

Labor Tops Sell Out to Nixon as...

Boom Heads Toward Bust

Coming in the midst of the Water-gate scandal which is daily exposing the slime of capitalist politics for all to see, Nixon's "Phase Four" is one more proof of the bankruptcy of bourgeois rule. Following a wave of price increases which have raised food costs by 47 percent in the last year, Nixon's 60-day price freeze (announced on 13 June) will simply be the prelude to a new round of inflation. This phony price freeze is merely an attempt to mask the onset of the inevitable economic crisis which follows every boom.

There is only one group in the whole country that believes the government will hold the lid on inflation: the labor bureaucracy. Nixon's own officials are already announcing the failure of Phase Four to control price increases—even before it has been implemented! But recent contracts call for pitiful wage increases which don't even come close to matching the current rate of inflation. The powerful Teamsters' union settled for a mere 6.1 percent, while prices rose at the rate of 9 percent in the last quarter.

"Experts are frankly puzzled at why unions and their rank and file should be so unmilitant about wage increases at a time when the purchasing power of their dollar is being eroded," wrote the *New York Times* (12 July 1973) recently. The lack of rank-and-file militancy is a myth—the Akron rubber workers rejected the rubber contract in May; New York postal workers turned down their contract last month; discontent in Teamster ranks over Fitzsimmons' sellout pact has been reported throughout the country.

What is lacking is an alternative, revolutionary leadership for the labor movement. The present Meany-Woodcock bureaucracy accepts the framework of capitalism, as do the leaders of most of the "rank-and-file oppositions" who oppose them. It is necessary to bring to the broad mass of workers the understanding that in the present epoch the struggle to protect the workers' living standards requires not a fight for reforms, which will only be illusory, but a fight to overthrow the capitalist system. To mobilize the workers against capitalism it is necessary to go beyond the business unionism embodied in the slogan "more" and build a revolutionary opposition in the unions which can broaden the economic struggle into the political struggle for socialism. The achievement of this task requires the most accurate, scientific appraisal of reality.

For the capitalist class the opposite is the case. As the representatives of a

dying social order already at an advanced stage of decomposition, the bourgeoisie requires not scientific analysis, but illusions. The economic "analysis" of the bourgeoisie is mere wishful thinking—alternating with panic when the facade of prosperity begins to crumble.

From Idiot Optimism to Despair

In recent months the bourgeoisie has graphically demonstrated that its "analysis" is mere impressionism. According to the Financial and Business Editor of the *New York Times*, writing at the beginning of this year, "The momentum developed since the cyclical contraction of 1969-70 has become so broad and balanced that an upturn reaching toward the next decade is a distinct possibility" (*New York Times*, 7 January 1973). But a mere five months later we read, "A growing number of business forecasters see a recession next year as a result of the breakneck economic expansion" (*New York Times*, 20 May 1973). Such is the ease and rapidity with which the prophets of the capitalist class go from idiot optimism to despair when faced with the contradictions and uncontrollable anarchy of their economic system.

Even prosperity seems bitter for the American ruling class these days. The *New York Times* (27 May 1973) caught the spirit of the times, quoting an of-

ficial of the Harris Bank and Trust of Chicago as saying, "This is the unhappiest boom I've ever lived through." Indeed, the boom has generated the highest peacetime inflation since the nineteenth century, while unemployment remains high at 5 percent, and that figure is sure to get worse. Despite inflation and the high profit levels, the capitalists seem to find profit rates unsatisfactory since they are devaluing the capital stock (i.e., the stock market slide) and amassing their wealth in the

form of money and debt claims—neither of which are very secure these days.

Faced with the disaster of economic "normalization" in Phase Three, the Nixon administration has again resorted to a hard line in state wage/price controls. Whatever the temporary effect on Nixon's sagging popularity ratings, Phase Four will not provide a long-run solution to galloping inflation and, moreover, it has the effect of making the division of income between labor and capital a direct political confronta-

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General Strike Called Off...

CP Hands Victory to Military in Uruguay

The Communist Party-led National Workers Confederation (CNT), in the leadership of a general strike which held Uruguay virtually paralyzed for more than two weeks and created a pre-revolutionary situation, handed over power on July 21 to a military dictatorship thinly disguised by the presence of civilian President Juan Bordaberry. Following secret negotiations with the military government, the CNT called off the general strike and although the final settlement has not yet been announced, its meaning is clear: liquidation of the workers

movement in Uruguay. Among other things, the CNT has apparently agreed to its own destruction—the Bordaberry government outlawed the labor organization in June, arrested many of its leaders during the strike and has driven the rest underground. Interior Minister Colonel Nestor Boletini told newsmen July 12 that the dissolution of the CNT was "irreversible" and announced a new labor policy to make the unions non-political, implying creation of a new labor organization that "will not be permitted to intervene in political questions that distort the true sense of union association" (*New York Times*, 13 July 1973).

When the strike ended, hundreds had been arrested and the military was free to consolidate its rule. Bordaberry announced he would replace Congress with an appointed Council of State, and the government announced on June 28 it planned a major new crackdown on the Tupamaros (urban guerrilla group).

The CNT called for the general strike on June 27 when Bordaberry, backed by the military chiefs, dissolved the two houses of Congress and all municipal councils; announced he would henceforth rule by decree; ordered rigid censorship of the press; closed down all the schools for a month and outlawed the CNT. Bordaberry said the measures were necessary due to "criminal acts of conspiracy against the country" referring to the activities of the Tupamaros.

The calling off of the strike shocked and disoriented Uruguayan workers, because at the time of the decision half a million workers were out; workers occupied the major export industries such as tires and textiles; the state oil refineries had been shut down as well as the ports; and banking had almost completely stopped, shutting down government functioning. Attempts by the army to clear workers from the factories they held had been defeated; all the major industries remained shut

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Boston SL/RCY Demonstrate in Defense of Ligue Communiste



WV PHOTO

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4-PART SERIES

The Lessons of Historical Experience:

TROTSKYIST WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS

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Repeal the Ban on the French Ligue Communiste

On 28 June the French government outlawed the "Trotskyist" Ligue Communiste and jailed several of its leading members following a violent melee in which leftist demonstrators clashed with Paris police defending a meeting called by the fascist *Ordre Nouveau* (New Order) as part of its racist campaign against immigrant workers. The Spartacist League calls on all working-class organizations to unite in defense of the Ligue against government repression and fascist attack.

Attempting to appear "even-handed" in the dispensing of bourgeois justice, the Gaullist Pompidou regime also banned *Ordre Nouveau*. But the fact that the French government chose to grant the fascists a permit for a public meeting may mark the beginning of a campaign against the left. In the past the government has either refused permits to *Ordre Nouveau*, or ordered the police to stand aside during the inevitable confrontation between the left and the fascists. Even the French Communist Party, which in the past has centered its attacks on the "gauchistes" (anyone to the left of the CP), was forced to comment that "by authorizing and giving police protection to the fascists of *Ordre Nouveau*, the government set up a deliberate provocation" (*Humanité*, 23 June).

These repressive measures occur in the potentially explosive context of recent strikes by workers at Renault against pay discrimination for semi-skilled (particularly foreign) workers and of students demonstrating against the militarization of youth expressed by the French government's new draft law (see *WV* No. 21, 25 May 1973). The provocations and attempts to smash the "far left" serve to underscore the fundamental instability of the French government. Even after the recent March elections, in which the Pompidou regime split the vote evenly with the "Union of the Left," the question of a workers government continues to be posed as an immediate task for the French working class. As the French government dispenses with the norms of bourgeois democracy, the defense of the interests of the working class can

only be assured by linking the struggle against the fascist bands and in defense of democratic liberties to the call for a workers government committed to the reconstruction of society on a socialist basis. New popular fronts, such as the "Union of the Left" composed of Communists, Socialists and bourgeois Radicals, are an obstacle to the political independence of the workers movement.

The Ligue Takes On the Cops

According to the 23 June *Le Monde* account of the confrontation:

"Three police vans were burned during the confrontations as well as several private vehicles. Store windows were broken. The most violent confrontation took place about 8 p.m. . . . when strong police forces . . . cordoned off the area around Maubert Square [area of the meeting]. The thousand counter-demonstrators, helmeted, armed with lead pipes, balls and chains, and Molotov cocktails, surprised the forces of order by their organization and especially by their use of Molotov cocktails. The police, bombarded with incendiaries (some of the demonstrators had climbed to the rooftops), obviously had not expected to deal with such a substantial aggressor (small vans resupplied the demonstrators with fire-bombs) and at first were forced to retreat in disorder. . . ."

"At several points in Paris, starting at 10:30 on the rue Lapepède, small groups tried to put up street barricades which were immediately torn down by special squads of police. An anti-barricade tractor was burned. After the first and most serious confrontation, the counter-demonstrators had dispersed in small and extremely mobile groups. Until about 1 a.m., the forces of order in motorcycles, jeeps and trucks patrolled the capital from the boulevard St-Germain to the place de la Concorde, from the Opéra to the Palais Royale in long columns of vehicles with their sirens screaming, to the astonishment of tourists and passers-by."

As is obvious from this account the Ligue Communiste organized the demonstration with full expectation of a military confrontation with the police. The Trotskyist movement has a long history of resistance to fascist groups, including attacking and dispersing fascist meetings, as French leftists have done to public meetings of *Ordre Nouveau* in the past. In this case, however, the presence of massive police force made the relation of forces unfavorable to the left. It would appear that the Ligue Communiste recklessly entered into an adventurist confrontation by attempting to take on the armed power of the state under circumstances which could lead only to the defeat of the left. The correct tactic, given the government's authorization of the meeting, was to mount a campaign calling on the mass workers organizations, particularly the CP and the CGT labor federation, to mobilize tens of thousands of their members to prevent the fascist meeting. In their absence, the Ligue could certainly have organized a mass protest demonstration. This is not the same thing, however, as a futile attempt to overwhelm the police with 1,000 youths.

This confrontation, which the Ligue characterized as an "error" in a subsequent leaflet, allowed the French bourgeoisie to begin a campaign of repression against the Ligue which could easily spread to other left groups. On the night following the demonstrations police occupied Ligue headquarters and arrested 25 Ligue supporters. One week later the Pompidou government outlawed the Ligue Communiste. In an-



LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR



Top, Paris police regrouping after recent anti-fascist demonstration. Left, meeting of *Ordre Nouveau*, French fascist organization.

L'EXPRESS

nouncing this action, Pierre Messmer, Pompidou's prime minister, remarked: "After having made a rapid analysis of the situation, you plunge headlong into a definitive action without worrying about what will happen. You'll see well enough." While the Napoleonic pretensions of this statement are absurd enough, considering the narrow support for the Pompidou regime, it reveals a dangerous bonapartist appetite to smash the left.

United Defense of the Left

Regardless of the errors of the Ligue, the working-class movement must defend the right of the Ligue to continue to function and vigorously defend it against government persecution. The Minister of Interior Marcellin has threatened that the government "will draw the consequences at every level" from the incident (*Le Monde*, 27 June). This attempt to escalate the red scare-mongering of the Gaullist election campaign into wholesale anti-communist repression must be met with united opposition by the left.

Fearing isolation from a new wave of militancy which might loosen its stranglehold on the workers movement, the Communist Party has for the first time been forced to depart from its usual practice of denouncing all groups to its left as "ultra-left," and refusing to acknowledge and defend "Trotskyists" as part of the workers movement. It is significant that the Stalinist CP, along with the Socialist Party and the trade-union confederations, has issued statements denouncing the government and participated in a 4 July demonstration in defense of the Ligue's democratic rights. The limitations of the CP's understanding of "democratic rights" and the need for working-class unity in the face of attack were, however, demonstrated by its refusal to allow the Ligue a speaker at a rally for its own defense!

New York, Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco SL/RCY locals participated in defense demonstrations called by the Socialist Workers Party.

The Spartacist League mobilized 40-50 of the total of approximately 150 demonstrators at the French consulate in New York City. Predictably, the SWP's defense of the Ligue has concentrated solely on bourgeois democratic demands such as "Defend Civil Liberties in France, End the Ban" and "For Free Speech in France," completely ignoring the need for a class defense of the left against fascism and government repression. On the picket lines SL/RCY-ers chanted such slogans as "Smash the Fascist Movement, For Armed Workers Self-Defense" and "End the Ban on the Left, For a Workers Government."

Workers Militias or Urban Guerrillaism

The slogan of "Workers Self-Defense" figures prominently in the Ligue Communiste's agitation against fascist terror attacks on left groups and striking workers. While this formulation seems to coincide with the Trotskyist call for "Workers Self-Defense Guards" and "Workers Militias," it leaves ambiguous the question of precisely *who* will carry out the armed defense of the workers. The Ligue's formulation allows for the interpretation that small bodies of vanguard forces can carry out exemplary acts of terror which will spark the imagination of the masses and inspire them to prepare for the armed proletarian insurrection. As the Ligue explained in *Rouge* of 18 March 1972:

"A terrorist action is only the 'continuation by other means' of the 'normal,' daily activity of revolutionaries. Its value derives from its ability to galvanize the combativity of the masses, strengthen their hatred for the existing order, bring to light the weakness of this order (cf. the actions of the Tupamaros, like the mass liberation of prisoners conceived to demoralize and ridicule in the eyes of the masses the Institution, the public powers, the army, the cops. . .). It is an action which unrolls a step ahead of the masses' determination, but which can be understood, approved, reflected by broad layers of the exploited."

WORKERS VANGUARD

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The workers, rather than "understanding, approving and reflecting" such actions, are only convinced of the futility of isolated, voluntarist confrontations between a few courageous individuals and the armed might of the bourgeois state.

Trotsky was quite clear on the difference between the violence of a few and the violence of the masses. In response to the question of whether the vanguard party should create the groups for workers defense out of its own members, Trotsky replied:

"The slogans of the party must be placed in quarters where we have sympathizers and workers who will defend us. But a party cannot create an independent defense organization. The task is to create such a body in the trade unions."
— "Discussion on the Transitional Program," June 1938

The *Transitional Program* itself is quite explicit:

"Only armed workers' detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory—and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of *creating workers' groups for self-defense*. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions... It is necessary to give organized expression to the valid hatred of the workers towards scabs and bands of gangsters and fascists. It is necessary to advance the slogan of a *workers militia* as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers' organizations, meetings and press."

The Ligue's consistent omission of the slogan "For a Workers Militia" in its propaganda and agitation around the resurgence of activity by the fascist groupings only highlights its consistent departure from the Trotskyist strategy of struggling for revolutionary leadership within the existing mass organizations of the working class. Instead, the workers will be shown the efficacy of armed struggle from the outside:

"In what concerns us, we have not hesitated to resort to actions of minority violence, when these activities were linked with mass activity... For us, revolutionaries need not wait for the uprising of the masses before opposing the daily violence of capital with their own violence. In strikes, we propose to the workers taught by the assassination of Overney, of Labroche, threatened by the CRS, to organize workers self-defense. To prove that it is possible, we set an example to the extent of our possibilities."

—D. Bensaïd, *Rouge*, 10 June 1972

Rather than face the arduous task of long-term implantation into the trade unions dominated by the reformist social-democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies, the Ligue seeks a shortcut to the workers movement by gaining hegemony within the "new mass van-

SWP Confronts Nazis in 1930's

SL criticism of the Ligue Communiste's recent confrontation with Paris police in no way implies opposition to the use of organized violence against fascists by the workers movement. In fact Trotskyists recognize the prevention of the growth of fascism, politically and organizationally, as a necessary task of the proletariat. Every attempted activity of the fascists to build a movement to spread their poisonous anti-working-class ideology deserves to be smashed by indignant workers; proletarian democracy does not extend to the reactionary scum of society whose purpose is to serve as the ultimate weapon of the ruling class to liquidate the labor movement. The focus of such a campaign must be to mobilize labor as a whole through the formation of workers self-defense groups and ultimately workers militias, based on the unions. *Depending on the correlation of forces*, the revolutionary party might itself initiate a mass mobilization to attack and disrupt fascist meetings. This however has nothing to do with "exemplary vanguard violence."

One instructive example of an effective anti-fascist mobilization took place on George Washington's Birthday 1939. This was the occa-

guard" forged out of the uprisings of May 1968. This abstract and amorphous category of "new vanguard" assumes a homogeneous layer of radicalized youth, obscuring the real differences in class outlook, political aspiration and revolutionary commitment. This category is used by the Ligue to justify the adaptation of its politics to appeal to high school and university youth. Rather than transforming these new recruits into Bolshevik cadre by breaking them from tendencies toward petty-bourgeois radicalism and confrontationism the Ligue has capitulated politically to the youth milieu in which it functions.

While generally paying lip service to formal Marxist orthodoxy, the real positions of the Ligue slip through occasionally, as in a polemic directed



Socialist Workers Party demonstrates against Nazi meeting in Los Angeles, February 1939.

sion for several massive rallies of the American fascist movement, the largest of which was held in Madison Square Garden. The meeting drew 18,000 including the German-American Bund, Pelley's Silver Shirts, Father Coughlin's "Social Justice" gang and Hague's notorious goons out of Jersey City.

The Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, together with its youth group the YPSL (Young People's Socialist League), launched a campaign calling on the workers of New York City to "let the fascists feel the anger and the might of the working class..." and warning, "we must not let this filthy, creeping slime get a foothold in New York!" Despite the fact that the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and the International Labor League (Lovestoneites) all refused to participate, the demonstration drew 50,000 anti-Nazis, including many rank-and-file members of the CP.

Protecting the fascists were

about 1800 of New York's "finest," who freely attacked the picketers, swinging clubs and trampling the crowd with charges of mounted patrols. The demonstrators responded without hesitation, broke through the police lines and returned blow for blow. Clashes between police and workers continued for five hours, until the meeting finally ended.

Similar demonstrations were held in other cities, notably Los Angeles and Oakland. The SWP was able to take full political advantage of its role in these militant mass counter-demonstrations. CP and Lovestoneite accusations of "Trotskyite"-Fascist collaboration were thoroughly discredited, and the SWP was able to establish a nucleus of sympathizers within the CP on the basis of this work. In addition, the demonstrations were used to highlight the central thrust of the SWP's anti-fascist agitation: the call for armed workers defense guards.

against "sectarians" who insisted, at the time of the May 1968 worker-student uprising, that the proletariat must be the leading force in revolutionary struggle. A prominent Ligue spokesman wrote:

"The dialectical interaction between the class struggle of the proletariat and the struggle of other classes or social layers is alien to the sectarians. In their eyes, so far as the peasants or petty-bourgeoisie is concerned, there can be no socialist revolution unless the workers stand at its head."

—Pierre Frank, "French Crisis Tests Revolutionary Vanguard," *Revolt in France*, 1968

How sectarian, indeed, to insist that the working class must lead the socialist revolution! What "sectarians" must Marx, Lenin and Trotsky have been to devote their entire lives to fighting for precisely this principle!

Thus the Ligue Communiste reveals the political disorientation underlying its tactical "errors" and anti-Marxist espousal of exemplary, minority violence. On the other hand, the Ligue's opportunist appetites (simply the reverse of its military adventurism) were revealed by its call during the recent French elections for a vote for the popular-front "Union of the Left," a coalition of workers parties with sections of the bourgeoisie.

In the international dispute currently raging in the fake-Trotskyist "United Secretariat," the European majority including the Ligue (its French section) sees the strategy for Latin American revolution as one of guerrilla warfare, based on military detachments isolated from the organized workers movement. At the same time the USec majority wishes to distinguish itself from Guevarism-Maoism which is the natural ideological expression of guerrilla strategy. This dangerous game has

reached the point where the Argentine section of the USec, the PRT (and its urban guerrilla detachment, the Revolutionary People's Army, the ERP) on the one hand embraces Maoism and Castroism while at the same time unilaterally declaring a truce with the new Peronist government which had vowed to "crush" Trotskyist and guerrilla groups (see "Guevarism vs. Social Democracy in the USec," *WV* No. 23, 22 June 1973)!

The voluntarist adventurism of the Ligue and USec majority will undoubtedly provide fresh ammunition for the minority led by the Socialist Workers Party (the U.S. sympathizer section). However, the SWP's pretensions to Trotskyist orthodoxy against petty-bourgeois guerrillism serve only to mask its own wretched betrayals of Marxism. No, the ultra-respectable SWP will not risk its cadre on such futile displays of impotence and frustration. Instead of exemplary terrorism it prefers unadulterated pacifism and grovelling at the feet of the liberal wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie (exemplified by the alliance with Senator Vance Hartke in the popular-front National Peace Action Coalition).

The recent adventure by the Ligue Communiste demands that honest revolutionists within both wings of the crumbling USec break with both the adventurist centrism of the European majority and the social-democratic reformism of the SWP, to return to the revolutionary Trotskyist program of intransigent struggle for the political independence of the working class.

For a United Defense of the Ligue Communiste!

For Workers Armed Self-Defense Against Fascism—Towards Workers Militias Based on the Unions!

For the Rebirth of the Fourth International! ■

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Preferential Hiring Is Not the Answer

The recent government offensive to impose preferential treatment of minorities and women in the telephone company is part and parcel of a broad attack on the independence of the trade-union movement. Government "Affirmative Action" programs for hiring, transfers and promotions—just like state wage controls, compulsory arbitration and court actions to overturn union elections—are weapons in the hands of the capitalist government to weaken the unions and directly or ultimately drive down wages. The workers movement must present a united front against these union-busting attacks. Instead of acquiescing to the class enemy's stratagems, working people must wage a real struggle to eliminate racial and sexual discrimination within the unions using *labor's own methods* (including strikes) to wipe out discriminatory practices of the employers.

Whatever gains individual minority and women workers might obtain by the government opening up a few jobs for them will in the long run be more than offset by the losses suffered by the entire working class as a result of state control of the labor movement. It is notable that Nixon, the author of the Philadelphia Plan for preferential hiring of blacks in the construction trades, openly wooed southern racists and does not even pay lip service to civil rights—except where the unions are the target. Likewise, the liberal Kennedys' campaign against "corruption in the unions" (in reality an effort to oust Jimmy Hoffa from the powerful Teamsters union) was combined with support for vicious anti-strike laws and wage controls.

"Preferential hiring" has the added effect of discriminating against white male workers supposedly in order to make up for centuries of oppression suffered by minorities and women as a result of capitalism. The intended result of such policies is to increase racial and sexual antagonisms within the working class. To these divisive schemes, which only serve the capitalists (and are actively supported by them), revolutionaries must counterpose a program which will promote working-class unity across racial, national and sexual lines. Categorically opposing state interference in the unions, we must call for the end of racial and sexual discrimination and job-trusting, and implementing a policy of increasing equalization of wages, non-discriminatory training programs for skilled-craft jobs, hiring on a first-come, first-serve basis and a struggle for a sliding scale of wages and hours which would provide jobs for all. As long as workers are pitted against each other in competition for a limited pool of jobs, the necessary consequence will be a divided and weakened labor movement.

"Affirmative Action" at Bell Tel

The most recent government preferential hiring scheme is the "Affirmative Action" program currently being implemented in telephone. This January American Telephone and Telegraph agreed to set up a "soft" quota system (guidelines rather than fixed percentages) after the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) sued the company for having discriminatory hiring and transfer policies. Subsequently the EEOC has filed discrimination suits against many other corporations and trade unions, including Philip Morris, General Motors, General Electric and the United Auto Workers.

The EEOC based its arguments of discrimination in the telephone company on Bell System figures which show extreme underrepresentation of minorities and women in higher-paying

craft jobs. Women, who comprise 60 percent of the total work force, are 99.8 percent of the system's secretaries, 99.9 percent of the operators, 98.9 percent of the service representatives and only 1.1 percent of the craft workers. Nationwide in 1971, 79 percent of all black employees were female, concentrated in the lowest job categories, with five-and-a-half times greater chance of remaining in unskilled positions than white employees. EEOC won the court case and demanded that AT&T write up a program to increase the number of minority and women workers in the higher-paid categories.

The AT&T settlement was in four parts: AT&T would give lump-sum payments of \$15 million to 13,000 women and 2,000 male minority group members who had been discriminated against in the past; it would give raises of \$23 million to 36,000 workers whose advances and pay increases were judged to be possibly hindered by discrimination with additional pay raises in the next five years; it would roughly double the company's "ultimate goals" for hiring male operators and clerical workers and female craft workers; but AT&T would not have to formally admit any instances of discrimination.

AT&T President Robert D. Lilley said at the conclusion of the settlement, "the big job for management is to convince those employees who are watching women and minorities pass them by that nothing unjust has been done" (*New York Times Magazine*, 20 May 1973). This will be a difficult task indeed! With no provisions for more jobs, the only way to increase the proportional representation of minorities and women is to systematically discriminate against whites and men in hiring, transferring and upgrading.

The *New York Times Magazine* (20 May 1973), which lauded the settlement as a breakthrough for women, mentioned in conclusion a hitch to the program:

"The traditional solution to conflicting demands in the American political system has been to divide an ever-increasing pie. But in the short run, the size of the employment pie is fixed and if minorities and women want a piece of it, it has got to come from the share held by white males."

For minorities and women, the actual settlement is pure tokenism. The lump-sum payments average out to a paltry \$100-to-\$400 for the first group of women and minority group males who transfer into craft jobs and *hold them for at least six months*—not much compensation for any individual kept out of a particular job category for any length of time. The pay raises are equally insignificant. As for the job quotas, doubling the "ultimate goals" in Pacific Telephone in the category of semi-skilled inside jobs, for example, would raise the percentage of black women to only 2.8 percent!

These percentages in no way reflect the proportions of women and minority group members in the population, but instead only those *with acquired skills*. With little access to specialized training, the majority of minority and women workers remain permanently barred from the higher-paying skilled categories. (In addition, most telephone company skilled craft jobs are based on the company's own training programs, thus making the whole skill criterion perfectly ludicrous.)

CWA Tops Temporize

The CWA International has asked the federal courts to delay implementing the program on the grounds that the agreement interferes with the union's job-posting and bidding procedures as well as rights to bargain with

the company over seniority; that the quotas are not large enough; and that the union is not sitting on the placement bureau. It does not oppose in principle government interference into union affairs, nor does it oppose preferential hiring per se. During the entire period of the court suit, the Beirne bureaucracy refused to take any action against the proposed guidelines, saying it would "wait and see" how the government dealt with the company. CWA is now fighting only through the courts and will file only individual grievances against the program.

The question of seniority is one of the most sensitive aspects of the preferential hiring question. In part seniority systems are a form of union control of advancement, as well as being protection against arbitrary or victimizing layoffs by the company. A government attack on seniority systems, for whatever reasons, is a threat to the partial gains won by labor and must

where AT&T is drastically cutting back on jobs through automation, "affirmative action" programs without a fight for jobs will simply set one group of workers against another.

MAC Opposes "Affirmative Action"

The various opposition groups in the CWA have taken sharply different positions on the question of "affirmative action." In the Bay Area, the *Bell Wrenger* and *Yellow Pages* caucuses originally criticized "affirmative action" only because the quotas weren't large enough. In a joint April issue, they called the program tokenist because there were no new hires and called for establishing a "real affirmative action program." Their position was in direct counterposition to the class stand of the Militant Action Caucus of CWA Local 9415 (Oakland,



Demonstration for preferential hiring in Pittsburgh, 1969, organized by Black Construction Coalition. Led by black middle class, BCC received government grants, made white workers the enemy.

be opposed on principle as one more union-busting tactic. Almost all government and company-sponsored "affirmative action" schemes have the effect of weakening, bypassing or eliminating negotiated seniority systems.

However, to oppose government meddling in the unions on the question of seniority is not the same thing as defending the existing systems, which are frequently blatantly discriminatory. In the phone company, for instance, the CWA opposes that part of the EEOC settlement which rules that craft jobs above entry level will be made competitive based on the length of employment with the company. The bureaucracy is standing on the old system of seniority based on time in the job category immediately beneath the vacancy level. This system will keep women and minorities from entering the higher-paying skilled crafts for many years, even if they have years of service in the Bell System.

Instead, it is necessary to oppose the discriminatory seniority system with a program of struggle for jobs for all. Seniority by its very nature is a system of dividing up scarce jobs and inevitably discriminates against younger and newer workers even when it is not blatantly biased. In a situation

Calif.), which correctly pointed out that the affirmative action program was merely a ruse to enable the government to intervene in the unions:

"The phone company and the U.S. government use the guise of 'racial justice' as a club to weaken the union and to divide the working class by pitting blacks against whites, men against women, unemployed against employed workers. 'Affirmative Action' applies quota systems on hiring and transfers, giving the company another excuse to ignore the seniority system..."

"Instead of calling for strikes against layoffs and forced transfers, and for a union hiring hall so workers can control hiring on a first-come, first-serve basis, the Bell Wrenger merely criticizes the phone company for not living up to government percentage quotas. This position objectively supports government interference in the unions. In light of this their demand for 30 For 40 is a contradiction, a militant cover for a class collaborationist position."

—"Militant Action Report," 7 November 1972

"Black Monday"

The most blatant anti-union drive using the issue of discrimination oc-

curred in the construction trades in the late 1960's. Unemployed blacks organized demonstrations and moved on construction sites in a number of cities across the country to shut them down, demanding jobs. The anti-black, anti-labor Nixon administration quickly moved to capitalize on black workers' legitimate resentment at being shut out of the construction industry. (In Pittsburgh in 1969, for example, only 1.4 percent of journeymen in craft building trades unions were black.)

The government, trying to whip up public opinion against the unions, raised hue and cry about "exorbitant" wage demands of workers on federally-funded construction projects robbing the urban poor of good housing. "Black Mondays Are Good for Us" ran an October 1969 editorial in *Fortune* magazine, the monthly organ of U.S. capitalism, approving demonstrations of blacks against construction workers in Chicago and Pittsburgh. *Fortune* said that the demonstrations of blacks for more jobs were "channelled in the right direction" and quoted John Doar, then president of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Development and Service Corporation (dedicated to restoring slums through black capitalism):

"Union concepts of security and seniority were formulated in a period of struggle between company and union. Now the struggle is between the Negro and the unions. It is our position that a basic conflict exists between labor-union concepts and civil-rights concepts. Something has to give."

Doar's recommendations included the elimination of the union hiring hall: "Unions still control an estimated two million jobs through such arrangements. Employers should be free to hire any qualified worker."

The sharp rise of anti-union sentiment among blacks was due primarily to the "new ideology"—that organized labor is the main barrier to black liberation. Through conscious propaganda and direct financial aid, the capitalists cleverly manipulate the phony "community control" issue—"blacks should have the jobs in the ghetto"—for the conscious purpose of breaking the unions.

"Black construction coalitions"—blocs between the government, ghetto residents and big business—were set up to skirt the unions. In Pittsburgh "Operation Dig" received \$485,000 of Labor Department funds to set up its own one-year training program for blacks, in counterposition to the traditional three-to-five-year union apprenticeship program, and demanded 40 percent black membership in each affected craft union in two years. Chicago's Coalition for United Community Action was directly financed by Chicago banks and the Ford Foundation to the tune of \$1,150,000. In return its leaders—C.T. Vivian and Jesse Jackson—promised to limit their fire to the unions and the contractors, covering up for the banks and big business which were responsible for large cutbacks in jobs in the construction industry.

At the same time the government sought to push its "Philadelphia Plan" which set quotas for minority hiring on federal construction. The Plan also included provisions for a government-industry-union commission to intercede in strikes and compulsory cooling-off periods. The Plan was implemented successfully only in Philadelphia but with the desired results. Racial antagonisms intensified sharply; the collective bargaining power of the unions was weakened.

"Affirmative Action" at UCLA

Recent attempts to implement an affirmative action program at the University of California coincide with an all-out drive by the State of California to smash the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) through anti-labor legislation such as the Morretti Bill (compulsory arbitration), red clauses and sweetheart contracts.

On the UCLA campus, "affirmative action" was first implemented at the

Neuro-Psychiatric Institute (NPI). A committee was set up to be merely an advisory body to the NPI administrator, who was to make sure that the proportions of minorities and women in the NPI work force corresponded to the proportion in the Los Angeles population. Since UCLA is doing very little hiring, the program could be accomplished only by preferential hiring, preferential promotions, etc. at the expense of white males who were threatened with loss of their jobs.

The key question facing Local 2070 of AFSCME was whether or not to participate in the elections to the Affirmative Action Committee (AAC). At first, in early 1972, the union set up its own rival Affirmative Action Committee and voted against participation in the employers' AAC. When the issue was revived this year, this position was reversed: the local leadership managed to swing the vote in favor of participation, thus sanctioning direct state intervention into union affairs and voluntarily abandoning the right to control hiring and promotions.

The question of participation in the NPI's Affirmative Action Committee has also been a divisive issue between tendencies within Local 2070. In the Local's vote on joining the employers' AAC, supporters of the reformist Communist Party voted to participate. Earlier, when the issue first came up in 1972, IS supporters in typical fashion proposed to *reform* the employers' AAC by giving it real powers, increasing the proportion of employee representatives, etc. The Militant Caucus has opposed union participation in the AAC. However, at the March 1973 meeting of Local 2070 the caucus incorrectly voted to reverse its previous stand and participate in AAC elections. In a subsequent leaflet entitled "Workers Action, Not Affirmative Action!" (7 April 1973) the Militant Caucus announced,

"Upon reconsideration, the MC repudiates this vote and reaffirms our long-standing and principled opposition to entry into the AAC..."

"...the AAC is a weapon for *direct state intervention* into the unions for the purpose of destroying them."

"Rather than entering the AAC, we propose a union *boycott* of the elections and counterpose *independent* action by the union. The main point of this action must be a massive *organizing drive* and the struggle for union recognition, a statewide contract, and collective bargaining. Affirmative Action is a diversion and threat to our goals. We seek to gain full employment and working class unity, not by exacerbating existing tensions among workers, but by advancing demands which unite all workers, such as: for a union hiring hall, mass hiring and training of the unemployed, a shorter work week at no loss in pay (30 for 40)... In order to obtain our goals a struggle for unity against the capitalists and for our own political party—a labor party based on the trade unions—is required. We seek not to better administer capitalism, but to struggle for a workers government!"

The Record of the Left

Almost every tendency claiming to have a revolutionary strategy for the working class has actively supported, or at least apologized for, government preferential hiring and advancement programs in the unions. Looking to the state as a neutral body that can aid the unions in their struggles for democracy and equal rights is the essence of reformism. In contrast, the Spartacist League recognizes the state to be an instrument of class oppression whose interest in intervening in the unions is in order to *paralyze* the working class. Consequently we oppose government interference in the unions on principled grounds.

The International Socialists (IS), which supports the Bell Winger and Yellow Pages groups in Bay Area telephone, gave its justification for appealing to the bosses' state against the unions in a comment on a Labor Department ruling on discrimination at the Bethlehem Steel plant in

Sparrows Point, Md. last January:

"The apparatus of many unions, including the IBT [Teamsters] and the UMW [Mineworkers] (under Boyle's regime) have been transformed into monstrous bureaucratic structures which use both gangster methods and alliances with the state to suppress virtually any possibility of rank and file reform through the processes of the union itself... Under these conditions, rank and file groups and oppositionists may have no choice but to use the courts as one arena in the struggle against the bureaucracy."

—*Workers' Power*,

16 February-1 March 1973

Thus in the IS' view, the unions should be supported against the capitalist state sometimes (when they do popular things) in the same way that the deformed workers states should be defended sometimes (as in Vietnam, due to the popularity of the Vietnamese Stalinist leaders among petty-bourgeois radicals)! For Trotskyists, however, defense of the unions against the bourgeoisie is a question of principle, just as is the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism despite the sellout policies of its Stalinist leaders.

Proving once again its complete abandonment of Trotskyism, the Socialist Workers Party's *Militant* (9 February 1973) called the steel settlement a victory for black workers and railed that because the government did not set up enforcement machinery, "the racist company and union officials will, at best, make only a token effort to enforce the government order." Supporting government intervention in the unions, no wonder the SWP can see nothing wrong with joining with bourgeois liberals in the National Peace Action Coalition.

Where Is the Class Line?

The sharp polarization within the U.S. left over the question of preferential hiring arises from the conflict between two principled positions: that blacks and women must be integrated into all sections of the work force and that no worker should be discriminated against. Proponents of preferential hiring argue that since black and women workers have historically carried the burden of inequality, white men must now be willing to give up their "privileges."

Such bourgeois moralizing must be rejected out of hand. It is crucial to recognize that the single most important cause of political backwardness in the American working class is the manipulation by the ruling class of profound ethnic consciousness and conflicts arising out of a nation created through immigration. The rise of right-wing populist demagoguery, which blames the economic troubles of white workers on the "inflated ambitions" of blacks and their establishment-liberal supporters, has heightened hostilities between black and white workers. It is therefore crucial to demonstrate that the fight against racial oppression will not take place at the expense of white workers, but instead at the expense of the capitalists.

Protecting jobs of white male workers in no way means sanctioning discriminatory practices against minorities and women. The Spartacist League demands replacement of discriminatory seniority systems and job trusting by

equal access to training and apprenticeship programs, open admissions with stipends to colleges and universities, the elimination of restrictive educational requirements for jobs that do not need them, so that minorities and women will not be systematically segregated into the lowest-paid sections of the working class. But we do not support "solutions" that result in the systematic discrimination against white male workers.

In a period of significant unemployment, preferential hiring programs are simply that: more jobs for blacks means fewer jobs for whites. Instead of pitting different groups of workers against each other, a real struggle for the integration of minorities and women into the work force on an equal basis requires a fight for organizing the unorganized, for a sliding scale of wages and hours to provide jobs for all, for an end to all sexual and racial discrimination, for a union hiring hall, and a political struggle against the capitalist parties and the capitalist system which fosters racism and sexism.

In recent years the bourgeois press has mounted a systematic effort to foster antagonisms between minority and white workers. A high point in this campaign was the 1968 New York teachers strike, in which the Ocean Hill-Brownsville School Board ("community control") was pitted against the United Federation of Teachers. The fundamental issue of the strike was the right of teachers to job security and due process for hiring, transferring and firings, despite the business-union conservatism of the Shanker leadership of the UFT which enabled the strike to be turned into a black-white racial war. This strike lined up almost every left group, with the exception of the Spartacist League and the NCLC, behind the school board and its cynical Ford Foundation backers.

The SL took a clear class stand against the union-busting drive, in defense of the strike, at a time when this was a very unpopular position. (Later, in 1970, most left groups supported the Newark Teachers Union in its strike against the local school board. The only significant difference between the two situations was that in 1968 blacks were "in" among petty-bourgeois radicals, while by 1970 it was labor's turn.)

Beyond the question of preferential hiring, the crucial issue in the case of "Affirmative Action" is the independence of the trade unions from the state. The unions, despite their reactionary and corrupt leaderships, represent the first step in the organization of the working class against its capitalist oppressors. Minority and women workers more than any other group need the protection of unions (as the difference between wages in the North and the right-to-work South clearly shows). The labor bureaucracy's collusion with the bosses' discriminatory practices is an abomination which must be fought out within the workers movement through struggle against the bureaucrats, not by reliance on the "benevolence" of the class enemy. Whoever fails to understand this cannot hope to lead the workers in the class struggle for socialism. ■

Corrections

The "Defend Chilean Miners' Strike" article in *WV* No. 23 of 22 June 1973 erroneously claims that the suspension of Chilean copper shipments to Europe during the recent Chilean copper miners' strike caused "losses of \$50 million per day in foreign exchange." In actuality total losses since the beginning of the strike in April were approximately \$50 million by mid-June.

The subjects of the page 5 photograph in *WV* No. 24 of 6 July 1973 are Hector Cámpora and Juan Perón's wife Isabel. The caption incorrectly states, "Perón and wife with picture of Eva...."

Also in *WV* No. 24 the article on "Socialism in One Country" refers on page 6 to the "May 1924 Party conference." It should have read "May 1924 party congress."

Class-Struggle Alternative for the Trade Unions

Guest Speaker:

KATHLEEN BURNHAM
Militant Action Caucus, CWA

Speaker:

MARK SMALL
SL Central Committee

Sunday, 22 July, 7:30 p.m.
YWCA—1515 Webster, Oakland, Ca.
For further information: 653-4668

Auspices: Spartacist League

The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited

3/ THE "THIRD PERIOD"

(Editor's Note: The recent wave of virulent anti-Trotskyism being spread by various Maoist groups relies on the standard Stalinist weapons of lies and distortion, and above all on ignorance about the true history of the communist movement. The present series, replying to the articles on "Trotsky's Heritage" in the New Left/Maoist Guardian, serves as an introduction to this history and a brief summary of the principal political issues separating Trotskyism from Stalinism.)

Stalin's consistent rightist course during 1926-27 led him to capitulate to the kulaks (rich peasants) at home, to the trade-union bureaucrats during the British general strike, to Chiang Kai-shek in China. He backed up this policy by a bloc in the Politburo with Bukharin, who had called on the peasants to "enrich yourselves" and projected the building of socialism "at a snail's pace." The Left Opposition led by Trotsky opposed this line, warning that it not only meant the massacre of thousands of foreign Communists but ultimately threatened the very foundations of the Soviet state itself. Stalin "answered" at the 15th party congress (December 1927) by summarily expelling the Opposition and formally declaring that "adherence to the opposition and propaganda of its views [is] incompatible with membership in the party."

Trotsky's predictions were dramatically confirmed by the kulak rebellion of 1927-28. The state granaries were half empty and starvation threatened the cities; grain collections produced riots in the villages, as the peasants (who could obtain little in the way of manufactured goods in return for the inflated currency) refused to sell at state-regulated prices. Suddenly in January 1928 Stalin switched to a tougher line, ordering armed expeditions to requisition grain stocks. But even this was not enough. In May he was still declaring that "expropriation of kulaks would be folly" (*Problems of Leninism*, p. 221), but by the end of the year he argued: "Can we permit the expropriation of kulaks...? A ridiculous question... We must break down the resistance of that class in open battle" (*Problems of Leninism*, p. 325). Such dramatic reversals of policy were a constant for Stalin.

Since 1924 Trotsky had been campaigning for industrialization and collectivization and was branded by Stalin as an "enemy of the peasant" and "superindustrializer." But faced with an anti-Soviet peasant revolt in 1928, Stalin recoiled in utter panic, switching from blind conservatism to blind adventurism. In the 1927 *Platform* of the Joint Opposition, Trotsky and Zinoviev called for doubling the growth rate of the first five-year plan; Stalin now tripled it, at the price of tremendous suffering for the workers. The Opposition called for voluntary collectivization aided by state credits for co-operatives and a struggle against the influence of the kulak; Stalin now accomplished the forced collectivization of half of all farms in the Soviet Union in the space of four months! The peasants responded by sabotage, killing off more than 50 percent of the horses in the country, and a civil war which during the next several years cost more than three million lives.

Trotsky opposed the collectivization-at-machine-gun-point as a monstrosity. Marxists had always called for the gradual winning over of the petty bourgeoisie by persuasion and a voluntary transition to socialism through cooperative production. The industrialization, however, despite the incredible disorganization and un-

ecessary hardships caused by bureaucratic planning, he praised:

"The success of the Soviet Union in industrial development is acquiring global historical significance... That tempo is neither stable nor secure... but it provides practical proof of the immense possibilities inherent in socialist economic methods."

—L.D. Trotsky, "Economic Recklessness and its Perils," 1930

Both the collectivization and industrialization fully vindicated the policies of the Opposition. To represent a return to Leninism, however, they required the complement of re-establishment of Soviet and party democracy. The bankruptcy of his previous policies sharply revealed by the crisis, Stalin took the opposite course, reinforcing his bureaucratic dictatorship and expelling Trotsky from the Soviet Union.

Stalin Discovers a "Third Period"

Stalin's policies in the Communist International (CI) were a duplicate of his domestic zigzags. After the disaster of the Shanghai insurrection of 1927, in which he ordered the Chinese Communists to lay down their arms to the butcher Chiang Kai-shek, he sharply reversed course and ordered the adventurist Canton Commune which ended in a similar massacre of the workers. In the summer of 1928 Stalin generalized this pattern of reckless ultra-leftism into the doctrine of a "third period" of imperialism.

According to this "theory" there was a post-war revolutionary wave ending in 1923, a period of stabilization until 1928 and then a new period of the imminent and final collapse of capitalism. Like the catastrophists of today, Stalin reasoned that economic crisis would automatically create a revolutionary situation. In fact the early stages of a crisis are frequently accompanied by sharp demoralization in the working class. And it is noteworthy that at no time during 1928-32 did any Communist party in the world attempt to seize power! (Subsequently Stalin quietly abandoned his bombastic theory as he made a sharp turn to the right.)

The onset of the depression and the Comintern's ultra-left policies wreaked havoc in the Communist parties. In the key country of Western Europe, Germany, a combination of mass layoffs and the CP's policy of abandoning the trade unions resulted in the percentage of factory workers in the party falling from 62 percent in 1928 to only 20 percent in 1931, effectively turning the Communists into the vanguard of the unemployed rather than the workers. Typical for the pathetic results of "Third Period" adventurism were the May Day demonstrations of 1929 which had been prohibited by the capitalist governments: In Paris the police simply arrested all active CP members on 30 April (releasing them three days later). In Berlin the social-democratic police chief Zoergiebel brutally attacked the Communists, whose call for a general strike fizzled.

Another aspect of the "Third Per-



Nazi stormtroopers march on Karl Liebknecht Haus, headquarters of German Communist Party. On Stalin's orders, CP refused to call for united front with Social Democrats, paving way for Hitler's seizure of power.

iod" policies was the practice of setting up small "revolutionary unions," counterposed to the reformist-led mass organizations. Communists favor trade-union unity, but do not oppose every split. It may be necessary to break with the restrictive craft unions in order to organize mass-production workers. Also, when a left-wing upsurge is prevented from taking power solely by bureaucratic and gangster methods, a break with the old organization may be the only alternative to defeat. The key is support of the overwhelming majority of the workers, enabling the union to survive as a mass organization.

The "Third Period" dual unionism, considered a matter of principle, was quite different. It led to the formation of separate trade-union federations (the Trade Union Unity League [TUUL] in the U.S. and the Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition [RGO] in Germany), and countless tiny "red unions" with a few score members, which never had any chance of success. The "red union" policy is directly opposed to the Leninist policy of struggling for Communist leadership of the existing mass workers' organizations, and with the exception of a few isolated situations it was doomed to defeat.

"Social-Fascism"

A generalization of this policy was Stalin's discovery that the reformist social-democratic parties were "social-fascist," i.e., "socialist in words, fascist in deeds." Since they were therefore no longer part of the workers movement (like the social-democratic-led unions!), the tactic of united front was not applicable and Communists could at most offer a "united front from below," that is simply calling on rank-and-file Social Democrats and trade unionists to desert their leaders.

The social-democratic leaders prepared the way for fascism—about this there can be no doubt. In January 1919 the Social Democrat Noske personally organized the massacre of hundreds of German revolutionary workers in repressing the "Spartacus Uprising" in Berlin; among the martyrs were Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the top leaders of the German CP. In 1929 the Social Democrat Zoergiebel drowned the CP May Day march in blood. At every step on Hitler's road to power the reformists capitulated rather than fight. And even after Hitler had already taken power, instead of organizing the massive resistance they had promised, social-democratic leaders offered to support the Nazi government's foreign policy in the vain hope of thereby saving their party from destruction! They never fought until it was too late, and in the last analysis they preferred Hitler to revolution.

But this is not at all the same as

saying, as did Stalin, that the Social Democracy was only the "left wing of fascism." This philistine statement ignored the fact that the organizations of Social Democracy and the unions themselves would be destroyed as the result of a fascist victory. As Trotsky wrote:

"Fascism is not merely a system of reprisals, of brutal force, and of police terror. Fascism is a particular governmental system based on the uprooting of all elements of proletarian democracy within bourgeois society. The task of fascism lies not only in destroying the Communist vanguard... It is also necessary to smash all independent and voluntary organizations, to demolish all the defensive bulwarks of the proletariat, and to uproot whatever has been achieved during three-quarters of a century by the Social Democracy and the trade unions."

—"What Next," January 1932

Here was a situation that cried out for the policy of the united front. The leaders did not want to fight but to retreat. The rank and file, however, could not retreat—they had to fight or face annihilation. Call on the social-democratic leadership to mount a united offensive against the Nazis! If they accept, the fascist menace could be destroyed and the road opened to revolution. If they refuse, their treachery is clearly exposed before the workers and the revolutionary mobilization of the working class is aided by demonstrating *in struggle* that the communists are the *only* consistent proletarian leadership. In Trotsky's words:

"Worker-Communists, you are hundreds of thousands, millions; you cannot leave for anyplace; there are not enough passports for you. Should fascism come to power, it will ride over your skulls and spines like a terrific tank. Your salvation lies in merciless struggle. And only a fighting unity with the Social Democratic workers can bring victory."

—"For a Workers' United Front Against Fascism," December 1931

"After Hitler—Us"

Right up to Hitler's seizure of power Stalin continued to follow out the sectarian-defeatist logic of the "Third Period." After the September 1930 elections, in which the Nazis' vote jumped from 800,000 to more than six million, the head of the German CP, Ernest Thaelmann, told the Comintern Executive, "...14 September was in a sense Hitler's best day after which there would be no better but only worse days." The CI endorsed this view and called on the CP to "concentrate fire on the Social-Fascists!" The Stalinists ridiculed Trotsky's analysis of fascism, and claimed there was no difference between the Brüning regime

and the Nazis. In other words, they were entirely indifferent whether the workers' organizations existed or not! Remmele, a CP leader, declared in the Reichstag (parliament), "Let Hitler take office—he will soon go bankrupt, and then it will be our day." Consistent with this criminal and utterly cowardly policy, the CP joined together with the Nazis in an (unsuccessful) attempt to unseat the social-democratic Prussian state government (the "Red Plebiscite" of 1931)!

In response to the wide support Trotsky's call for a united front found among German workers, Thaelmann replied in September 1932:

"In his pamphlet on how National Socialism is to be defeated, Trotsky gives one answer only, and it is this: the German Communist Party must join hands with the Social Democratic Party... Either, says he, the Communist party makes common cause with the Social Democrats, or the German working class is lost for ten or twenty years. This is the theory of an utterly bankrupt Fascist and counter-revolutionary... Germany will of course not go fascist—our electoral victories are a guarantee of this. [:]"

Nine months later Thaelmann was sitting in Hitler's jails. He was later executed by the Nazis, as were thousands of Communist and Social-Democratic militants, and the workers parties and trade unions were crushed by the iron heel of fascism. Trotsky's analyses and policies were fully confirmed—and the German proletariat paid the price of Stalin's criminal blindness.

But this did not put an end to Stalin's betrayals. Trotsky had earlier warned, "We must tell the advanced workers as loudly as we can: after the 'third period' of recklessness and boasting the fourth period of panic and capitulation has set in" ("Germany, The Key to the International Situation," November 1931). The tragedy continued to unfold with clockwork precision. Following Hitler's assumption of power, the Comintern, seized with panic, forbade any discussion of the German events in the Communist parties and dropped all mention of social-fascism. Instead, in a manifesto "To the Workers of All Countries" (5 March 1933) the Executive called for a united front with the social-democratic leaders (which they had rejected for the past five years), and for the CPs to "abandon all attacks against the Social Democratic organizations during the joint action!"

The United Front

Carl Davidson's series on "Trotsky's Heritage" in the *Guardian* is a consistent whitewash of Stalin's crimes against the workers movement in an attempt to make a case for the Stalinist policies of "socialism in one country," "peaceful coexistence," "two-stage revolution," etc. In dealing with the events around Hitler's rise to power Davidson claims "the Trotskyists cover up for the political force that actually paved the way to power for the fascists—the German Social-Democrats" (*Guardian*, 9 May 1973). The reader can judge for himself from the above just who paved the way for fascism! Davidson goes on to remark, "This is not to say that the German Communist party made no mistakes or that their errors were insignificant. ... They also made a number of ultra-'left' errors, including a one-sided emphasis on the 'united front from below,' rather than a more persistent effort at unity with the Social-Democratic leaders as well, even if this was turned down." Davidson neglects to point out that at every point the policy of the German CP was dictated by Stalin himself, and repeatedly confirmed by Comintern meetings!

The Stalinists consistently try to blur the working-class content of Lenin's united-front policy (whose main slogan was "class against class") in order to confuse it with Stalin's "popular front" with the "democratic" bourgeoisie. They seek to portray the united front as a tactic of class collaboration and capitulation to the social-democratic leadership. This has led

some groups, such as the Progressive Labor Party (PL), to reject the tactic of united front altogether:

"As we have repeatedly pointed out, we reject the concept of a united front with bosses. We reject the concept of a united front with Trotskyists and the herd of various fakes on the left... We believe in a united front from below that takes the form of a left-center coalition."

—"Road to Revolution III," PL, November 1973

The united front from below, i.e. calling on the ranks to desert the reformist leaders, is always in order. But we cannot simply ignore these misleaders without resigning the vanguard to sterile isolation. Replying to opponents of the united front during the early years of the Communist International, Trotsky wrote:

"Does the united front extend only to the working masses or doesn't it also include the opportunist leaders?"

"The very posing of this question is a product of misunderstanding."

"If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organizations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world..."

"...in order not to lose their influence over the workers reformists are compelled, against the innermost desires



Russian peasants demonstrating in 1929, calling for "liquidation of the kulaks." Stalin first opposed Trotsky's call for gradual collectivization; later, after 1928 kulak revolt, ordered forced collectivization of half of all farms in four months.

of their own leaders, to support the partial movements of the exploited against the exploiters..."

"...we are, apart from all other considerations, interested in dragging the reformists from their asylums and placing them alongside ourselves before the eyes of the struggling masses." —"On the United Front," 1922

These theses were approved by the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and by the Executive Committee of the CI. In his polemic against the ultra-lefts (*Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*) Lenin called for using "every opportunity to gain a mass ally, no matter how temporary, vacillating, unreliable, and adventitious. Whoever hasn't been able to get that into his head doesn't understand an iota of Marxism, and of contemporary scientific socialism in general."

After refusing for five years to unite with the social-democratic leaders, Stalin in March 1933 flip-flopped completely and agreed to a "united front" which prohibited the freedom of criticism. This meant the Communists pledged themselves in advance to remain silent in the face of the inevitable betrayals by the reformists, just as Stalin refused to criticize and break with the British trade-union leaders when they smashed the 1926 general strike. How little this has to do with Bolshevism can be appreciated by reading the original Comintern resolution on the united front:

"Imposing on themselves a discipline of action, it is obligatory that Communists should preserve for themselves, not only up to and after action, but if

necessary even during action, the right and possibility of expressing their opinion on the policy of all working-class organizations without exception. The rejection of this condition is not permissible under any circumstances." —"Theses on the United Front," 1922

The Soviet Union—A Degenerated Workers State

The definitive betrayal by Stalin in Germany, and the necessary conclusion of calling for new communist parties and a new international, led to the question of a new party inside the Soviet Union itself. This, in turn, brought up again the question of the class character of the Soviet state and the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy which ruled it. Trotsky refused to consider the USSR "state capitalist" as did many former Communists who had been expelled by Stalin. To do so would imply that there could be a peaceful counter-revolution, "running the film of reformism in reverse," so to speak. Fundamentally the state is based on the property forms, which represent the interests of particular classes. The socialist property relations in the Soviet Union remained intact, and this colossal conquest of the October Revolution must not be lightly abandoned. While opposing the bureaucratic Stalinist leadership, Bolshevik-Leninists must unconditionally defend the USSR from imperialist attack.

At the same time, this was no healthy workers state. The proletariat had been politically expropriated. The soviets were simply administrative bodies to rubber-stamp the decisions of

UNDERWOOD AND UNDERWOOD



German CP leader Ernst Thaelmann (left) rejected Trotsky's call for united working-class front against fascists as "counter-revolutionary" and announced in September 1932 that "Germany will of course not go fascist." Nine months later he was in a Nazi jail.

WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

the General Secretary. The Bolshevik party was a creature of the bureaucracy, with the entire leadership of 1917 expelled or in disfavor, with the sole exception of Stalin. Given the events of recent years—the expulsions, the arrests and exiling of every oppositionist—it was criminal lightmindedness to believe that this parasitic bureaucracy could be eliminated without revolution. This would not be a social revolution, resulting in new property forms, but a *political revolution*. The USSR was a *degenerated workers state*.

"...the privileges of the bureaucracy by themselves do not change the bases of the Soviet society, because the bureaucracy derives its privileges not from any special property relations peculiar to it as a 'class,' but from those property relations that have been created by the October Revolution and that are fundamentally adequate for the dictatorship of the proletariat."

"To put it plainly, insofar as the bureaucracy robs the people (and this is done in various ways by every bureaucracy), we have to deal not with *class exploitation*, in the scientific sense of the word, but with *social parasitism*, although on a very large scale..."

"Finally, we may add for the sake of complete clarity: if in the USSR today the Marxist party were in power, it would renovate the entire political regime; it would shuffle and purge the bureaucracy and place it under the control of the masses; it would transform all of the administrative practices and inaugurate a series of capital reforms in the management of economy; but in no case would it have to undertake an *overturn in the property relations, i.e., a new social revolution*." —"The Class Nature of the Soviet State," October 1933

The Stalinists immediately screamed "counter-revolution." Trotsky was an agent of Chamberlain, Hitler, the Mikado, etc., and was out to re-establish capitalism, they claimed. But the Stalinists were never able to point to a single instance in which Trotsky refused to support the USSR against imperialism or called for abandoning the socialist property forms. In 1939 on the eve of the Second World War he led a bitter struggle against a group in the American Socialist Workers Party, led by Max Shachtman, which refused to defend Russia against Hitler. Trotsky repeatedly emphasized that as long as the Soviet Union remained a workers state, however badly degenerated, it was a matter of principle to defend it. In the hour of need the Bolshevik-Leninists would stand ready at their battle posts.

In the early 1960's Mao Tse-tung announced that the Khrushchev-Brezhnev leadership of the Soviet Union since 1956 was "social-imperial-

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The Trotskyist movement has a proud tradition of struggle for the principles of Leninism, under difficult conditions and against heavy odds. In the United States, the core of the leadership which built the original Trotskyist organization (Communist League of America 1928-34) kept up the struggle for over three decades, before the vicissitudes of the Cold War anti-communist witchhunt finally caught up with them and caused their political degeneration and departure from Bolshevism in the early 1960's. The Spartacist League was born in the fight against the degeneration of the Trotskyist movement—in the Socialist Workers Party—and claims the tradition as its own.

**PART 1
OF 4**

This tradition includes the struggle of the Left Opposition against the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR, the campaign for a workers united front against fascism in Germany, and the battle to build a new, Fourth International to provide an alternative proletarian leadership to the bankrupt Social Democrats and Stalinists.

As in the course of every preceding phase of the struggle for revolutionary socialism, however, it was inevitable that the Trotskyists would make mistakes. Correction of earlier mistakes, while in no way repudiating the earlier struggles and tradition, has been integral to the growth and political and theoretical armament of the movement. If one holds the early Lenin, for instance, up to the mirror of the whole body of Leninism—which incorporates the experience of the Russian Revolution and struggle to build the Communist International—one finds many errors and shortcomings. As James P. Cannon, communist leader and pioneer American Trotskyist, put it, discussing the development of the democratic-centralist vanguard party conception in 1944:

"If our party stands today on far higher ground than that occupied by the amorphous rebel workers' movement prior to the First World War—and that is indubitably the case—it is not due solely to the superiority of our program, but also to the consistent application in practice of the principles and methods of Bolshevik organization. The experience of a quarter of a century has convinced us over and over again that this is the right way, the only way, to build a revolutionary party. . . .

"In politics nothing is more stupid, more infantile than to retrace ground that had already been covered, to go back and start all over again as if nothing had happened and nothing has been learned."

—Letters from Prison

Just as Lenin had early shortcomings which reflected the social-democratic movement he was struggling to transcend, so the American Trotskyists made mistakes which reflected, in part, the arena of the degenerating Communist Party from which they emerged, and in part the national political environment in which they functioned. The history of Trotskyist work in the trade unions in the U.S. was in the main exemplary and includes such high points as the Minneapolis Teamster strike of 1934, which was a model of mass mobilization as well as the first instance of organizing of trucking on the lines of industrial unionism; and the SWP's struggles against the no-strike pledge and the War Labor Board in World War II. However, it also reveals consistent errors which must be studied and corrected by revolutionists today if the movement is to be armed against new dangers. While this history has yet to be fully researched and recorded, its main outlines can be critically examined.

CP Degeneration in the Twenties

Cannon, Shachtman, Abern and the other founders of American Trotskyism were recruited to Trotsky's Opposition suddenly, in 1928, after the issue of "Trotskyism" was considered closed in the American CP, and without having undergone the experience of a conscious

Trotskyist Work in the Trade Unions

struggle against the Stalinist degeneration of the party in the twenties. This degeneration had hopelessly corrupted the bulk of the leadership and cadre of the CP and demoralized, tamed or driven away most of the members.

The leadership of the party was firmly in the hands of Jay Lovestone, a hated, distrusted and cynical factionalist, who controlled the party through organizational manipulation and unprincipled political adaptationism. Identified with the Bukharinite right wing internationally, the Lovestone clique was steering the party in the direction of unbridled opportunism based on pessimism. In the trade unions, Lovestone's policy was to rely heavily on maneuvers at the top in the trade-union bureaucracy, coupled with political overtures to liberals in the form of pacifism, etc. Given the sharp decline of the AFL, this policy meant concentration on the privileged skilled trades, the small minority of the workers who were organized, and virtually no orientation to the masses of unskilled workers.

In the Stalinized Communist International (CI) of the late twenties, leadership of the national sections depended on being able to sense the winds of political change in Moscow and change one's line in time. The rampant factionalism, soon to be replaced by monolithism, had become completely unprincipled. Thus while Lovestone's right-wing opportunism fit his natural predilections and organizational methods, his faction was no more or less identified with any particular political program than was that of his chief opponent, William Z. Foster. Both sought power through adapting to the Comintern breezes, which had been blowing distinctly to the right since 1926, when Stalin blocked with Bukharin against Trotsky, Zinoviev and the ultra-lefts.

Cannon, although he too was influenced by the degeneration of the Communist International, as early as 1925 formed a third faction, the purpose of which was to fight for the liquidation of the programless factions and the building of a collective leadership. It was a somewhat demoralized Cannon who reluctantly attended the Sixth Congress of the CI in 1928, at which he accidentally discovered a copy of Trotsky's critique of the draft program, and became convinced of Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the International as based on the interests of the national-bureaucratic elite in the USSR.

"The Right Danger in the American Party"

At the time of the Sixth CI Congress Cannon had formed a bloc (a temporary alliance, not a fusion of groups) with Foster's group on the basis of the document, "The Right Danger in the American Party." This document, like the bloc that produced it, was contradictory: it was both a principled condemnation of the gross opportunist errors of Lovestone, and a platform for an unprincipled attempt by the Fosterites to get control of the CP on the basis of what they sensed was a new left turn in the making in the Comintern.

Stalin was indeed preparing a new left turn, though he was not ready to break openly with Bukharin at the time of the Sixth Congress. As usual, the turn was forced on Stalin by circum-

stances which grew out of the previous line. In addition, the turn of 1928 was a plot to outflank the Left Opposition: first to expel Trotsky, then to appear to adopt his slogans. Many members of the opposition fell into the trap and capitulated to Stalin.

"The Right Danger," later reprinted in the Trotskyists' paper, the *Militant*, on which the Trotskyists continued to stand after their expulsion, reflected the signals being sent out from Moscow before the Sixth Congress, indicating the approach of the new "Third Period" turn. It attempted to use against Lovestone letters from the CI complaining about this and that, and pressure from the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU—CI trade-union arm) for more work to organize the unorganized into new unions. While correctly attacking the grossly opportunist and capitulatory blocs of Lovestone with various elements of the trade-union bureauc-

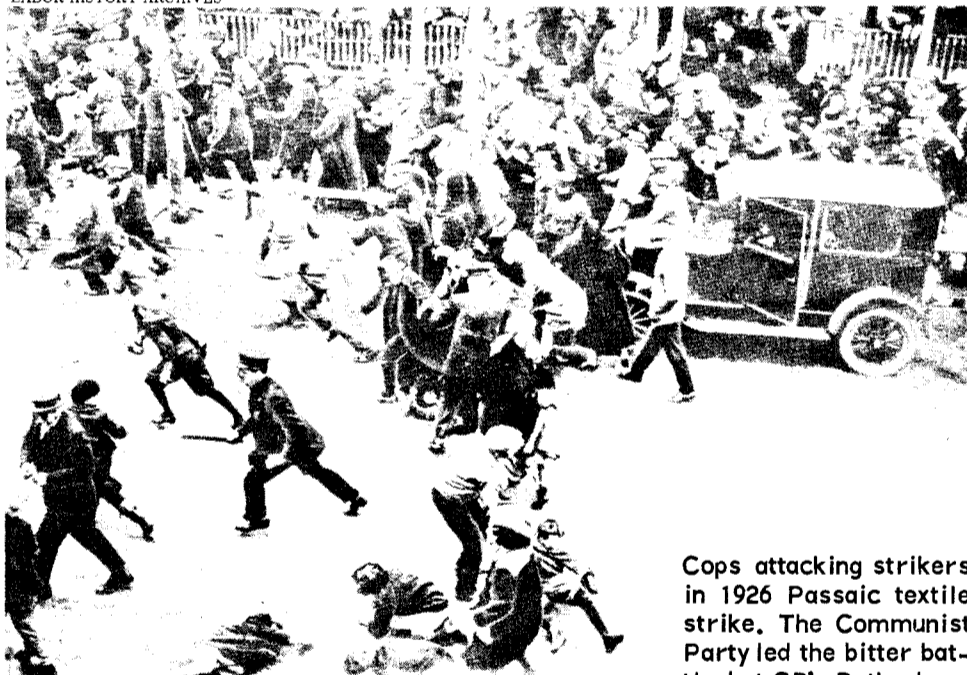
racy, the document tended to slip into the fallacious third period "united front from below" conception:

"The C.I. line against the United Front from the top with reactionary trade union, liberal and S.P. leaders, and for united front with the workers against them, applies with special emphasis in America."

—*Militant*, 15 December 1928

While the "Right Danger" thus contained some errors reflecting the developing new Stalinist zigzag (and was furthermore limited solely to the consideration of American questions), it was in the main correct. It was principled, from Cannon's point of view, on the need to form new unions in places where the AFL was decrepit or non-existent. While Foster was the extreme AFL-fetishist, the partisan of "boring from within," Cannon had broken with Foster in 1926 over the Passaic strike, which he felt was an example in which a new union should

LABOR HISTORY ARCHIVES



Cops attacking strikers in 1926 Passaic textile strike. The Communist Party led the bitter battle, but CP's Ruthenberg

leadership capitulated to the AFL rather than form new union. Below, 1933 coal strike in southern Illinois, led by Progressive Miners of America. While opposing dual unionism, Trotskyists supported PMA and called for formation of new unions where craft restrictions or bureaucratic domination strangled old unions. The key is support from overwhelming majority of workers.



by Chris Knox

have been formed under Communist leadership.

After their summary expulsion from the CP, which occurred on the basis of their views alone as soon as they solidarized with Trotsky, the Trotskyists attempted to make the most of Stalin's adoption of their slogans and continued to expose Lovestone, who was belatedly jumping on the third period bandwagon. The Trotskyists claimed Moscow's new slogans, "Against the Kulak! Against the Nepmen! Against the Bureaucrats!" as their own and took credit for the pressure leading to the CP's formation of new unions in mining, textiles and needle trades. These were the areas which the Trotskyists had felt were most ripe for the open formation of new unions, in conjunction with continued oppositional work in what was left of the old AFL unions. Initial Trotskyist trade-union work centered on these unions, particularly mining in southern Illinois.

This position for new unions in areas abandoned and betrayed by the AFL bureaucrats was soon to be distorted by the Stalinists into a position of dual unions *on principle*, and opposition to work in the old unions. As consistently presented by the Trotskyist Opposition (both before and after it became "Trotskyist"), however, the "new unions" line conformed to both the objective situation and the CP's ability to intervene in the situation. The AFL unions had been on a rampage of class collaborationism, destruction of militancy and expulsion of "reds" throughout most of the twenties. The thrust of this reactionary drive by the bureaucracy was explicitly against the organization of the masses of unskilled workers into industrial unions, which alone could overcome craft myopia and accomplish the organization of the bulk of the working class. The result was that the AFL unions not only refused to organize new workers, but they shrank drastically, driving away new workers and anyone who wanted to organize them in the process. By the end of the twenties, the crisis of proletarian leadership took the form of the lack of leadership to organize the unorganized.

The duty of revolutionary leadership was, in fact, to fill this gap, and smash the AFL bureaucracy in the process. This condition continued into the thirties, until finally a section of the AFL bureaucracy moved to organize the mass production industries precisely out of fear that if the AFL leadership didn't do it, the reds would. This resulted in the setting up of the CIO which, while it entailed a bitter rivalry with the old AFL leadership, was primarily a matter of the formation of new unions for the unorganized industries rather than a case of rivals directly competing for the same workers with the old unions.

The Trotskyists proceeded from the concrete situation in each case, and advocated new unions only where the struggle to take over the old unions had clearly exhausted itself against the stone wall of bureaucratism. Mining was such a case. The rank and file in areas such as southern Illinois were so disgusted with the betrayals and utter disregard for democracy of the Lewis machine that the basis for a new union really displacing the old shell existed. Opposition leaders in the CP before 1928 had to fight Lovestone policies which were a capitulation not only to the slow moving "progressives" (Brophy, Hapgood, etc.) but to the Lewis machine itself! The formation of the National Miners Union (NMU) by the CP, in conjunction with anti-Lewis leaders, came too late and was further sabotaged by other CP errors of an adventurist character. Rank-and-file pressure caused the progressives to try again in 1932, however, and the CP went along reluctantly with setting up the Progressive Miners of America.

Despite the objective conditions favoring new unions, the CP's third period red unions were a disastrous betrayal. They were disasters because of the manner in which the CP attempted to form them: too late at first, in the

case of mining and needle trades, but then increasingly too precipitously, without preparation. Strikes were called in the same manner, as an adventure on the part of a small handful, rather than on the basis of conscious preparation of the mass of the workers. Furthermore, the CP's policy was a betrayal, because it made a principle for the whole movement out of what should have been merely a tactic for particular circumstances. While the CP claimed throughout to be for continued opposition inside the old unions, the core of third period sectarianism made this impossible. The AFL leadership, as well as the Socialist Party, Trotskyists, Musteites, and all other tendencies, were denounced as "social-fascists" and otherwise not part of the workers movement in any sense. This made the united front, in which communists bloc with non-communist working-class leaders in order to expose them and advance the struggle at the same time—an essential part of communist work in the trade unions—impossible. While destroying its handful of new unions through sectarianism and adventurism, the Stalinists thus abandoned and sabotaged work in the old unions, which left the reactionary bureaucrats in control. This not only delayed the final introduction of industrial unions on a mass scale, but ensured that when such unions were formed, reactionaries would lead them.

From the moment at which the "new unions" position of the CP began to mushroom into the full-scale sectarianism of the third period, the Trotskyists fought to expose these errors and warn of the dangers. With tremendous prescience, they warned:

"The new 'theories' are attempting to rationalize the AFL out of existence as a federation of unions and abstractly preclude the possibility of its future expansion and growth in an organizational sense....

"The abandonment of... struggle [in the AFL] now taking place under the cover of high-sounding 'radicalism' will only prevent the crystallization of an insurgent movement within the old unions and free the hands of the bureaucrats for more effective sabotage of the new unions, for these two processes are bound together. The result will be to strengthen the effectiveness of the AFL bureaucracy as a part of the capitalist war machine."

—"Platform of the Communist Opposition," *Militant*, 15 February 1929

Trotskyist opposition to the sectarianism and adventurism of the third period, like the opposition to Lovestone's opportunism, was consciously linked to Cannon's earlier positions in the CP. As such, it carried forth certain errors which contributed to the mistakes of the later work of the Trotskyists in the trade unions.

In addition to condemning Lovestone's opportunism in the late twenties, the opposition groups (Foster and Cannon) condemned as sectarian his tendency to work exclusively through party fractions in the trade unions rather than building sections of the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), the party's trade-union organization. This tendency on the part of the Lovestone group dated back to the 1924-25 left turn in the CI. In the U.S., the Ruthenberg/Lovestone faction (Ruthenberg died in 1927) used this turn for factional advantage against Foster, by substituting direct party work in the unions for building the TUEL, which was Foster's main organizational base. While Cannon had always been for a flexible policy on work in the unions, including building new unions when called for, he was also against the "narrow" conception of the TUEL, which was developed at this time, in which the latter was closely identified with the party. Instead, he was for broad united-front blocs, while maintaining the independence and freedom to criticize of the party:

"In 1925 the present Opposition conducted a struggle against the narrowing of the TUEL into a purely Communist body with a Communist program and for broadening it into a united front organization. This was one of the most progressive struggles in the history of the party."

—"Platform of the Opposition"

The "Platform" of 1929 then goes on to condemn both the abandonment of united-front tactics with the onset of the third period and earlier failures of both a left and right character: failure to build broad united-front movements where possible and failure to struggle for a leading role of the party within such blocs and movements (including warning that "progressive" bloc partners will betray, etc.).

The error which was buried in this polemic was that the TUEL was designed precisely to be the vehicle to bring the main outlines of the Communist program directly into the unions. It was a membership organization based on a program, not a bloc or united front. It *carried out* united fronts with other forces. Since these other forces, and much of the TUEL membership itself, had melted away or been driven out of the unions by 1924, the *increased* identification between the TUEL and the Communist Party engineered by Ruthenberg/Lovestone seemed to Cannon to be a sectarian error: rather, the party should be using the TUEL to seek new allies. Yet Cannon advocated the same watering down of the TUEL's political nature as did the degenerating Comintern in the late twenties. This watering down gave rise to a policy of blocs as a permanent strategy (the "left-center coalition") from 1927 on (see *WV* No. 22, 8 June 1973).

Cannon's position on trade-union work, then, called for principled united fronts and blocs around the immediate burning issues, together with vigorous party-building and maintenance of the party as an independent force, free to criticize its bloc partners, and always striving to play a leading role. Rather than being confused on the nature of the united front, which he was not, Cannon simply dismissed the TUEL, or the need for anything like the TUEL, as

anything other than a vehicle for such blocs or united fronts. This left him with no conception of an organized pole for the recruitment of militants to the full party program for the trade unions, i.e., what the TUEL had been during its period of greatest success (and before the Stalinist degeneration of the CI set in). It is not surprising, then, that the Trotskyists never attempted to create anything like the TUEL, such as caucuses based on the Trotskyist Transitional Program, in the course of their trade-union work. What caucuses they did create had the character of temporary blocs, usually based on immediate, trade-union issues. This meant that the party itself, able to function openly only outside the unions, was the only organized pole for recruitment to the full program.

That the problems with this approach didn't become manifest until much later, after the rise of the CIO, was due primarily to the nature of the period, which called above all for a united front for the organization of the unorganized into industrial unions. This called for capable revolutionary trade-union organizing, which the Trotskyists, particularly the experienced militants of Minneapolis and Cannon himself, were prepared to conduct. This perspective led the Trotskyists into some of the Stalinist dual unions, the progressives' PMA, and leadership of the historic Minneapolis truck drivers' strikes of 1934.

The Minneapolis strikes stand to this day as a model of revolutionary trade-union organizing. Together with the San Francisco and Toledo general strikes of the same year, the Minneapolis strikes were an important precursor to the organization of all mass production workers along industrial lines.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Continued from page 1 ...Uruguay

down despite arrests of a number of union leaders and proclamations by the government that all striking government workers would be fired and non-government workers who were fired would receive no compensation. The students had taken over Montevideo University; tear gas and shootings had failed to crush a giant demonstration in downtown Montevideo. Even the *Daily World* said on July 6, "The military's strikebreaking efforts have had almost no effect..." The *New York Times* reported an interview with a construction worker July 13 who said he could not understand why the union leadership had given in: "At first some of our companions went hungry, but we were getting organized and were ready to hold out."

In tragic confirmation of the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism, as if further proof were required, the CP had all through the strike called not for a workers revolution, not even for consistent democracy, but instead for a coalition with not-so-reactionary sectors of the military! When the general strike threatened to turn into a real contest for power, rendering the CP's feeble bourgeois allies irrelevant, the Stalinists chose to liquidate the resistance rather than form factory committees and a national strike committee to wage class struggle against the military.

Military Slowly Consolidates

In late 1971 an Allende-type popular-front coalition including the CP and the Christian Democrats and called the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) ran a general for president but lost in the elections to Bordaberry's Colorado party. The military had been gaining strength in the past few years through the success of its campaign against the Tupamaros. *Le Monde* 11-12 February 1973 reported that within six months of the campaign against the Tupamaros, over

half of the members and cadres had been lost, most of the hiding places discovered, and the leadership chopped off including the shooting and arrest of founder Raul Sendic.

Opposition to the military drive was centered in the Frente Amplio. In addition to the main parties it also included the PRT (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores), a grouping linked to the Argentinian PST which in turn is supported by the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, and the POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario) of Juan Posadas, with support from the Tupamaros. The Tupamaros, despite all their spectacular and individually heroic adventures, managed to play a totally insignificant role in the recent crisis, due to their divorce from the mass organizations of the working class.

When Congress was dissolved and the CNT outlawed, the Frente Amplio made an additional bloc, the Resistance Front, with dissident sections of Bordaberry's own Colorado party and with the other major bourgeois party, the Blancos. The Resistance Front was a political bloc on a bourgeois program around two demands: ousting Bordaberry and the restoration of democratic rights. Thus the CP, unsatisfied with its leftist popular front, formed an even broader "Broad Front."

Naturally the Stalinists maintained that the primary question was that of union of all forces against fascism. They were about as successful in applying the strategy of the popular front in Uruguay in 1973 as they had been in Spain in 1936-39—which is to say they were very successful since the whole purpose of the class-collaborationist bloc is to prevent revolution.

There is only one policy for revolution in Uruguay, as throughout the world—permanent revolution. Faced with the massive mobilization of the working class, the Castroite Tupamaro guerrillas faded into irrelevancy. Faced with the massive mobilization of the working class, the CP abandoned the struggle for fear of the consequences. The battle for Trotskyism is the battle of life and death for the revolution. ■

Continued from page 1

Boom Heads Toward Bust

tion, something which does not augur well for the capitalists.

The Slumping 50's and the Booming 60's

The present economic situation is organically linked to earlier cycles and can only be understood by looking at capital accumulation over the past few decades. This is because capitalist production cycles are primarily generated by the changing quantitative relation between the amount of profit and the value of capital (in other words, the rate of profit).

According to the fairy tale concocted by Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League (SLL), and his American camp follower the Workers League (WL), there was a post-World War II economic boom which only ended in the early 1960's (or in recent versions, in 1971). In reality, however, the end of the Korean War brought in a prolonged period of economic stagnation. In fact, 1953-61 marked the second worst period for American capitalism in this century. The period contained three downturns and had an average unemployment rate of over 5 percent. Moreover, between 1953 and 1961 the national output per person increased by a total of only 8 percent! At the same time, the rate of profit, which had averaged 13 percent during the late 1940's and the Korean War fell to 10 percent during 1954-61. (All statistics are from the 1973 *Economic Report of the President*. The Marxist concept of the rate of profit, based on the labor theory of value, is sharply different from the formula used in capitalist statistics; however changes in the two are usually parallel.)

This stagnation of the U.S. economy during the middle and late 1950's was a cause of major concern to the ruling class, particularly when contrasted with the dynamism of the Soviet economy during the same period. A key slogan in Kennedy's 1960 campaign was to "get this country moving again." The belief that the statism of the liberal Democrats—compared with the do-nothingism of the Eisenhower administration—could stimulate the economy was probably the most important cause of substantial ruling-class support for Kennedy.

The Kennedy administration was associated with an economic boom, partly caused by state investment subsidies in the form of corporate tax dodges and government pressure to keep down wages (the "wage-price guidelines"). However, the 1962-66 capital investment boom was primarily the product of market forces unrelated to government policy. After years of minimal investment which resulted in obsolete production facilities in wide sectors of the economy by the early 1960's, the new plant and equipment during the Kennedy years embodied exceptionally high rates of technological improvement. Thus during 1962-66 the output per man-hour increased 3.8 percent a year compared with 2.7 percent a year in the 1954-61 period. This dramatic rise in productivity-increasing investment led bourgeois ideologues, and some supposed Marxists (such as Ernest Mandel) as well, to fantasize about a "third industrial revolution" and a fully automated economy.

By 1967 however, the facts demonstrated once again that capitalist expansion contains its own negation. A fully automated economy is only possible under socialism. In the period up to 1966 the expanded production had halved the unemployment rate and the resulting tight labor market had strengthened workers' bargaining power. As a result, wages rose sharply in 1966, leading to a jump in unit labor costs of 2.8 percent compared to an increase of only .7 percent the year before. Rising labor costs combined with the high rate of capital investment drove down the rate of profit. Investment, which had been increasing at 13 percent a year, actually

fell slightly, which should have thrown the economy into a downturn. In fact, national output did decline in the first quarter of 1967. However, a recession was averted by the expansion of the Vietnam war, which increased the military budget by 17 percent in 1967 alone. Thus the U.S. had entered into a partial war economy.

War Inflation, Strike Wave and State Wage Control

Because of the unpopularity of the Vietnam war, Johnson decided not to raise taxes or impose direct wage-price controls or rationing. Instead he chose the con-man's way of paying for his armaments and soldiers by simply

printing money (in this case by borrowing from the central bank). With an expanding payroll and smaller proportion of consumer goods, the U.S. suffered a classic war-generated inflation which pushed consumer prices up about 6 percent a year between 1967 and 1970. Wage increases had been geared to an earlier, slower rate of inflation and many unions (such as the UAW) had actually bargained away full cost-of-living adjustments in the early 1960's. With the unions trapped by existing contracts and a pro-capitalist bureaucracy, real take-home pay fell in the period from 1967 to 1970.

Nixon came to power committed to the right-wing bourgeois recipe for fighting inflation: deflate the economy so that rising unemployment will check wage increases and falling demand will depress prices. By cutting back the federal budget (the only dynamic aspect of the economy) by 6 percent in 1969, Nixon got his desired recession. But the results were not to his liking. On the one hand the monopoly power of the huge corporations made prices relatively resistant to government monetary measures, and inflation continued. On the other, trade unions were too entrenched to be cowed by anything short of massive unemployment, while the workers were more concerned with catching up with the inflation than afraid of pricing themselves out of a job.

In the face of rising unemployment the working class undertook a massive strike wave during 1969-71. This was highlighted by the General Electric strike in the fall of 1969, the postal workers' wildcat in the spring of 1970, the Midwest Teamster wildcat in the spring and the long General Motors strike in the fall of that year. Although they were not uniformly victories for the workers, due to the treachery of the labor bureaucracy, these strikes enabled the organized working class to keep its real wages roughly stable.

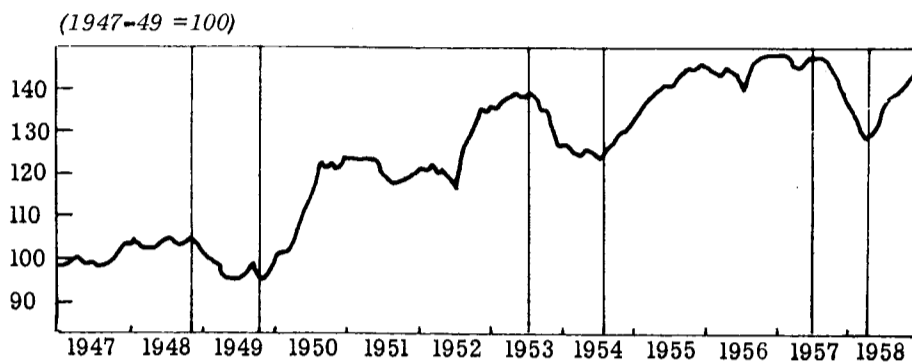
The bourgeoisie, however, required a cut in the workers' real wages to offset the inflation. The money wage increases of 7 to 10 percent were intolerable for the U.S. ruling class given its weakened international competitive position. Following the steel settlement under threat of an expected strike, the Nixon administration was faced with the choice of either trying to further depress the economy, hoping that rising unemployment would finally break the spirit of the unions, or else imposing direct state wage control. Nixon chose the latter course.

With the cooperation of the union bureaucracy, Nixon's wage price control was essentially successful from the standpoint of the ruling class. The strike wave was broken as the number of man-days on strike fell from more than 66 million in 1970 to 26 million in 1972 (*Monthly Labor Review*, February 1973). The union bureaucracy kept to Nixon's game plan by holding wage increases to an acceptable 5-1/2 percent. With wage increases down and the increased productivity always associated with the early phase of a boom, the inflation was moderated at about 3-1/2 percent in 1972.

"The Unhappy Boom"

The wage price controls roughly coincided with, and partly contributed to, a capital investment boom which took off in the middle of 1971. It has been, however, a strange boom.

One of the most unusual and important aspects of this boom has been



Index of U.S. manufacturing production, 1947-58. While bourgeois economists, Healy/Wohlforth talk of "1950's boom," statistics show post-Korean War period was one of relative stagnation.

its small impact on employment. The unemployment rate has only dropped from 6 percent in mid-1971 to 5 percent in the first quarter of this year, and it will certainly not drop any further. While from 1971 to the first quarter of 1973 national output increased by 11 percent and investment in plant and equipment went up by 19 percent, total man-hours employed only increased by 6 percent (*Current Business Developments*, May 1973). This means that investment has been of a highly capital-intensive, labor-saving type—what Marx called accumulation with a sharply rising organic composition of capital. This means that the value of capital is increasing faster than the value of the output it generates, leading to a falling rate of profit.

The highly capital-intensive nature of recent investment accounts for another seemingly strange aspect of the current boom—the fall in stock market prices. Despite the rapid inflation and healthy profit levels, the market value of the capital stock has declined steadily since January. The decline in stock prices is not because of Watergate or even the monetary crisis, but is a normal phenomenon during business cycles. As the *Wall Street Journal's* leading financial analyst, Alfred Malabre, correctly observed, "Stock prices normally begin to drop long before a recession sets in and to rise long before business recovers" (*Wall Street Journal*, 18 June 1973).

At a certain point during a boom the owners of the capital stock discover that the return on their investment (profit) is unsatisfactory given its rising value. In Marx's words, capital has blocked its own growth. The first manifestation of the falling rate of profit is the devaluation of the capital stock and the flight from ownership of the means of production into money and debt claims. The second manifestation is a cutback in the actual production of capital (a drop in investment) causing a general decline in economic activity.

It is clear that the boom has peaked and that a new downturn is less than a year away. The key element in a capital investment boom, new orders for plant and equipment, peaked last January (the same month as stock prices) and has been declining steadily since. The workweek shortened slightly in May. Retail sales in April grew at the slowest rate since June 1972. And for the first time in a year inventories grew faster than sales, always a clear sign that a boom has peaked. It is fairly

certain that the value of output will decline by late this year and that the physical volume of output will decline in the early and middle months of 1974.

However the "unhappiest" aspect of the boom, particularly for workers, is unquestionably the near-runaway inflation in the first part of this year. This has a number of causes. Undoubtedly, the capitalists took Nixon's "back-to-normal" Phase Three as a signal to engage in competitive price increases. The one-sidedness of the investment boom is itself a cause of inflation since it increases total payrolls much faster than consumer goods, particularly food. The February dollar devaluation also contributed by raising the price of imports (mainly manufactured consumer goods and raw materials, notably petroleum) and shifting certain products, notably agricultural, out of domestic and into foreign markets.

Whatever the specific weight of the various factors contributing to the current inflation, it is clear that the United States (along with the other advanced capitalist countries) now faces a structurally higher rate of inflation which feeds on itself. This has two objective bases. One is the inability of the nationally organized ruling classes, in the absence of the external, "natural" discipline of the gold standard, to control the international money supply. To do so would require a genuinely international political unit and this the bourgeoisie is incapable of providing, tied as it is to the archaic national-state system. The second reason is that trade unions in the advanced capitalist countries are so well-entrenched that it requires extraordinary measures to replace organized workers with the unemployed.

Back to the Hard Line

If the trade unions have the objective power to defend the workers' living standards even in the face of substantial unemployment, the union bureaucracy can sabotage the use of that power. And one would have to look far and wide for a better example of such sabotage than the bureaucracies' policies during Phase Three. In order to prepare for the steel contract, Abel signed a no-strike pledge. In order to prepare for the trucking negotiations, Fitzsimmons forced the Chicago Teamsters local to agree not to wildcat against the national contract. And the Rubber Workers and electrical unions signed contracts that everyone knew would mean a decline in the living standards of the workers. From the standpoint of the ruling class, the only good news on the inflation front is that wages are rising less than prices. As the *Wall Street Journal* (11 May) commented, "The chief cost they are watching is labor cost, and so far the signs have been encouraging. Last month, for instance, the Rubber Workers signed with Goodyear for increases amounting to about 6 per cent a year."

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WORKERS VANGUARD

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...UAW Elections

order to get elected, while the Brotherhood Caucus leaders are career bureaucrats pretending to be some kind of radicals in order to get elected. As *Workers Vanguard* pointed out before the elections (see *WV* No. 21, 25 May 1973), the Brotherhood was really a vehicle for the old Blue Slate, the previous union leadership before the Herrera clique (which in turn was just ousted by the Brotherhood). The Brotherhood slate contained a large number of Blue Slate operators, including Denny Lemmond, who ran for financial secretary and is so infamous that he was defeated by an unknown independent.

The election campaign also revealed that behind the New Left populist rhetoric—which can be purchased cheaply in California—of Brotherhood leader Earle Mays lies a past history as a full-time functionary for the Reuther-Woodcock bureaucracy. Thus despite vague talk of "people power," the Brotherhood victory was simply the exchange of one bureaucratic clique for another in a game of musical chairs in which the membership always loses.

This was accurately reflected in the campaign itself, which was totally dominated by mutual personal exposés and recriminations (probably mostly true on both sides). The net effect should have been to discredit both sides in the eyes of any honest militant. And in fact only about half the membership voted at all. Although Mays won the key shop committee chairmanship, the other un-

ion offices were pretty evenly divided with the incumbent Unity Team keeping 12 out of 19 of the committeemen. In short, the vote was a minor protest vote, with a recognition that there was really no significant difference between the two slates.

Responding to the call for "people power" like a school of sea lions to a barrel of fish, all the phony "revolutionary" groups in California barked the praises of the Brotherhood Caucus. Predictably the CP characterized the Brotherhood victory as "a significant victory for the rank and file" (*Peoples World*, 23 June). And just as the Chinese bureaucracy vies with Moscow for the favors of U.S. imperialism, so the American Maoists vie with the CP in embracing trade-union opportunism. Thus both the Revolutionary Union and the October League give uncritical support to the Brotherhood Caucus. Not to be outdone by the Stalinists, the Workers League added its own characteristic touch of political banditry by first hailing the establishment of the Brotherhood (*Bulletin*, 11 December 1972), later withdrawing its endorsement in order to push its own barely-distinguishable reformist auto program (centering on a 20 percent wage increase), and now again hailing the Brotherhood victory with the headline "Brotherhood Sweeps Fremont" (*Bulletin*, 25 June)—this time covering itself by noting deficiencies in the caucus' program.

In keeping with the petty cliquism which characterized both slates in the Fremont elections, neither side has mobilized the ranks for a united class defense of victimized workers who have been sacked by GM. The two latest incidents are the firing of night committeeman Gregg Mello and the disciplinary layoff of John Scrempo, a Brotherhood leader. In response to

Nixon's exemption of wages from the 60-day freeze is not generosity toward labor, but smart politics. With the bureaucrats shoving rotten contracts down the throats of the ranks, while prices and profits are soaring, for Nixon to have applied the freeze to wages would have been a totally unnecessary provocation to labor. As it is, the bureaucracy will certainly claim that the price freeze has stiffened management resistance, thereby preventing the unions from winning better terms.

The breakdown of the "normalization" Phase Three and the reassertion of a hard line in direct controls demonstrates that state wage control is a fundamental requirement of contemporary capitalism, regardless of the personal preferences of whatever politicians are in office. The implication for union militants is clear: it is not possible to revert to "independent" unions simply acting as bargaining agents for their members in a free market. In this era, the unions are either agencies by which the ruling class disciplines the workers or they must be the organizational bases for the overthrow of capitalism.

Catastrophism vs. Marxist Economics

For some time Lyn Marcus' National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) and Tim Wohlforth's Workers League (WL) have been proclaiming that the final economic crisis of capitalism is at hand and that the next few years will bring either communist revolution or fascism. People new to the Marxist movement may believe that this is simply an over-reaction to the 1971 devaluation of the dollar and the onset of international financial anarchy. Far from it. Wohlforth and Marcus have been singing the "final, ever-deepening crisis" song ever since the early 1960's! In 1965 Wohlforth, with Marcus acting as his economic adviser, asserted:

"Our position is that essentially capitalism as a world system is in a

period of stagnation and decline, and that the fundamental character of the post-war period is formed by the boom and prosperity of capitalism based on the rebuilding and development of Europe and that the period since the end of the 50's has been one of decline and stagnation." [our emphasis]

—"Conversations with Wohlforth," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 3, Part 4, Seventh Session

Here we have it—the fifteen-year "ever-deepening final crisis" of capitalism.

In the next issue of *Workers Vanguard* we intend to deal with the Workers League/Healyite theory of "The Crisis" in some detail. At this point we will limit ourselves to two observations. First, capitalist production is inherently cyclical and a continual decline in production is impossible. And second, both the WL and NCLC use "the final crisis" to justify the proposition that traditional economic reformism is now revolutionary, since capitalism can no longer grant reforms. Their crisis-mongering is simply a justification for their economism.

Not only do catastrophic theories discredit Marxism and disorient would-be revolutionists, but they also distract the working class from the actual exploitation, oppression and class conflict they face in daily life. Thus in order to make a case that now the final depression is at hand, the WL is forced to create the complete fiction of the prosperous Eisenhower years, a period which occurred—oh happy coincidence—before the emergence of the Wohlforth tendency. (Had Wohlforth led an organization during the mid-1950's we have no doubt that the ultimate crisis of capitalism would have surfaced then.)

Communists do not need to project the imminence of a catastrophic economic crisis and fascist rule to justify the need for socialist revolution. The highest inflation in twenty years, a 5 percent rate of officially acknowledged unemployment and a venal and moribund union bureaucracy actively collaborating with a reactionary government to hold down wages—these conditions are a quite sufficient precondition for building the vanguard communist party and a class-struggle opposition in the unions. ■

earlier company attacks, the Brotherhood stalled for months before holding a small rally on 10 May which was attended by only a small fraction of the Brotherhood's claimed membership. Moreover, they sought to use opposition to the firings for purely factional advantage, announcing an NLRB suit against GM's "attempt to obstruct the Brotherhood." Their answer to the company's recent attacks was another impotent rally on 20 June. Fremont workers must reject this each-caucus-for-itself defense policy and unite in a major campaign to force the company to rehire all the victimized workers, utilizing the full power of the organized working class including the power to halt production.

The defense of the union also requires the fullest freedom of discussion, that is *workers democracy*, to arrive at the proper course of action. We therefore call on the Brotherhood Caucus to live up to its democratic pretensions and drop the ban on selling left-wing literature in front of the union hall, a ban earlier imposed by the Herrera gang. We also call on the Brotherhood and all other forces in the union to condemn the gangster tactics of the Maoist Revolutionary Union which has on several occasions physically threatened *Workers Vanguard* salesmen at the Fremont plant. The October League, another Maoist group which enthuses over the Brotherhood, has similarly threatened *WV* salesmen in other locations.

For a Nationwide Class-Struggle Opposition in the UAW

The election of diverse "left" oppositionists in locals throughout the country demonstrates the felt need for a militant, class-struggle alternative to the Woodcock bureaucracy. Such an opposition must be based not on cheap (and meaningless) "serve the people" or "fight the bosses" rhetoric. Instead it must have a sharply defined and comprehensive program for working-class power, uniting the proletariat around a series of transitional demands which, going beyond the limits of the capitalist system itself, lead directly to the only real answer to workers' needs, socialist revolution. ■

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REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

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THE "THIRD PERIOD"

ist," and that the USSR is no longer a workers state but a new imperialism presided over by a "red bourgeoisie." In a recent attack on Trotskyism from a Maoist viewpoint, the pamphlet entitled "From Trotskyism to Social-Imperialism" by Michael Miller of the League for Proletarian Revolution, this position stands in contrast to Trotsky's position:

"In 1956 Khrushchev came on the scene, launching an attack on the dictatorship of the proletariat and spreading petty-bourgeois ideology and culture everywhere..."

"Trotskyism has never understood in theory and never learned from practice the class character of the Soviet and Chinese states. During the period of Soviet history when the economic base was being transformed from private to social ownership of the means of production, the Trotskyites always stressed the political structure—the superstructure... The economic base can never be considered apart from the political structure. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party, which is the heart of the political structure, was taken over by a clique of bourgeois-type politicians and transformed into a variant of a big bourgeois political party. Now they are busy implementing economic policies which reverse the socialist economic base, which restore private ownership, private production for the market, and which reproduce on an enormous scale all the corresponding capitalist social relationships."

This passage demonstrates the Maoists' rejection of elementary Marxism. If, as they hold, a peaceful social counter-revolution took place in Russia, then logically a peaceful socialist revolution against capitalism is also possible—a classic social-democratic position which Lenin refuted in *State and Revolution*. Further, to maintain that such a revolution was accomplished by the appearance of a ruling group with "petty-bourgeois ideology" is idealism, completely counterposed to the Marxist materialist understanding that a social revolution can be accomplished only by an overturn in property relations.

Most important of all are the practical consequences of this policy. Since the USSR is an "imperialist" state according to Mao, it is not necessary to defend it against other capitalist states. In fact, Mao has gone so far as to press for a Sino-Japanese alliance against the Soviet Union and to encourage the retention of NATO as a bulwark against "Soviet imperialism" in Europe! These are the counterrevolutionary implications of the "state capitalist" position put into practice. They raise the specter of an inter-imperialist war with the USSR and China aligned with opposing capitalist powers—an eventuality which would place the socialist property forms of the deformed workers states in immediate danger. Though the Brezhnev clique in Moscow is not so explicit in blocking with capitalist states against China, its willingness to abandon the defense of the workers states in the hopes of achieving an alliance with U.S. imperialism was clearly revealed last year when Nixon was invited to sign a declaration of "peaceful co-existence" in Moscow at the very moment that American planes were carrying out saturation bombing over North Vietnam!

The Trotskyists, in contrast, call for Sino-Soviet unity against imperialism, for unconditional defense of the deformed workers states. At the same time we mercilessly criticize the parasitic bureaucracies who are sabotaging that defense. The advanced workers will recognize the justice of this principled, class position, and reject those such as the Maoists and pro-Moscow Stalinists who criminally abandon the defense of the workers' conquests.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

Reformists Gain in UAW Elections

In recent local elections at four key plants of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in different sections of the country, incumbent bureaucrats have been ousted by the ranks and replaced by more militant-talking oppositionists. At the Tarrytown, N.Y. General Motors plant and the International Harvester complex in Chicago the winners were supporters of the Communist Party (CP) and its labor sympathizer group, the Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy (TUAD). In Detroit a leader of the largest oppositional group in the union, the United National Caucus (UNC), was elected president of Chrysler's Eldon Gear and Axle plant, while the Brotherhood Caucus won at Fremont GM on the West Coast. What these various oppositionists have in common is a lack of a clearly-defined class-struggle program, relying instead on simple trade-union militancy and vague anti-establishment rhetoric.

Since the 1969-71 strike wave, the ancient and rigidly conservative Meanyite bureaucracy has become fundamentally alienated from the ranks and a target for hostility, particularly from the younger, black and Latin workers. That bureaucracy can now be shattered. But the decisive question is whether the Meany-Woodcock leadership will be replaced by a slicker, more left version of the same, drawn in part from the cadre of the reformist left organizations, or by forces representing revolutionary class-struggle policies. Thus far the international bureaucracy of the UAW has not been effectively challenged by a "left" opposition, but in the past few years a number of "militant" oppositionists have achieved a certain power base at the local level.

The two major currents in the present upsurge of rank-and-file labor reformism are on the one hand the Communist Party, with its experienced trade-union machine, and on the other a diverse conglomeration of groups and individuals emerging from the New Left/black nationalist movement and supported by various Maoist, syndicalist and social-democratic organizations, notably the International Socialists (IS). One of the key arenas in this struggle is the UAW, which was built by supporters of several avowedly socialist parties and where today, with the brutal working conditions and heavily young and black membership, discontent with the pro-capitalist Woodcock regime is rife.

The Huey Newton of Eldon Gear and Axle

Jordan Sims, who recently won the presidency of the Chrysler Eldon plant in Detroit, is a prominent spokesman for the apparently moribund United National Caucus. The UNC is an unstable amalgam of aspiring local bureaucrats ranging from the politically conservative, business unionist Mike Singer to reformist "socialists" like Sims and the ex-Trotskyist Art Fox, with the IS thrown in for added flavor. Like many such groupings, the UNC features a two-tier, maximum-minimum program. The maximum program includes such demands as immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, opposition to state wage control and support for a labor party. These demands would be an important part of an authentic class-struggle program, although in themselves they do not go beyond the bounds of capitalist society. However, in practice the UNC completely ignores them in favor of concentrating on safer issues such as the referendum election of the International president, and crosses the class line to sue the union in the capitalist courts (to deprive pensioners of

voting rights). Beset by organizational incompetence and rampant warlordism, the UNC appears to have self-destructed (the last issue of its paper, the *UNC*, was in December). If true, this would mean one less obstacle for auto workers and the rest of the proletariat in the struggle for independent organization as a class around revolutionary objectives.

Sims' election is clearly a personal victory and not a strengthening of the UNC. While Sims was elected presi-



Bill Scott, leader of Rank and File Committee at Tarrytown GM.

dent, every other office was retained by the incumbent bureaucracy. Sims apparently did not associate himself with the UNC, even on the basis of its lowest-common-denominator "bargaining program," running instead primarily on a reputation for militancy arising from past victimization by Chrysler and the local bureaucracy. In a glowing article on the Eldon election, the IS' *Workers' Power* (June 1973) restricted itself entirely to the heroic saga of Jordan Sims' personal history (rather like the *Black Panther* coverage of Huey Newton), not once mentioning the program he ran on. This is not surprising considering that he didn't run on any program.

The CP Achieves Respectability

Meanwhile at Tarrytown GM, the Rank and File Committee won an important victory, sweeping the bargaining committee elections. Among those elected was Bill Scott, a prominent supporter of the reformist politics of the CP. The program of the victorious RFC (which ran in a bloc with some independents) was the typical menu of bread-and-butter "economism" one expects of a CP-supported caucus. According to the *Daily World* (6 July 1973), "Their program [was] to fight speedup, clean up unsafe working conditions, fight for the hundreds of pending grievances and organize the shop behind contract negotiations."

Faced with a successful upsurge from the ranks, the incumbent bureaucracy moved to co-opt the RFC by "unifying" with it. The current Local 664 leaders, Calore and Sheridan, announced that they wanted to join with the Rank and File Committee against the company and that they supported the caucus' program. They probably did, too, for there is nothing in it that has not been raised by every bureaucrat on the outs who is trying to get into office without upsetting the system. Scott

replied that the RFC also favored unity, but that "unity must be based on struggle for the rights of the membership" (*Daily World*, 6 July 1973). What union bureaucrat, even the most reactionary, would ever openly oppose the "rights of the membership" in the abstract? On the basis of such protestations Meany himself could unite with the RFC! This farce clearly demonstrates the key importance of program. Faced with successful insurgency, the willier bureaucrats will move to co-opt the opposition, temporarily embracing as their own the more militant program as long as it remains within the framework of traditional business unionism.

Another important victory for the CP was the election of Norman Roth as president of the Melrose Park, Illinois UAW local at the International Harvester plant. Roth is a prominent spokesman for the CP-backed TUAD and "Labor for Peace," a loose coalition of liberal bureaucrats. Roth won against a campaign of red-baiting in a three-sided race against a corrupt, racist incumbent, Egan, who put out a leaflet calling blacks "fugitives from the watermelon patch" and "burr heads."

Roth's election, like Sims' in Detroit, was essentially a personal victory although he heads a small opposition group, the Solidarity Caucus. Roth was the only Solidarity candidate elected, with the remaining local offices divided between the Egan group and a similar bureaucratic clique. The goals of the Solidarity Caucus are summarized by its virtually meaningless slogan of "the unity of all labor behind a program which can win." Despite its talk about "all labor" the caucus is a localized group which doesn't even bother to call for the ouster of the Woodcock bureaucracy. In the present campaign, its two most radical demands were "open the books" and an end to labor participation on Nixon's Productivity Board. While opposition to state wage control is a vital agitational demand in this period, to limit labor's economic program to that single demand implies tolerance for "normal" free-market capitalism. Although Roth does a lot of talking about the Vietnam war *outside* the union, his campaign was almost totally devoid of concern for any broader political issues. He does not say *how* labor should oppose the war (write your congressman?). He refused to call on the workers to break from the capitalist parties to form a labor party based on the trade unions, and in fact he, together with TUAD and—in practice—the CP, supported McGovern in the last elections. By not calling for labor action against U.S. imperialism in Southeast Asia and a working-class alternative to the bosses' parties, Roth's campaign did not fundamentally break with the policies of

the present labor bureaucracy, which above all refuses to challenge capitalist rule.

Syndicalists Sucked into Business Unionism

An important radical group in Melrose Harvester is the Workers Voice Committee, a syndicalist group, originating from the Revolutionary Youth Movement wing of the old SDS. Workers Voice believes that trade unions are organically reformist and discredited and that the class struggle must flow through new shop-floor organizations. Despite its formal anti-unionism, which includes opposition to participation in union affairs, Workers Voice revealed its fundamentally reformist appetites by succumbing to Roth's popularity and giving him backhanded support: *Workers Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 5 observed that Roth "is closer to the real issues concerning workers in the shop than the other candidates." Mike Goldfield, a leader of Workers Voice, went even further by putting out a personal leaflet attacking only Egan and saying, "We hope that if Norm Roth is elected president, he will not play the same divisive role, thus, making it easier to achieve unity among all workers in the shop."

Another leader of Workers Voice, Murray Dillard, ran for re-election on the union executive board as a trustee. (Since Workers Voice has a formal position against running for union office, its members instead run as independents when they want to.) Dillard's campaign leaflet of 27 June had a picture of the American flag and the caption, "Be a Good American!"

Dillard's flag-waving is not some aberration or cynical maneuver unrelated to his past association with Workers Voice. At heart syndicalists long to be at one with the great American working class and are contemptuous of revolutionary Marxism, preferring instead native shop-floor militancy. A group which defers to the existing consciousness of the workers will necessarily become infected sooner or later with the reactionary ideology that the ruling class inculcates in the masses. National chauvinism, just as much as racism, is a principal weapon of the ruling class in fighting against the independent organization of the workers as a class. The Dillard incident is simply one more demonstration that a workerist rejection of the Leninist vanguard party means abandoning the historic tasks of the working class, instead capitulating to the present attitudes of particular groups of workers and ultimately leads to reaction.

Dillard's campaign, in addition to embarrassing Workers Voice, also embarrassed—you guessed it—the IS, whose supporters had been sporting Dillard campaign buttons. The IS just can't seem to resist those "honest, rank-and-file" opportunists.

Out-Bureaucrats Don New Left Clothing

The victory of the Brotherhood Caucus at the Fremont, California General Motors plant differs from the elections of Sims, Scott and Roth in that the latter are reformist "socialists" pretending to be simple union militants in

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