percent in the interim!

In exchange for a 46 percent fare increase granted by the city two years ago (which substantially cut into tips and fares for most drivers), Van Arsdale agreed to divide the union into "new" and "old" drivers, the former having their percentage of the fare cut from 49 percent to 42 percent, while the latter simply stayed at the old rate. In addition, a dime was taken off every fare ostensibly to cover health and other benefits previously paid for by the companies.

This incredible contract (to call it a "sellout" would be a compliment) also calls for *three* separate union-management committees directed against the drivers. The "Labor-Management Taxicab Joint Board" will "seek mutual improvement of labor relations between parties and to undertake such activities as is mutually agreed will aid the Employer in its relations with its employees and others." The "Joint Union-Management Committee" will see to it that the union cooperates fully with management "to raise the productivity of the employees." "The Union recognizes that only through the successful operation of the Employer is it possible for the success of the parties hereto to be achieved."

The third committee will supervise the transfer of the companies' "Motor Corps," more commonly known as the "rat corps," to the union's management. This Motor Corps consists of company goons who drive around at night to spy on drivers to see if they are taking passengers with the meter off (almost a necessity in an industry where the pay scale is beneath subsistence). In other words, *the union will now play company stoolie, spying on its own members.*

As if class-collaborationist committees and union-sponsored Pinkertons were not enough, the contract contains a section on "industrial peace" which would be the envy of a fascist regime. Not only are strikes illegal under the contract, but union members cannot "instigate, cause, aid, encourage, support, condone or participate in any strike, slowdown, work stoppage, boycott or picketing or patrolling directed against (the Employer)..."

## Rank and File Coalition

The main organized opposition to the Van Arsdale leadership is the Rank and File Coalition, a bloc between supporters of the Attica Brigade, Progressive Labor Party, International Socialists and other militants. The program of the coalition is a six-point list of bread-and-butter demands whose most radical point is 60 percent of the metered fare for the drivers. The main recent activity of the RFC has been taking the union to court to get the contract thrown out as "unconstitutional"! But the courts, like government "mediators," cops, taxi commissions—or prisons—are not "impartial." They are all coercive arms of the capitalist state. Bringing the courts into union affairs tends to integrate the union into the capitalist state apparatus, and can only make more difficult the struggle to transform the unions into organs of class struggle.

## Workers League and MDDC

The other opposition group in Local 3036 is the "Mechanics and Drivers for a Decent Contract" (MDDC), which is supported by the Workers League. For the MDDC the questions of gypsy cabs, union-management collaboration, taking the union to court, police supervision of the industry, even the political independence of the working class and the need for a labor party—all these are irrelevant. For the MDDC the "main issue facing taxi drivers today is wages." In the past the Workers League's and MDDC's answer to every problem was to call on Van Arsdale to

form a labor party. Now, however, giving vent to their opportunist appetites, they rip off their phony labor party mask and reveal beneath it good old American business unionism, i.e., "all the workers are interested in is more money."

## A Class Struggle Program

The Spartacist League, in a leaflet issued in April 1972, has called for the adoption of a program which would "Fight the Van Arsdale Sellout with a Class Struggle Program." Instead of a commission system, which puts taxi drivers into competition against each other, the SL calls for an hourly wage. To fight unemployment and the long hours typical of the industry, the program demands a shorter work week with no loss in pay. Instead of making the customers pay for increased company profits, roll back the fare. Eliminate the fratricidal competition between the medallioned and "car service" taxis, organize the gypsy cabs and abolish the medallion system and the Taxi Commission. For a union hiring hall. Expropriate the fleets.

But the economic struggle is only a part of the overall class struggle, and a real fight against the bosses must be a political fight as well. Thus the SL leaflet calls "For a general strike against the wage freeze. Break with the parties of big business, for a labor party based on the unions; towards a workers government." Likewise, it calls for "immediate unconditional withdrawal of U.S. from Southeast Asia—Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution." ■

## Continued from page 5

## NCLC "Reconstructs" the NWRO

as the latest vanguard is found in a curious speech by Marcus ("Nixon's Plan to Recycle Human Beings," *The Organizer*, Vol. I, No. 1). It seems that the economic depression which we are, of course, already in will compel Nixon to lower the wages of the working class by an average of 40% in the next two years. This will be accomplished by increasing speedup to the point that workers will voluntarily quit their jobs by the thousands to go on welfare, to be replaced by thousands of welfare recipients organized by the old NWRO at lower wages, and they by the old employees at yet lower wages, etc. This absurd fantasy forgets that workers are not distraught petty-bourgeois or lumpen elements and neither can nor will quit their jobs at a moment's notice and without a struggle.

What is also overlooked in the NCLC's master plan is that no such scheme could possibly be implemented without the complete destruction of the union movement as a precondition. Fascism requires a political counter-revolution and the destruction of the organized working class and cannot be implemented merely because the government decides that it might be convenient. The spring 1970 Teamster wildcat shows what the destruction of the unions would require. Governor Rhodes of Ohio, supported by the national leadership of the Teamsters, mobilized 4,000 National Guardsmen to ride shotgun in the convoys of scab trucks, with armored cars and military helicopters supporting. The Teamsters countered with flying picket squads and faced the Guards down, who didn't dare shoot (until they got to the Kent State students a few days later). The alternative was an open confrontation with the entire labor movement in which a full-scale general strike would have been almost inevitable.

To the NCLC, fascism is a moral-religious concept. The fact that a successful fascist takeover requires that the ruling class organize a mass movement capable of smashing the mass

## Defend Venceremos

The capitalist state attack against the Venceremos group continues in California. The witchhunt sparked by the 6 October 1972 escape of Ronald Beatty, ex-member of Venceremos turned police informer, from Chino prison has resulted in the arrest of at least 14 people thus far and the interrogation and harassment of at least as many others. At the present time Venceremos member Andrea Holman and ex-member Douglas Burt sit in a San Bernadino jail awaiting trial on charges of murder.

This wave of police repression can be resisted only through united working-class defense. Struggling consistently for the Trotskyist principle of unconditional defense of the left against bourgeois repression, despite serious political criticisms of those under attack, the Spartacist League and Revolutionary Communist Youth are actively involved in the Chino Defense Committee in the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area, a committee established to support the defense of Venceremos. *Workers Vanguard* calls on its readers to support the defense of Venceremos by sending contributions to: Chino Defense Committee, 747 Dolores St., Stanford, Calif. 94305.

## Continued from page 1 Watergate...

Harding and Hoover to Nixon, deflationary policies have always been the basic line of the conservative bourgeoisie. And when faced with the perspective of a major recession, Nixon successfully switched over to a deliberately inflationary policy, with some of the biggest budget deficits ever.

As for the wage controls, it is necessary to keep in mind that wage-price controls have traditionally been the policies of the *liberal* bourgeois politicians, and of the *labor bureaucrats*. For the latter, "equitable" wage controls tied to productivity are a means of insulating themselves from pressures from the rank and file. Rather than seeking to crush the labor bureaucrats, as a true bonapartist would do, Nixon has tried to maneuver (somewhat successfully) to split the right wing of the union bureaucracy away from the Democrats (e.g., his courting of Meany, the appointment of Brennan as Secretary of Labor).

## Bonaparte or Metternich?

In more general terms, Nixon does not have a strategic radical program for capitalism, but instead has essentially been reacting to immediate pressures and seeking above all to maneuver. Rather than the historical parallel with Napoleon Bonaparte, who established a personal dictatorship through control of the army and above the warring factions of the French Revolution, the comparison should be instead with Metternich, the idol of Nixon's adviser Kissinger, who attempted to maneuver all the reactionary interests into a Holy Alliance against bourgeois revolution, but without provoking radical changes in the established order.

## Depression/Fascism—Mongering and the Left

The predictions of impending bonapartist dictatorship, fascism or a similar cataclysmic shift in the political situation are usually accompanied by predictions of impending depression. Thus the WL's *Bulletin* (2 April) writes: "As American capitalism, the center of the world crisis, enters its *deepest crisis* the corruption of the system must begin to pour out" [our italics]. Wohlforth, of course, has been predicting the imminent arrival of this "deepest" crisis since the early 1960's, so it is about time he declared we are actually entering it.

organizations of the proletariat (obviously possible only when the class is divided and the non-proletarian sectors of "the masses" are alienated from it) is an understanding foreign to the NCLC. Trotsky referred to the millions-strong fascist movement in Germany as "a mass of human dust" which the superbly organized German working class could easily have defeated were it not for its treacherous social-democratic and Stalinist leadership. How much more is this true of the NCLC's candidates for fascist menaces: Zero Population Growth, LeRoi Jones and the pro-government wing of the welfare movement. (At other times, the NCLC has trembled in fear before Bob Dylan and Ti-Grace Atkinson!)

To the anti-Marxist ravings of the NCLC, the Spartacist League counterposes a perspective of the implantation of communist cadre in the union movement and the formation of caucuses based on the transitional program of class struggle. The strategy of revolutionists must be to develop the roots and authority of the vanguard party among the workers and to oust the class-collaborationist union bureaucracy in favor of a new leadership committed to uniting the class, including the unemployed, around a resolute policy of international class solidarity and the fight for a workers government. ■

RCY FORUM

### Myths of Maoist China

Speaker:

JOSEPH SEYMOUR  
SL Central Committee Member

THURSDAY MAY 3 at 7:30 p.m.

University of Illinois  
Room to be Announced

CHICAGO

The National Caucus of Labor Committees likewise sees us as already entering a depression, which thereby produces a revolutionary situation in their view. Thus, "the world monetary system is dead" (*New Solidarity*, 12-16 March); "The Nixon administration is helpless in the face of impending depression" (*New Solidarity*, 26-30 March); "This is the first battle that leads to workers' government by 1978 or 1979" (*New Solidarity*, 19-23 March).

Of course, the Workers League and NCLC are relatively small organizations without real influence in the working class, so the practical effects of this fascism/depression syndrome are relatively unimportant. Nevertheless, we must warn that the tendency toward trying to prove one's revolutionary credentials by shouting "depression" the loudest can be extremely disorienting if acted upon. As Marxists we analyze economic and political developments with the purpose of scientifically determining our own course of action. A faulty economic and political evaluation of the current period will usually lead to mistaken tactical steps which are harmful to the development of the vanguard party.

During the 1950's both the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party were confused by the phenomenon of McCarthyism, believing it to be a form of native fascism, on the order of Father Coughlin in the 1930's or Gerald L. K. Smith in the 1940's. In 1954, the SWP wrote:

"As a product of the witch-hunt, McCarthyism continues to set the pace for the hysteria, but it is more than a witch-hunting excrescence of the capitalist state apparatus. It is a native American fascist movement in the early stage of formation."

— "Draft Resolution on the Political Situation in America" September, 1954.

While the SWP did not act on this pessimistic evaluation (if McCarthyism was fascism, then considering its popularity and the disarray/demoralization in the workers movement, revolutionaries were in a pretty bad way), the Communist Party did. It sent many of its members into an underground existence that lasted for years and liquidated a good part of its trade union work.

Today the Workers League believes that the depression/fascism threat will force the trade-union leaders to take up the fight for a working-class policy, whether they like it or not. This is why the WL is constantly calling on Van Arsdale, Abel or Meany to form a labor party. Similarly, the depth of the economic crisis makes wage demands revolutionary in the WL's view. Thus the WL founds a "Trade Union Alliance for a Labor Party" whose program consists of nothing but a collection of contract demands for one industry after another!

In a similar vein, the NCLC believes that the new depression will enable it to set up a workers government in five years and thus it must finish off the Communist Party in a few weeks. After that the NCLC will take up the Democrats directly!

#### Deepening Capitalist Crises

The U.S. capitalist class is, in fact, faced with a deteriorating economic position—a declining rate of profit domestically and a loss of economic hegemony internationally. Its ability to maintain a certain level of domestic prosperity and avoid serious

Continued from page 12

## PSP Conference

Socialist Workers Party sat at the presiding table, as well as representatives of the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (Young Lords), the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), El Comité, the Black Workers Congress, the *Guardian*, the Revolutionary Union and Workers World Party.

The PSP reaffirmed its traditional position of calling for a "patriotic front" of all Puerto Rican independence forces, including in this the bourgeois PIP. A resolution called for concrete



Juan Mari Bras, PSP secretary-general, addresses congress.

depression is undermined by the adverse balance of payments and the highly unstable world monetary system. In such a situation we can expect to face increasingly sharp recessions which will have a radicalizing influence on the working class internationally and will thus open opportunities for rapid growth of socialist organizations.

In this situation the main danger is not capitalist reactionaries on the order of Nixon-Agnew, but the trade-union leadership and aspiring reform bureaucrats who will be in a key position to sidetrack the coming struggles, unless they are defeated politically by an alternative, revolutionary leadership.

But in any case there is no final crisis of capitalism from which the capitalists cannot recover if the workers do not themselves directly challenge the exploiters for state power. Even though corrupt and bankrupt, the capitalist system will not fall of its own weight. What is required to bring down the bourgeoisie is the intervention of the conscious vanguard struggling for the class independence of the proletariat. With their predictions of imminent depression/fascism the various fake left groups (CP, NCLC, WL) are looking only for a cover which will excuse their capitulations before the bourgeoisie, the labor bureaucracy and the existing backward consciousness of the workers. Superradicalism in words, opportunism in deeds. ■

united actions around such issues as political prisoners and stated that "the independence of Puerto Rico as a preliminary step to the construction of socialism must be the object of all the solidarity and support which the Puerto Rican anti-imperialist organizations can muster..."

The resolution on the U.S. left defined the main problem as "sectarianism" and lack of unity:

"The proliferation of sects and mini-groups, which spend so much of their time and energy attacking other groups shows the incapacity of a single organization or party to hold hegemony over the U.S. left. Another cause of sectarianism is the practice of many organizations to take positions on international questions instead of organizing concretely among the masses."

The resolution calls for eliminating sectarianism by fomenting a genuine ideological debate, unity on specific

actions on the basis of non-exclusion of organizations agreeing with the objectives of the specific actions, bases for unity of the left forces, including the establishment of "the right of cultural expression of the third world forces in the U.S., as long as this is progressive, i.e., that it does not contradict the development of the class consciousness of those sectors."

#### Defeat Nationalism and Reformism!

The Spartacist League intervened at the conference to pose the Leninist alternative to nationalism and reformist class-collaboration. A leaflet distributed by the SL called "For an Independent and Socialist Puerto Rico Through Proletarian Revolution." Rejecting the bourgeois nationalism underlying the idea of a Puerto Rican nation inside the U.S. and the PSP's alliance with the bourgeois nationalist PIP, the SL concluded that Puerto Rican workers in the U.S. "can make their greatest contribution to world socialist revolution by building a single, unified vanguard party in this country, which would represent the class interests of all U.S. workers, whether white, black or Spanish-speaking. To organize Puerto Rican workers in the U.S. into a separate party can only divide the class..."

The leaflet also polemicized against the reformist theory of two-stage revolution (independence first, socialism later), counterposing the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution:

"The struggle for the independence of Puerto Rico can be carried through to success only under the leadership of the working class struggling in its own class interests, that is, for socialism."

In contrast to the principled intervention of the SL, the various fake-left groups which graced the presiding platform during the congress all support the completely anti-Leninist policy of multi-vanguardism, which rejects the Leninist strategy of a proletarian party struggling to unite all the exploited and oppressed. These opportunist tendencies reinforce the divi-

sions among the class by posing separate "revolutionary" parties for the blacks, for the Puerto Ricans, for the women, etc. Likewise, they support the demand for "cultural autonomy" and the idea that nationalism and socialism are compatible.

Lenin, polemicizing against the Jewish Workers' Bund, said about such theories:

"The slogan of national culture is a bourgeois...fraud. Our slogan is: the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement... The place of those who advocate the slogan of national culture is among the nationalist petty bourgeois, not among the Marxists.

"Take a concrete example. Can a Great-Russian Marxist accept the slogan of national, Great-Russian culture? No, he cannot. Anyone who does that should stand in the ranks of the nationalists, not of the Marxists..."

"The same applies to the most oppressed and persecuted nation—the Jews. Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeoisie, the slogan of our enemies..."

"Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism—these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world... In advocating the slogan of national culture and building up on it an entire plan and practical programme of what they call 'cultural-national autonomy,' the Bundists are in effect instruments of bourgeois nationalism among the workers."

—Critical Remarks on the National Question, 1913

The "Marxism-Leninism" of the PSP and its opportunist friends bears no resemblance to authentic Marxism-Leninism. The only political tendency which continues the revolutionary heritage of the Bolsheviks is Trotskyism. The PSP stands, not for Leninism, but for nationalism. The slogan of the "democratic revolution of national independence" leads straight to a new oppression of the Puerto Rican workers by their "own" bourgeoisie. Comrades, this was the slogan of the Social Democrats Scheidemann and Noske in 1919 as they called on the bourgeois police to gun down the revolutionary Berlin workers! This was the slogan with which Stalin delivered the Chinese Communists into the embrace of the "anti-imperialist" Chiang Kai-shek, who turned around and murdered thousands of militant workers in the Shanghai Massacre of 1927!

Only a resolute struggle for the Marxist program of proletarian internationalism and permanent revolution can defeat the forces of bourgeois reaction. The defeat of the reformist agents of the bourgeoisie in the workers movement and of their policies of cultural autonomy, multi-vanguardism and two-stage revolution, is a vital task for all who would hope to deliver the exploited masses from capitalist oppression. ■

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**WORKERS VANGUARD**

#### SL FORUM

## WOMEN AND REVOLUTION

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**HELENE BROSIUS**  
SL Central Committee Member  
  
SATURDAY, MAY 5 at 2 p.m.  
  
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Speaker:  
**SUE MILES**  
  
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**Berkeley**



# Social Democrats Raise Heads in NMU Elections

At the half-way point of the two-month NMU election, seamen are being treated to a sight not seen for many years, the Curran machine actually concerned about getting votes. While the bureaucracy has always herded the ranks into the voting booths in order to present a facade of "overwhelming support" for the dictator, this time they are doing more than handing out cards and plastic wallets. They are actually issuing campaign leaflets, many of them mentioning oppositionists by name.

Part of the concern of the "Curran-Wall Team" is the play given by the bourgeois press to the liberal oppositionist Morrissey, but their main worry is the widespread dissatisfaction in the ranks which could lead to a heavy vote for oppositionists. Many officials actually stand a chance of losing office. In a demagogic effort to counter the pervasive dissatisfaction with an ossified, self-serving bureaucracy, the NMU leaders are now even appealing to seamen's class instincts: recalling the union's militant history, attacking Morrissey for using anti-labor laws and the courts against the union. The hypocrisy is obvious, as Curran has opposed any show of militancy for years, uses cops and goons on oppositionists, etc. But then, as the saying goes, hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue, and under pressure these corrupt agents of the bosses are forced to "discover" traditions of labor militancy in order to avoid complete repudiation.

James Morrissey, the opportunist

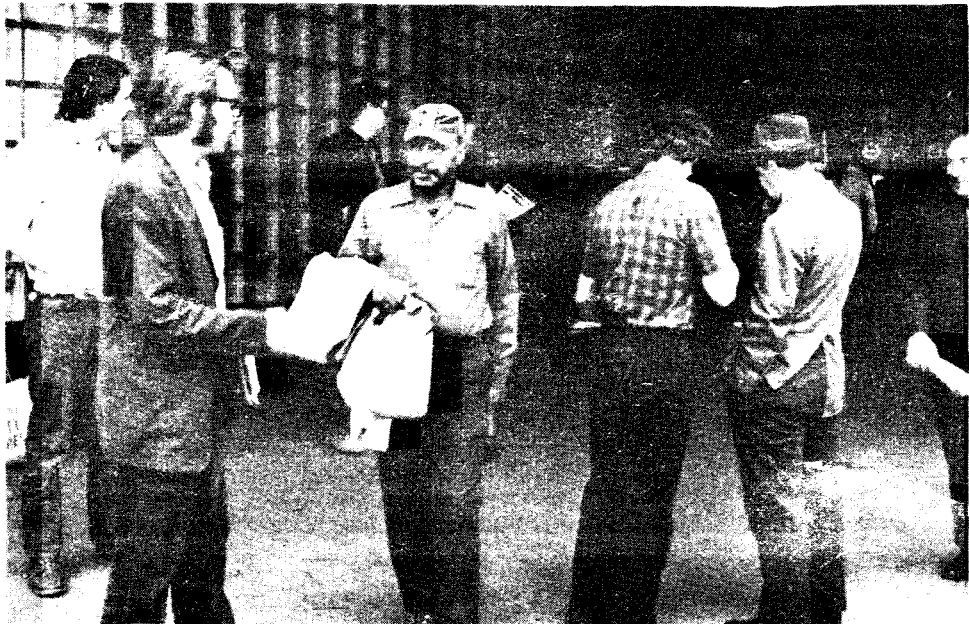
Morrissey, stated that "labor should not tolerate wage controls unless they are equitable," meaning, of course, that labor *should* tolerate control of wages by the bosses' government provided they go through the motions of a bogus price control. Asked about a labor party, Miller replied that "labor has to support the best candidate available," meaning rewarding labor's "friends" among the capitalist politicians.

The Militant-Solidarity Caucus, an oppositionist group in the NMU based on a class struggle program, issued a leaflet exposing the Miller-Morrissey link-up:

"All Morrissey wants is to reform Curran's operation, but not change it. What Miller did in the Miners Union is a good example: As soon as he got into office he tried to kill rank-and-file militancy and wildcat strikes, telling the miners that they must live up to Boyle's rotten, sellout contract that was shoved down their throat[s] (*United Mine Workers Journal*, February 15, 1973, No. 3, pp. 9 and 24)... Arnold Miller's support to Morrissey comes as no surprise since their tactics are identical: reliance on the big business controlled press, appeals to the Labor Department and the federal courts, and financial support from sources outside the labor movement. The Militant-Solidarity Caucus demands that internal union affairs be settled by the union membership, not by government agents in the labor movement." [emphasis in original]

—Beacon supplement, 2 April 1973

The involvement of Miller and Rauh in the Morrissey campaign is part of a



Militant-Solidarity Caucus distributing campaign literature outside NMU hall.

"reform" candidate, has continued to build his campaign on grandstanding for the bourgeois press. Almost all of his leaflets are simple reprints of glowing editorials or interviews from one or another capitalist paper. His major coup has been winning the endorsement of Arnold Miller, the recently elected head of the United Mine Workers. The tie to Miller was achieved through Joseph Rauh, the liberal lawyer and chief organizer/fund raiser for Miller's "Miners for Democracy" campaign, now attempting to do the same with Morrissey.

Morrissey in the past has made a name for himself primarily by taking the NMU to court and promoting government control of the union, just as did Miller and his caucus in the UMW. In a press conference on 29 March, Morrissey went to some length reassuring the press that he "doesn't want to change the world, just the NMU." Asked what he would do about the dwindling number of seamen's jobs, he replied that he would do "whatever was necessary to get results [i.e., asking the government to tax run-away fleets], limited to peaceful means, of course... I'd even jump up and down on the White House lawn!" One can bet that that is just about the most militant thing he would do.

At the same conference, Miller, expressing the same reformist politics as

more widespread involvement of the social democracy in the labor movement of late. Rauh, former chairman of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action, is also linked to James Wechsler, who has been virtually a publicity agent for Morrissey on the *New York Post*. Morrissey has also received extensive coverage and support from Herman Benson, editor of the SP's unofficial labor bulletin, *Union Democracy in Action*. Benson is a former Shachtmanite who later entered the Socialist Party.

Up to now the social democrats have relied primarily on their members and supporters who are leading bureaucrats in several unions. But as the encrusted old bureaucracies assembled by Patofsky (ACWU), Dubinsky (ILGWU), Reuther (UAW), etc., are becoming totally isolated from and unable to control the ranks of labor as the capitalist economic crisis deepens, these "socialist" guardians of the bourgeois order will increasingly find it necessary to more actively woo the restive ranks, including even building "rank-and-file" movements which are, of course, tied in advance to the liberal establishment. What this would mean for the unions can be inferred from the Socialist Party's long-time connection with the CIA, a by-product of the rabid anti-communism which led the SP to sup-

# PSP Nationalists Hold U.S. Conference

The Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) held the first congress of its "U.S. zone" in New York City early last month. The closing session was attended by approximately 1,500 people, in spite of inclement weather, indicating the rapid growth of the PSP in the last year. The congress approved the Political Declaration of the U.S. zone and a number of resolutions, notably on unity of Puerto Rican independence forces and relations with the U.S. left.

The congress also marked the consolidation of the PSP as the major leftist force in the Puerto Rican communities of the U.S. and a step on the road to becoming a mass reformist social democratic party.

## A Nation Within a Nation?

In the public sessions PSP spokesmen concentrated on elaborating their view that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are not a national minority but an integral part of the Puerto Rican nation itself. As a consequence they should be organized not as members of a single vanguard party in the U.S., but rather as part of the PSP.

The Political Declaration approved at the congress was based on the conception that Puerto Ricans everywhere are part of a single nation:

"The General Declaration of our party begins with the affirmation that 'Puerto Rico is a Latin American nation with four and one-half million citizens, 2,700,000 of whom live on the island and the rest (more than a third) are concentrated in New York and other places in the U.S.'"

"Thus we begin with a basic conclusion: We Puerto Ricans, whether living here or there, constitute a single nation."

In his speech at the closing session on 8 April, Juan Mari Bras, general secretary of the PSP, maintained that the "single Puerto Rican nation" is marked by "a cohesive identification of our national being" defined in part by linguistic and cultural characteristics. The tremendous immigration to the

U.S. was part of a plan of "national genocide" characteristic of the 75 years of Yankee colonialism. As a consequence, "The conquest of independence for the fatherland has priority, in order to safeguard the nation."

Mari Bras argued that achievement of Puerto Rican independence would be a blow to U.S. imperialism, which has made the island into a major military outpost in the Caribbean, a "super coaling station" for U.S. efforts to suppress the struggles of Latin American peoples for national liberation. In his presentation of the Political Declaration, Ramón Arbona, first secretary of the U.S. zone, declared that there will be no revolution in the U.S. without previous independence in the colony.

Asking militants to read, discuss and dispute the program of the PSP, Arbona declared that:

"... all Puerto Ricans suffering from imperialism are part of the nation... We are not a national minority with ties to the nation, but part of the nation itself... To talk about Puerto Ricans in the U.S. as a national minority in the U.S. forgets that in that sense Puerto Rico itself would simply be a national minority."

He called for "unleashing the national liberation struggle in the U.S. cities."

Arbona did, however, add that "we must participate in the revolutionary process in the U.S.":

"We cannot have real independence in Puerto Rico until after eliminating the social oppression and exploitation of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. But this is not possible without socialism in the U.S."

The U.S. must be restructured to safeguard the rights of national minorities, he continued. The Puerto Ricans must link up with other sectors of the population who are equally oppressed.

In his speech at the opening of the congress on 30 March, Mari Bras linked this view of a "single Puerto Rican nation" to the PSP's "original contribution to Marxist-Leninist science," namely, the creation of a semi-autonomous section of their party in the U.S.

## The PSP and the U.S. Left

One of the important decisions of the congress was an attempt to formalize the PSP's relations with the U.S. left. In the past the PSP has had loose links with the International Socialists and the National Caucus of Labor Committees. At this congress, a representative of the Political Committee of the

*continued on page 11*

port U.S. aggression in Vietnam!

The NMU Militant-Solidarity Caucus, running Gene Herson for president, has continued its campaign maintaining a firm, principled working-class orientation. In a special interview with *Workers Vanguard*, Herson said that the Caucus has been conducting campaign tours to every major port in the U.S., as well as to Panama and Puerto Rico, and has been received with great interest.

A summary of the Caucus program calls for "two crews alternating on each ship and a 4-watch system to make more jobs and cost of living base pay and pensions. Meeting the seamen's needs will require reorganizing the industry by nationalizing shipping, without compensation, under seamen's control; maintaining full trade union rights. Fight runaway shipping by organizing foreign seamen into an international maritime union. NMU seamen must link up with the rest of labor for a workers party and a workers government" (press release, 2 March 1973).

The Caucus also raises the demand for nationalization of the Panama Canal without compensation, under workers control, but warning Panamanian workers that anti-imperialism must be combined with international working-class solidarity, or else it could be coopted by local capitalists. The Caucus call for organizing internationally in particular includes Panamanian seamen and canal workers. For all non-

maritime shoreside workers the Caucus proposes complete autonomy, deciding themselves on affiliation to other unions if they wish; pay and benefits equal with U.S. seamen, especially in Puerto Rico and Panama (where wage scales are lower); and emphasizing the right to strike, since many shoreside workers are employed on government or military installations.

In contrast to the lavish coverage for the fake "reform" candidate Morrissey, the bourgeois press, not surprisingly, has virtually boycotted the Herson candidacy. But the same is true of various supposedly socialist papers, such as the Workers League's *Bulletin*, the International Socialists' *Workers' Power* and the Socialist Workers Party's *Militant*. All support Morrissey and his brand of labor reformism. The fact that they do not even mention Herson and the Militant-Solidarity Caucus is no accident. To do so would expose their socialist pretensions for what they are, a cover for craven capitulation before aspiring bureaucrats, claiming as an excuse that Morrissey and his Labor Department-bourgeois press-social democratic operation is the only alternative. They aren't. The Militant-Solidarity Caucus, with its class struggle program, gives seamen the first chance in decades to vote against the bosses and their agents in the unions, for a leadership that fights for the independence of the workers from the capitalist class and their state. ■