

# Revolutionary Communist Youth NEWSLETTER 10¢

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## MYTH OF NEO-CAPITALISM

It is not surprising that the apparent prosperity and stability of the post-war period should have encouraged bourgeois ideologues to assert that capitalism had fundamentally changed to guarantee permanent prosperity and stability. It was also to be expected that bourgeois ideological pressure should penetrate the socialist movement, producing revisionist theories which parallel those of bourgeois economists. The main economic ideologues of the three principle currents of Marxist revisionism—Stalinism-Maoism (Paul Sweezy of *Monthly Review*), left Social Democracy (Michael Kidron of the British International Socialists) and revisionist "Trotskyism" (Ernest Mandel of the United Secretariat)—have produced analyses of post-war capitalism which contain identical premises and, despite secondary differences, arrive at similar conclusions.

### Post-War Capitalist Boom?

All theories of fundamental post-war capitalist change assume that post-war capitalism has performed extraordinarily well. This exceptional performance can only be explained if major structural reforms have taken place. Bourgeois and revisionist theorists then search for the structural changes behind this otherwise inexplicable boom—Keynesian-type stabilization policy, capitalist planning, increased government expenditure, the "permanent arms economy," etc.

The first, and in some ways most important, myth of neo-capitalism is the post-war boom. The general impression of a post-war boom comes from comparing the post-war period to the 1930's. Since the 1930's constituted the greatest depression in capitalist history, it is not surprising that post-war capitalism should appear much more successful. Even here, superficial impressions are misleading. Britain's post-war growth rate, 2.5% a year, was the same that Britain experienced from the devaluation of the pound in 1931 until the outbreak of World War II. If Japan's post-war growth of 9.5% a year is a "miracle," then Japan's 7.5% rate of growth during the Great Depression demonstrated the intervention of God himself.

To draw a balanced picture of post-war capitalist performance it is necessary to compare the post-war period with the entire modern capitalist epoch, and not simply with the Thirties. When this is done, a radically different picture emerges. Britain performed miserably by any standard. Except for the Korean War and 1962-66, the post-war U.S. growth rate was below its historical (1880-1970) average rate of 4.0%. France performed distinctly better than its historic norm, but this reflected the overcoming of France's traditional backwardness ultimately related to the crushing of the petty bourgeoisie under the fascist occupation. If Germany's growth rate in the 1950's was "miraculous," Germany's growth rate

in the 1960's, and particularly late in that decade, was definitely profane and rather below Germany's historical norm. Germany's growth in the 1950's was export-led and must be seen as the inverse of Britain's malaise. Japan accelerated its traditionally high growth rate by the traditional and very precarious method of penetrating the American import market, rather than by Keynesian expansion of the domestic government sector. Thus two of the five major capitalist powers performed below their historic norms and the performance of the others can be adequately explained without recourse to neo-capitalist theories.

### Military Spending— Salvation or Burden?

All major theories of neo-capitalism, harking back to Luxemburg's misstatement of the basic contradiction of capitalism in *The Accumulation of Capital*, view the fundamental problem of capitalism as absorbing the surplus between production and the consumption of productive workers ("variable capital"). All neo-capitalist theorists see the solution in the expansion of "unproductive expenditures" in the corporate bureaucracy (eg. advertising, marketing, finance) and in the state sector, particularly the military budget. Kidron treats military expenditure as akin to capitalist consumption, as a form of "luxury" good. Mandel explicitly states that unproductive expenditure is an alternative to productive investment which reduces unemployment. The American New Left theorist, Martin Nicolaus, regards state employment as the contemporary analogue to the widespread use of personal servants in the nineteenth century. Sweezy and Baran spend most of *Monopoly Capital* explaining why the economic surplus can not be employed usefully (in education, health, anti-pollution, etc.), but must be expended on the

military. Before discussing the nature and importance of "unproductive expenditures," we will review some empirical data on post-war government and military expenditure to explode another myth of neo-capitalism.

Since both liberals and radicals talk about the expanded role of the state under post-war capitalism, it is often accepted as self-evident fact. In fact, the expanded role of the state has even less factual basis than the post-war "boom," for which this expanded role was supposedly responsible. In Germany and Japan, the share of state expenditure in national income was far less in the post-war period than under fascism and militarism. State non-military investment in Japan fell from 40% in the Thirties to less than 30% in the post-war period. The share of the French government budget in national income has remained virtually the same since the Thirties. The share of British government expenditure has increased moderately since the 1930's, entirely accounted for by the increased military budget. Of all the major capitalist nations, only the U.S. experienced a significant increase in the share of government expenditures. This is entirely a result of increased military expenditure, non-military government expenditure running between 10% to 15% of total expenditure in both the 1930's and post-war periods. It is important to emphasize that those countries that had the lowest rate of government expenditure (Germany and Japan) had the highest growth rates; and those countries with the highest rates of government expenditure (the U.S. and Britain) had the lowest growth rates. The relationship between government expenditure and

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## Workers League Youth Vanguardism: FAKE YOUTH CONFERENCE

NEW YORK--The Workers League "Conference for Youth to Fight Back" held December 18 represented yet another in the WL's long series of attempts to set up a youth front group in the U.S. ("Revolt," "Young Workers League," etc.) Tim Wohlforth followed the precedent set by his mentor, Gerry Healy of the British Socialist Labour League, right down the line in setting up his youth conference just like the British Young Socialists, the street-demonstration,

rock-band low-level youth group Healy personally runs.

Wohlforth himself set the tone of the conference, which was youth vanguardist through and through. "Youth will bring consciousness to the working class," "Youth will force the trade unions to take up the struggle," he drummed into his audience, which consisted mostly of high school students, most of whom have probably never attended a radical political meeting before. The other speeches given, one by a member of the Young Socialists, who in her opening remarks attacked the Spartacist League, and one by a Peruvian attacking the Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Bolivia, went over the heads of most of the audience, whose questions were naive ones such as "Will we lose our freedom under socialism?", "What is Stalinism?", etc. When the question of unity of the left was raised, Lucy St. John said, "We are the only revolutionary tendency in the world!" The young audience was thus whipped into shape, warned to avoid other groups on the left--all of which, according to the WL, embody betrayal itself--revisionism, Stalinism or reformism.

What was omitted is as important as what was said. During the hour or so of audience questions about "unity," Wohlforth and Co. never used, much less explained, the term "united front." Such vital questions as racial and sexual oppression and imperialism were not even marginally mentioned.

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RIGHT  
TURN**

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SL/RCY contingent at PL's "united front" march Oct. 30 in Boston.

# Myth of Neo-Capitalism

by Joseph Seymour

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economic performance was exactly the reverse of that projected by Keynesian and neo-capitalist theories.

## The "Permanent Arms Economy"

The term "permanent arms economy" was popularized by the British left social democrat Michael Kidron. If the term has any analytic value, it means that military expenditures are deliberately adjusted to counter the business cycle and eliminate unemployment, increasing when unemployment rises and vice versa. In the one country where military expenditure is important, the U.S., changes in the military budget have certainly not been counter-cyclical, but have been dominated by foreign policy needs. Following World War II, the military budget was cut to the bone despite the fears of almost all bourgeois economists that this would lead to a recession. The Korean War did pull the U.S. out of the 1948-49 recession, but one can hardly argue that the U.S. would not have intervened in Korea if there had been full employment domestically. The 30% cut-back in military expenditures following Korea was the direct cause of the 1953-54 recession. Despite two recessions, the military budget as a percentage of total national expenditure declined steadily from the end of the Korean War until 1964. The Kennedy administration sought to stimulate the economy by investment subsidies and downward pressures of wages, while pursuing a moderate disarmament policy. The expansion of the Vietnam War in 1965 undoubtedly prevented a downturn, but the expansion occurred solely because the NLF could not be contained without a greatly expanded military effort. By 1968, full capacity had been reached and the increased military expenditure was purely inflationary. The present military budget is contractionary, despite Nixon's efforts to stimulate the economy through investment subsidies, protectionism and state wage control. In conclusion, U.S. military expenditure has at times been expansionary (1950-51, 1965-66), at times contractionary (1953-54, 1970-71) and at times purely inflationary (1968-69). Moreover, neither the liberal bourgeoisie (Kennedy) nor the conservative bourgeoisie (Nixon) have demonstrated support for expanded military expenditure as an anti-recession policy.

The level of military expenditures is determined by the objective resources needed to pursue foreign policy aims. The impact of military spending is determined by the relation of these objective resources to total output. During the post-war period, the material requirements of an acceptable military posture have grown more slowly than output as a whole. Thus, as Kidron himself admits, there has been a steady decline in the share of military expenditure in the capitalist nations from 7.2% of national output in 1953 to 4% in 1965.

## Unproductive Labor in Marxian Economics

Immense confusion has been generated by Marx's concept of "unproductive but necessary" expenses. These expenses are concentrated in the clerical and distributive activities of the private capitalist sector and in the state sector. All revisionist theorists maintain that "unproductive expenses" are part of surplus value. Sweezy explicitly rejects Marx's definition of surplus value as property income (profit, interest and rent) as too narrow and includes the state sector, advertising, market research, etc. Sweezy, Kidron and Mandel treat expansion of unproductive expenditure as deliberate make-work designed to eliminate the immanent tendency toward unused surplus.

Valid Marxist analysis must conform to capitalist behavior. If a corporate manager were told expenses for advertising, market research or credit accounting are really an alternative to profits, he would reply that, within limits, just the opposite is true. The more that is spent on marketing and systematic accounting, the larger the profits. For capitalist firms, administrative and distributive expenses are absolutely necessary to realize the value of their commodities on the market. In other words, these expenses are needed to maintain the conditions of capitalist reproduction, which is the reproduction of value and not simply of physical goods. Marx called the overhead expenses of the capitalist system "constant capital." "Constant capital" has usually been treated by Marxists to refer only to the depreciation of the physical means of production. However, the labor time advanced and expended by the corporate bureaucracy and distributive apparatus is definitely part of the total social capital spent to realize the value of commodities in the market.

Only by treating the employment of unproductive labor as necessary overhead expenses can one explain actual capitalist behavior. It is obvious that capitalists regard "unproductive labor" as necessary costs and not charity coming out of profit. Capitalists are just as concerned with economizing on "unproductive" labor as on "productive" labor. The tremendous expansion of computers, photocopiers, calculating machines and other office equipment is designed to increase the productivity of clerical and administrative labor.

A Sweezyite might counter that while these expenses are not surplus for individual capitalists, they are for the capitalist system as a whole. This argument amounts to applying those categories which Marx used to analyze capitalism to a rational economic order (i. e., socialism). This is a technocratic bias, treating economics as relations between things rather than between men. Under socialism, there would indeed be a radical rationalization of "unproductive expenses," but one cannot therefore treat them as a surplus under capitalism. After all, under socialism there would also be a radical rationalization of "productive" labor as well as of consumption patterns.

## State Expenditures and the Rate of Profit

The definition of unproductive labor as capitalist overhead or "constant capital" can be extended from the private to the state sector. The government sector represents the collectivization of certain kinds of capitalist overhead expenses. Most services provided by government substitute for overhead expenses which are and were undertaken by private firms. Police substitute for private guards; public education substitutes for private education and apprenticeship programs; welfare substitutes for private and religious charity; government statistical services substitute for private information-gathering activity. A decrease in government expenditure often leads to increased private overhead expenses, as "inadequate" police protection would lead to more private guards.

The definition of government expenditure as collective capitalist overhead also extends to the military sector. The functions of military force in imperialist nations is to prevail in inter-imperialist conflict, to put down rebellions in colonial countries and to suppress domestic disorder and proletarian revolution. These aims allow the capitalists to realize the value of their commodities on the world market, in the narrow sense, and to maintain the bourgeois order, in the broad sense. In avoiding a sharp demarcation between state military and private capitalist activities, it should be recalled that the first phase of European imperialism was carried out by private mercantilist armies. India and Java were colonized by troops in the employ of the British and Dutch East India Companies, respectively.

Two major arguments present themselves against including government expenditure in the Marxian category of "constant capital." One is that the government budget is determined by a po-

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The RCY Newsletter is published by the Revolutionary Communist Youth, youth section of the Spartacist League. We seek to build a revolutionary socialist youth organization which can intervene in all social struggles armed with a working-class program, based on the politics of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.

litical process and not by the laws of the market. The second is that government expenditure is paid for by taxes falling mostly on wages and should, therefore, be treated as part of "variable capital."

The "laws" of the market operate only through the decisions and actions of actual capitalists, whose judgements often conflict with one another. The size of the advertising budget, the volume and composition of new investment, maximum concessions to a union are areas of intense conflict within corporate management. If policies are adopted which result in smaller profits, or losses, tendencies will seek alternate policies. The process determining the size and composition of government expenditure is not qualitatively different. If government expenditure results in mass unrest, inflation, falling exports, that section of the bourgeoisie pushing for opposite policies will tend to prevail.

The notion concerning government expenditure coming out of wages reflects misplaced concreteness. If we accept Marx's contention that the level of wages ("variable capital") is that necessary to reproduce labor power, then increased taxes must be offset by higher wages. If personal taxes were cut, thereby increasing effective real wages, the pressure for higher wages would decline and capitalists would receive the value of the tax cut in the form of reduced relative wages. In the case of a tax increase, the process would be reversed. In the short run, tax changes affect workers' real income, but in the long run, these changes will be offset by wage changes in the opposite direction.

Having correctly identified "unproductive labor," including all forms of state expenditure, as constant capital expended and replaced, we can analyze the effect of an increase in such "unproductive labor." If we assume, as did Marx, that that portion of output consumed by "productive" labor (variable capital) is determined in the labor market, an increase in capitalist overhead expenditure (constant capital) necessarily reduces surplus value. The expansion of "unproductive labor" thus has a contradictory character. This increase in overhead expenditure subtracts from surplus value, however, it is necessary precisely because surplus value would be even lower without it. Thus, hiring a credit man adds to the payroll and reduces profits. However, without a credit man profits could be lower still due to shipping to bad accounts. This is precisely why those countries having a relatively small government budget (West Germany and Japan) have had much higher levels of property income, investment and growth than countries with larger government budgets (the U.S. and Britain). "But," a neo-capitalist theorist might retort, "would a higher rate of profit associated with lower military expenditure necessarily generate sufficiently greater investment to utilize the higher level of surplus value?" Since we are dealing with specific quantitative relations, a definite answer can not be given to such a question. A plausible reply would be that with a lower military budget, the U.S. would have had a higher general level of investment and growth, with greater cyclical instability. However, a much lower military budget combined with much higher capital investment would have radically changed the political-economic balance of power in the post-war world, so that speculations along these lines are not very useful.

To summarize—the economies of the major capitalist nations did not perform exceptionally well in the post-war period and the booms that did occur can be explained adequately without assuming major structural changes in the capitalist system. Except for the United States, the share of military and other government expenditure did not increase in the post-war period. The expansion of "unproductive labor," which all neo-capitalist theorists see as the key to post-war economic stability, actually drives down the rate of profit intensifying the contradictions of capitalism.

### ORDER NOW!

✓ "Youth, Class and Party," basic documents of the RCY. Offset pamphlet, 50¢.

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# Workers League Youth Vanguardism:

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In order to appeal to youth militancy, Wohlforth exaggerated fascistic elements in the U. S. today. He warned, "We'll all be in concentration camps in a few years if something isn't done--that's how far they'll go!"

The entire conference was run in extreme bureaucratic fashion, with questions left inadequately answered or unanswered altogether. Political opponents were excluded on sight. One speaker, suspected of being a supporter of the Labor Committee, was ordered to sit down in the middle of asking a question.

## Youth Manipulation

At the end of the speeches, voting took place. On what, one may well ask--on the "program" (the leaflet handed out for the conference), on having a steering committee (for what?), and to have an "action" sometime in March. There was no discussion, there was no explanation of what this voting meant, of whether it is the founding of a youth organization, of the relation of youth to the party, no explanation of anything. This "democratic" gesture--the vote--was a cynical and disgusting manipulation of potentially serious young militants. To ram through this "program," to manipulate young militants who lack the experience to see through this trickery--or if they do, who will walk out disgusted by what they believe to be "socialism"--is a crime against the revolutionary movement.

Of course, we realize the WL could not afford discussion on its "program," could not afford comparison to other radical groups, particularly to the Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY), the youth section of the Spartacist League. The RCY is not a front group, but a Trotskyist youth group affiliated to the SL along Leninist lines of organization. The RCY sees the working class, not the undifferentiated "youth" as the vanguard of the revolution. The SL-RCY passed out a leaflet criticizing the "program" and had available the RCY program, organizational rules and youth-party relations document in pamphlet form. (Our founding conference spent two full days going over these documents, following two months of pre-conference discussion, and only after this thorough and democratic discussion, voted and approved them!)

## WL Youth "Program"

The WL "program" is notable for its lack of Trotskyist politics--the word "socialist" appears only once, and then as the unspecified program for the future "labor party," which is called for without a single reference to the struggle against the reactionary trade union bureaucracy. The "program" is largely economist in content; for example, the section on the Vietnam war does not even mention military support to the NLF against imperialism! Its primary purpose is stated as building "the widest campaign among the youth"--which youth, Wohlforth made clear at the conference, is "all youth who want to fight back," recruited at the dances, at the sporting events, off the streets, anywhere and everywhere! This assumes the undifferentiated "youth" to be inherently revolutionary, a capitulation to petty-bourgeois misconceptions. (In typical flip-flop fashion, Wohlforth took the opposite position a few nights earlier at Stony Brook, where driven to a rage by opposition questions from the floor, he screamed, "The WL is entirely hostile to the middle class!", also a thoroughly un-Marxist position, since the middle class is an intermediate social class and in periods of social crisis elements drawn from the middle class can be won to the proletarian revolutionary cause.)

The WL youth conference represented a profound capitulation to the petty-bourgeois mood of youth vanguardism--the idea that "the youth," who are in fact drawn from all social classes, are inherently revolutionary. Given strong working-class leadership, other oppressed groups (youth, ethnic minorities, women, etc.) can be a valuable component of the revolutionary movement. But without deep political and organizational ties to the Trotskyist proletarian vanguard organization, the militant radicalism of other social groupings only reinforces New Left, poly-vanguardist illusions.

The WL's approach to building a youth group is not just an aberration, but flows directly and consistently from the real "method" of the WL which sacrifices Marxist principle to the opportunities of the moment. We have assembled a few of the more glaring examples of the opportunism of the WL which have led us to characterize this group as counterfeit Trotskyists and what Lenin called "political bandits."

## Some Questions for the WL

\* The WL supported the reactionary and racist strike of NYC police in Jan. 1971, claiming that cops are workers too, and in fact were leading the struggle of all NYC labor. How can they simultaneously defend the Panthers or the Attica prisoners, most of whom were put there by the same cops? If there hadn't been a riot, would they have supported the demands of the Attica Correction Officers--all AFSCME members--for better riot equipment?

\* The WL characterized the Panthers as a black version of the Weathermen and "proto-fascist" in Oct. 1969, and thereby on the other side of the class line. Yet a year later the WL hailed Huey Newton for embracing "dialectics" (shortly before he embraced the church).

\* While now attacking the Mao Tse Tung government of China for its criminal support of the West Pakistan government for cheap diplomatic advantage, they fail to mention that the WL called for support to Mao during the Cultural Revolution because "Mao's line has not been one of capitulation to imperialism."

\* Instead of a policy of revolutionary defeatism on both sides in the India-Pakistani war, the WL urges support for India, thereby subordinating the just Bengali struggle to the ambitions of the Indian bourgeoisie, and abandoning Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution which states that only through proletarian revolution can even bourgeois-democratic demands be realized in the colonial countries.

\* The WL denounces the Bolivian Partido Obrero Revolucionario for its popular frontist maneuvers. Yet the WL itself called for support to the Allende Popular Front in Chile, claiming

"as a step in this understanding the workers must hold Allende to his promises." (21 Sept. '70). This formulation "to support insofar as..." was the same rationale used by Stalin to support Kerensky in 1917, and was fought by Lenin.

\* The WL condemned any participation in the NPAC April 24 demonstration as class collaboration, then turned around and defended the right of imperialist U. S. Senator Hartke to speak "against the war" at the July 4 NPAC conference, joining with goon squads of the reformist SWP to beat up and expel Spartacists, RCYers and others who oppose class collaboration in the anti-war movement.

\* Does the WL still defend excluding any reference to either racial oppression or the Vietnam war from their "labor party" program as they did in 1968 when they formed "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party"?

\* For years the WL touted its cynical toadying to Gerry Healy's SLL in England as "internationalism" and passed off the "International Committee"--a rotten bloc between the SLL and the French OCI, along with their respective satellites--as a disciplined international organization. The IC split has now ripped away this "internationalist" facade from what was all along a non-aggression pact papering over basic and long-standing differences.

## Don't Be Fooled!

These are only a selection of the twists and turns and 180 degree shifts in line of the WL in the recent past. They are typical of the entire history of this group since its inception. The Spartacist League wrote in 1970: "Faced with such a history, the much vaunted 'Marxist method' that Wohlforth teaches his members is of necessity a profound cynicism which cannot but erode and destroy the backbone of those who start out by seeking revolution and end up following Wohlforth ever deeper into the mire." We say to young militants seeking the path of revolutionary communism: do not take the "fools gold" of the Workers League for good coin. There is a lot more than loud speeches and big banners involved in becoming a professional revolutionist.

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"History shows" that fascism can be victorious only by smashing the organizations of the working class and the left. Hitler's victory in Germany was a deep and tragic setback for the German working class. The "socialist consciousness" of which PL speaks in Road to Revolution III is not some idealist abstraction suspended in mid-air; it is carried by human beings and embodied in organizations. The illegalization and destruction of proletarian organizations and the literal and bloody decimation of the most dedicated and conscious proletarian militants destroys even the possibility of struggle for a generation. The German CP's "after Hitler, us" did not come true. PL reduces the Trotskyist-Stalinist debates over fascism in Germany to a disagreement over the timing of a popular front. This is because PL cannot distinguish between a united front in action of the working class movement and a popular front which ties the working class into an ongoing alliance led by the bourgeoisie. The Stalinist CP's cries that the Social Democrats were "worse than Hitler" (similar to PL's characterizations today of the Russian and Chinese bureaucracies) greatly facilitated the rise of fascism.

PL today refuses to join in united defense of the left movements, preferring to characterize their opponents on the left as "cops" or people who "play a cop role." They lump trade union bureaucrats together with capitalist politicians. Trade union mis-leaders must be exposed before their memberships, but the failure to distinguish them from the bourgeoisie will lead to an abstentionist position as the ruling class steps up its attacks on the unions. PL pushes a "united front from below" (sometimes known as the "left-center coalition"). What does this mean? PL explains in Road to Revolution III: "The political basis of the united front is our mass line on whatever issue workers and others deem important at any given moment" (p. 21). This totally opportunist position is a duplicate of the SWP's attitude on the war, abortion, et. al.: "lots of people want to have peace or legal abortions or such-and-such; if we tail-end them, maybe we can get organizational leadership." As for PL's "mass line", the line in evidence on Nov. 6 was the deep entry into the march itself.

RCY and the SL see the united front as a unity in action of organizations, which sets the base of these groups against the top, and leads to the clarification of political differences necessary for principled regroupment of genuine revolutionary forces and the building of a vanguard party of the working class. The class-collaborationist tendencies of PL's "united front from below" are clear in their recent turns toward NPAC and the NAC.

## PL Repudiates Lenin

The Spartacist League has previously noted the possible consequences of PL's centrist politics --

"PL will either discover the Leninist road in the only tendency--authentic Trotskyism--consistently opposed to the revisionism PL rejects, or reject Lenin along with the usurpers of his mantle and be lost forever in the wilderness of backward sectarianism and political banditry." (Spartacist, No. 19, Nov.-Dec. 1970)

It is not enough for PL to bow humbly its head, confessing "yes, we've made mistakes--we're not arrogant or perfect--we try to learn from our mistakes." A simple reflex in the opposite direction of a mistaken path leads to new mistakes, or rather, the same old ones. PL must seriously explore why it has repeatedly made so many mistakes. In the article, "Strategy and Tactics of the International Communist Movement," PL states--

"The old communist movement, led by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, is dead as a revolutionary force. A new communist movement can and must develop to absorb the lessons of the past defeats and carry forward the struggle to destroy capitalism." ("The International Communist Movement," PL, Nov. 71, p. 51)

This refusal to look seriously for historical revolutionary continuity is at the heart of PL's dilemma. The New Left also said once, "The old left is dead. Let's start brand new." They did, and never coming to grips with the lessons of the past, made all the old mistakes over again. PL must seriously confront the Stalin-Trotsky debates and acknowledge the continuation of revolutionary Marxism in Trotskyism, or it is doomed to disintegration and defeat as a political tendency.



Progressive Labor (PL)-SDS's support to the class-collaborationist Nov. 6 peace marches was outdone by their grovelling at the feet of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leadership at the Cleveland National Peace Action Coalition Conference Dec. 3-5. SDS and PL speakers pledged their support to April 22 (date of the next peace crawl) and were a model of benevolent good behavior throughout the conference, except for a brief period on Saturday when the exclusion of two Kent State SDSers for alleged threats against SMCers brought forth some noisy protest from PL and SDS (which SL and RCY joined). The SDS proposals centered in economist and reformist fashion around fighting racism, prisoner abuse, welfare cutbacks and bad food in school cafeterias. Not only was the issue of the Vietnam war ignored, but the class collaboration policies of the SWP leadership of NPAC were left unmentioned! As a substitute for demanding exclusion of the bourgeoisie from the anti-war movement, SDS indicated objection to "speakers who oppress people." This vague formulation not only abandons the struggle against class collaboration, but also refuses to point the finger of blame and expose the betrayers. PL came out with a leaflet which in the context of the rest of their "intervention" can only be characterized as anti-working class. PL called for throwing out all trade union misleaders from the anti-war movement, but totally ignored the presence of the bourgeoisie. It is the position of the SL/RCY that the political representatives of the bourgeoisie must be unconditionally excluded from the anti-war movement. Members of the working-class movement, and this includes union bureaucrats, should have the right to speak at anti-war meetings. At the same time, we must carry out relentless propaganda aimed at exposing their sellouts and driving them from leadership. PL's leaflet, in effect, called for a popular front, which includes the political representatives of the bourgeoisie, to expel union members!

The only militant, consistent, principled opposition to class collaboration at the Cleveland conference came from the SL/RCY contingent.

### The Dismal Record

In Boston and Chicago SDS conferences called prior to Nov. 6, PLers put forward motions for slogans around fighting racism, welfare cutbacks, etc., but did not confront class collaboration. In Boston, they indicated they would co-sponsor the march if SDS got a speaker! In contrast to this, RCY raised demands for unconditional exclusion of the political representatives of the bourgeoisie, for labor strikes against the war, and for victory to the Vietnamese Revolution. PL considered this last demand to be sectarian (!), preferring the liberal-pacifist "Freeze War, Not Wages." Boston SL/RCY organized an anti-class collaborationist united front contingent which PL boycotted on the stated grounds that the Spartacist League was organizing it.

PL's right turn was further evident at the Boston and Chicago conferences by their stated intention to enter and build the National Abortion Coalition (NAC) led by the same SWP betrayers. RCY countered this with a proposal to intervene at the next NAC conference with a working-class program which opposed the SWP's class collaborationism and included raising "Free Abortion on Demand," in opposition to the SWP's "legalize abortion," orienting the women's movement to the working class, and struggling to create a socialist and non-exclusionist women's organization. Less than a year ago, PL stood opposed to raising right-to-abortion demands because they were "reformist" and because they emphasized the sexual oppression of women, whereas PL had incorrectly seen female oppression as strictly an economic question. Four months ago, PLers were beaten and bruised for their opposition to reformist, class collaboration pushed by the SWP in the anti-war movement. Now they are rushing to join and build the organizations led by yesterday's betrayers of the working class! This is the dilemma of centrism: lacking an understanding of revolutionary Marxist theory and their own historical roots, and therefore unable to develop consistent working-class program and strategy, PL jumps back and forth between revolutionary impulse and reformist practice.

PL's right opportunism towards NPAC and NAC is in keeping with the sectarian gangsterism of recent months where, for instance, Boston PL has repeatedly threatened or sometimes physically assaulted SL and RCY members. Refusing to be frightened into silence, SL/RCY responded

# Sellout to Class Collaboration: PL'S RIGHT TURN

to PL's physical attacks on them at the Lynn, Mass. march by coming to PL's Oct. 30 "united front" demonstration with an 80-strong contingent, asserting its right to participate in such "united fronts."

In New York, in San Francisco, Berkeley, Stony Brook, and San Diego, as well as in Chicago and Boston, PL has tried its best to keep SDS confined safely within the campus gates and involved in bread-and-butter issues only. RCYers have fought hard for an involvement in major labor struggles and for political struggle grounded in revolutionary socialist consciousness. In Boston, SDS has insisted on limiting the fight against unemployment to campus unemployment. At Stony Brook, RCY and its supporters fought to involve SDS in the wildcat phone strike in Suffolk County (part of the New York state-wide Communication Workers of America wildcat). PL supporters refused to go near the phone strike, and even walked out of SDS meetings when it came up. They abstained from this important class struggle because the RCY first brought it up, and because they prefer to keep SDS on campus. Thus it is that sectarian and campus-parochial attitudes lead to the betrayal of working-class struggles. At Berkeley and San Francisco, PL has stopped pushing an "anti-imperialist, pro-working class" definition for SDS and says that what most distinguishes SDS from the YSA is that SDS really wants to fight. At SF State College, what they "really want to fight" over has been the most minimal imaginable program directed at improving cafeteria conditions: better food, lowering the cost of all foods by 5¢, etc. Likewise at San Diego, PL has concerned itself primarily with "fighting racist counselors." At Columbia University in New York, PL's two or three members have immersed themselves quietly into the "Columbia Anti-Imperialist Movement", rather than attempting to win these Maoists and New Lefters to a working-class, socialist orientation. In response to Columbia RCY's proposal for a working-class orientation based on revolutionary socialist politics, PLers have blocked with the right wing of CAM against Marxism-Leninism.

### PL Sunk in its Theoretical Swamp

PL has never come to terms with its own history, has never understood Marxist methodology, and has never developed a revolutionary strategy for the working class. It is a centrist group, shifting from right to left and back again, always leaping over the correct Marxist positions. The latest issue of PL magazine (Vol. 8, No. 3, Nov. 1971), containing Road to Revolution III and other major party documents, reveals the theoretical swamp into which PL has sunk.

PL has always had a formal insistence on the importance of the working class; in practice, they have been incapable of developing program and strategy that flow from an understanding of the origins and development of class consciousness (namely, the Trotskyist transitional program and a consistent strategy of building trade union caucuses that seek to throw out the bureaucrats and win the ranks to revolutionary consciousness). They have held onto the Stalinist strategy of a "left-center coalition" and a maximum-minimum program (as it is hard to be both maximum and minimum simultaneously, PL tends to be maximum for a while and then minimum). PL has never been able to draw sharp class lines--that is, to understand what the working class is, in the Marxist sense, and why they are the only consistently revolutionary group in capitalist society.

### PL's Turn to the Peasantry

PL's reinterpretation of the peasantry (in opposition to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky) in Road to Revolution III dramatizes PL's inability to draw sharp class lines:

"We believe that virtually all the world's peasant and oppressed people are proletarianized. The vast majority own neither land nor the means of production. This is certainly the case today, and we believe it was also the case during Lenin's lifetime. As a world-wide system of exploitation, imperialism proletarianizes people, whether they work on the land or in the factories... workers in the colonial countries are far more exploited than workers in imperialist countries... this type of exploitation affords ample opportunity for winning workers and peasants--especially the most oppressed--to socialism... ("Road to Revolution III," PL, Nov. 71, pp. 12-13)

While the phenomenon of the rural proletariat--which works for wages on plantations where it has no aspirations for ever owning land--is in fact far less pervasive than PL apparently believes it to be, a far more important objection is that the notion that "exploitation" or oppression alone proletarianizes. This is both crudely economist and idealist; nor is it sufficient to show that the majority of the world's peasantry do not own land and have learned new organizational techniques since the time that Marx wrote about them. Historically, the most oppressed sections of society have not been the most revolutionary. Extreme oppression can in fact defuse consistent revolutionary will; the refusal to see this comes from a voluntarist and idealist petty-bourgeois world view. More importantly, the peasantry's separation from industrial production (the axis of capitalist economy), their social fragmentation (in distinction to the collective and cohesive social organization of work of the proletariat), and their historical attachment to the land prevents them from becoming a main force of the socialist revolution.

As Trotsky pointed out, their support to the working-class vanguard is crucial to the success of the revolution, but they do not play a leadership role. PL's counterposing the oppression of workers in the advanced industrial countries to the "more oppressed" workers of the colonial world shows an objectivist failure (the mirror of voluntarist idealism) to understand the role of consciousness. A worker's sense of his own oppression develops in relation to other groups in the society he lives in, and the growth of this consciousness into socialist consciousness is a more critical factor in the success of a revolutionary movement (but consciousness alone does not make the revolution) than objective conditions seen in absolute, not relative, terms. PL further fails to grasp that there is a world economy in which the advanced industrial countries play the most influential role; thus the struggles of the workers in these countries are the decisive struggles in the world proletariat's fight for socialism. PL's positions on the peasantry and exploitation lead straight to third-worldism, Fanonist concepts of the "wretched of the earth" vanguard, and away from seeing the centrality of the working class in the advanced industrial countries. All the statistical data PL musters in this article fail to counter the Marxist social definitions of the peasantry and the working class. Their inability to recognize the main antagonists in the class struggle finds its reflection in this country in their attention to welfare clients, ghetto rioters, prisoners, and campus struggles for day care or against bourgeois classroom hegemony, as equal in importance to strikes and other trade union struggles. This has been an important component of the recent right turn.

### Fascism—Aid to Revolution?

PL's crude notion that oppression alone proletarianizes coincides with their third-period Stalinist viewpoint on fascism:

"History shows that fascism and fascist wars intensify the masses' class hatred and willingness to smash the ruling class. Communist movements can grow by leaps and bounds under fascism." ("The 7th Comintern Congress and the United Front Against Fascism," PL, Nov. 71, p. 73)

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