

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

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THE LABOR PARTY - Part I

From Economic To Political Action

"The Week In Finance", business section column of the New York Times of Dec. 13, 1970, noted with gloom that, "1970 will be the worst strike year since 1959".

On the following day, NY Times assistant editor, AH Raskin, in an article entitled, "Frustrations of Union Power", detailed the trials and tribulations of a "high AFL-CIO official...the head of a key union of NY City employees and a top building-trades man". It seems that no matter how much these gentry wish to be "reasonable", labor "statesmen", to take into account the "financial plight" of employers, including the municipal variety, the union members are forcing them to make "'screwball demands'", to "'ask for the moon'", even though these "leaders are convinced that the end result will be lost jobs and a worthless dollar".

Raskin recognizes the main factor acting to produce this rank and file pressure, "No matter how big the pay increases, they never keep pace with the upsurge in living costs." Real wages, says Raskin, were lower on the average by 2% than the year before, and are still behind the 1965 level, despite the record number of militant strikes, e.g., railroad, postal, other federal service workers, auto, maritime, etc.

The very knowledgeable "assistant

editor of the editorial page", only insinuates in this essay what his editorial page has often enough stated directly, that the workers are "causing" inflation through "excessive" wage gains which "out-strip productivity". But Raskin also demolishes that falsehood by noting that "the normal rise in national productivity should have assured the worker a 15% improvement in real earnings" over the preceding five year period.

He also records the deep feelings of "hopelessness, almost despair" the "sense of impotence" which afflicts the union "leaders", as the ranks call upon them for leadership against the attempts of the employers to solve the problems of inflation, recession and international competition at their expense.

Raskin notes in this connection that the "business slump has cut down on overtime pay", and on "opportunities to 'moonlight'", that "import competition is cutting deeply into jobs", that "conglomerate empires" are liquidating jobs, e.g., maritime, and in fact, that "unemployment on the docks is so great that it may bankrupt the guaranteed-

wage fund under which a regular longshoreman gets close to \$10,000 a year even if he never goes near a ship". The last gratuitous remark is an effective measure of the contempt that a well-fed bourgeois intellectual has for the workers who do physical labor.

He testifies, however, that as the fighting spirit of the workers rises, the feelings of despondency of the union "tops" also rise in direct proportion under present conditions. The "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class" are still accustomed to the "good old days" of the early '60's, when they could "win" contracts which contained real gains for the workers, while the capitalists could also obtain a higher rate of exploitation and fatter profits. But today, under conditions of capitalist crisis, these labor mis-leaders are demonstrating that they are completely unfit to lead a fight to defend, let alone advance the vital interests of the workers.

The president of the 320,000 member Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, CL Dennis, who admits to calling the one-day rail strike in response to rank and file pressure, is now feeling the anger of the ranks for ordering a return to work in compliance with a federal court order and the threat of a \$200,000 a day fine. A special Congressional law had also been rammed through, which extended the previous "cooling off" period until March 1st, and which had been sweetened with an immediate 13.5% wage increase. Nevertheless, the once-well paid railroad workers, whose wages had fallen both relatively and absolutely over the years with the help of the Railway Labor Act, and who were not considered among the most militant of trade unionists, were ready to defy both Congress and the courts to win the \$1.85 an hour increase over a 39 month period which the teamsters union had won.

Leonard Woodcock, Walter Reuther's replacement at the helm of the United Auto Workers, is also being attacked by the union ranks for a sellout of the General Motors

strike. Knowing the fighting spirit of the workers, Woodcock called the strike to win, in addition to other demands, a key demand of \$1.25 an hour increase for the first year of the contract. Evidently concluding that the workers had been sufficiently softened up by 9 weeks on the picket-line, Woodcock presented them with his "victory", a 51¢ an hour increase the first year.

The Nixon Administration has recently attacked the General Motors settlement as "inflationary". But as the NY Times itself pointed out, 33¢ represents "inflation catch-up", 12¢ matches the increase in national "productivity". Only the 6¢ remaining constitutes an improvement in the real wage. The workers had only succeeded in lowering the rate of their exploitation by a small amount.

Nixon tries to hide the real cause of inflation, which his Democratic predecessors helped to bring about, the debasement of the money supply through budget deficit financing, the creation and circulation of more and more paper money and credit to finance the Vietnam war and "defense", and in order to keep the faltering economy afloat. The same Nixon not too long ago pontificated about the need to control inflation through a balanced federal budget, and "tight" money and credit policies. He had a "game plan" for "trading off" inflation for unemployment. Today, in fear of the political consequences in 1972, he has reversed his economic policies by 180 degrees, proposes a large federal budget deficit, and is twisting the arm of Federal Reserve Board chairman Burns to open wide the flood-gates of money and credit.

From the farm workers in Salinas to the taxi-drivers in NY City, the American workers everywhere are demonstrating their readiness to fight to maintain and improve their standards. But as the national income declines, as the "recession" cuts into profits, as international competition sharpens, i.e., as the elements accumulate of a world-wide crisis of capitalist production and financial relations, the American capitalists, and also their rivals,

are forced to attempt to redistribute the national income at the expense of the working class. No longer can they afford to bribe an aristocratic layer of the class with the shrinking profits and super-profits of a world market monopoly which is rapidly slipping from their grasp. As production declines, as the rate of profit also declines, the ruling class tries to rescue the situation by increasing the exploitation of the workers.

It is at this time that the executive committee of the capitalist class, the state, which had previously been content to hamstring, to limit the effectiveness of trade unions, attempts to completely transform them from defensive instruments of the workers into organs of control over them.

The workers are to be hand-cuffed, first by an "incomes policy" such as Burns recently advocated, i.e., a "high-level Price and Wage Review Board" which will freeze wages, while the capitalists cheapen products to sell at the same prices, and while "black market" prices go sky-high. Burns also calls for "productivity boards" to decide on the amount of wage increases, if and when they are permitted. The right to strike in "essential" industries is to be replaced by compulsory "arbitration", with the right of union members to ratify or reject contracts a thing of the past.

The state still operates under bourgeois democratic rules. It does not, as under fascism, seek to transform the unions into state institutions, but only to "control" them. In so doing, however, it demonstrates more and more openly that it is indeed the organ of capitalist rule over the workers. Mr. Hyde becomes more clearly visible in Dr. Jekyll.

But, in the face of the ruling class offensive, and deprived of even the inadequate weapons with which they could fight to defend their standards, the workers are forced to recognize their need to fight politically, as a class.

As Trotsky has pointed out in his discussions on the labor party, the

trade unions are propelled into politics because:

"Political action generalizes the needs of the workers and addresses them not to parts of the bourgeoisie but to the bourgeoisie as a whole organized in the state."

The recurrence of capitalism's incurable disease, a new world crisis, is once again producing the typical symptoms within the trade unions which Trotsky noted in the 1938 discussions:

"The trade union bureaucracy becomes more and more disoriented, the rank and file more and more dissatisfied... If the class struggle is not to be crushed, replaced by demoralization, then the movement must find a new channel and this channel is political."

But what kind of political channel should the revolutionary Marxists advocate today? In 1932, Trotsky, interviewed in Turkey, stated that, "The emergence of a labor party is inevitable" in the US. In a letter written later that year to the second national conference of the Communist League of America, he made clear that by a labor party, he had meant "a party of the working class", and was not proposing "a labor party in the specific British sense". At that time, Trotsky also emphasized that while he did not exclude such a development, the question was of a tactical, not strategic nature. Trotsky, therefore, refused "to affirm abstractly and dogmatically that the creation of a labor party would be a 'progressive step' even in the United States", because he did "not know under what circumstances, under what guidance and for what purposes that party would be created".

Trotsky, true to the dialectic method, and in contradistinction to some present-day advocates of a labor party, who have transformed it into an article of faith, or even an empty slogan, was concerned to examine this question concretely,

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STATE AND REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA (Part II)

--The Chilean Popular Front

Castro, until recently one of the foremost advocates of the peasant-guerrilla road to "socialism", has since embraced not only the Peruvian junta, but now also the Chilean multi-class Unidad Popular (UP) headed by Allende, which is now posing a "peaceful transition" to socialism

Chile, a semi-industrialized country, is one of the more developed nations in Latin America. In addition to being the world's second largest copper producer, it has now developed an urban industry. Like Mexico, its annual per capita income is approximately \$500, little more than 1/7th that of the US. The bottom 60% of the population subsists on 20% of the national income, but it can boast of universal suffrage for those over 18, a minimum wage (\$52 per month), a month's sick leave and yearly paid vacations for "salaried" employees, and also a sliding scale of wages to enable the masses to cope with Chile's chronic inflation.

Even before Allende assumed power, the Chilean state, through its development corporations, either owned outright or had investments in 84 corporations which accounted for 40% of its gross national product. Along with the fuel and power industries, it also controlled the copper industry, and owned in full or in large part the sugar, steel, metal fabricating and glass industries. It controlled 60% of the private banks, and, through its central bank, national credit. It was heavily involved in development loans and public financing of construction, and also in the management of agricultural reform projects.

Despite Allende's assurances to the head of the Chilean stock exchange that he would "respect private enterprise", and his and the Chilean CP's protestations, that neither Allende or it intended to form a "socialist" or "Marxist" government, the Chilean economy did suffer a contraction as large deposits were withdrawn from Chilean banks in late September.

However, the basic confidence of the bourgeoisie in the "integrity"

of the Allende regime was demonstrated on October 24th, at the special session of Congress at which Allende received the support of the Christian Democratic (CD) party and Congressional ratification as president-elect. Moreover, the US corporations, whose holdings are valued at almost \$1 billion--more than half in the mining and smelting industries which "return" them a profit of more than 25% annually--demonstrated no undue alarm at the nationalization of copper and nitrate mines. While the American imperialists would prefer to safeguard "their" property and profits through a "stooge" government, or failing this alternative, through military and economic action, the latter road is not now available to them. They fear that, at this stage, direct action against Chile might result in toppling the imperialist applecart in all of Latin America. They have had to settle for "compensation" which will enable them to continue to receive "returns" on their investments, even if at a lesser rate.

The "popular front" installed on November 3rd was not the first in Chilean history. In 1938, the same Allende was appointed Minister of Health by millionaire Pres. Aguirre Cerda, whose Radical party headed a "popular front" coalition organized by the CP. The "popular front", broken up by the Stalin-Hitler pact, was revived in 1946, but not for long. Shortly after Radical party Pres. González Videla took office, he threw out his CP cabinet ministers. In 1948, he outlawed the CP and broke off relations with the USSR and Czechoslovakia, in a bid for financial aid and investment capital from the US. Only in 1958 did it again achieve legal status.

At that time, the CP formed a bloc with the Socialist Party, the Popu-

lar Action Front (FRAP), which ran Allende against and was narrowly defeated by Jorge Alessandri. In 1964, CD candidate Sen. Frei Montalva defeated Allende and FRAP.

In addition to Allende's SP and the CP, the UP coalition is composed of the Radical party and the Movement of United Popular Action (MAPU).

Allende, one of the founders of the SP is considered to be "left" of the Moscow-oriented CP. The latter claims to have a solid core of 50,000 voters (the equivalent of a million in US terms). Its spokesmen have recently expressed the hope that the somewhat moth-eaten Radical party would now regain some of its old strength. As do all reformists, the SP and CP hope to introduce a "socialist" content into capitalist forms, and consider that they are laying the foundations for an "eventual socialist regime".

The Radical party had its beginnings in the 1860's. In the early '30's, under the impetus of the great depression, its program, reflecting its class origins and composition as the professional spokesmen for the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, called for democratic government, industrialization and social reform.

MAPU was the result of a left split from the CD.

Allende and the UP have promised a "republic of the working class" on a program of "progressive nationalization" of basic mining activities in copper, iron ore and nitrates, the banking and large domestic industries, and a further extension of agrarian reforms. Allende has established relations with Cuba, and is expected to soon redeem his promises to recognize North Vietnam, North Korea, China and East Germany.

Army commander-in-chief René Schneider Chereau's assassination was believed to have been engineered by the US Central Intelligence Agency, working through right-wing terrorists, in the hope of provoking an army coup to prevent Allende from taking office.

To the right of the UP stands Jorge Alessandri's Nationalist party

which polled 39,000 votes behind the UP. It was formed by a fusion of Liberal and Conservative parties. The latter was the traditional party of the landed aristocracy. Its eclipse reflects the weakened position of this layer of the ruling class as a result of the impact of the world market and peasant struggles, e.g., land occupations and agrarian reform programs.

The liberal CD had its beginnings in the '30's as a Catholic-action movement, the National Falange, with sympathies toward Franco. The hope of a capitalist development for Chile caused it to evolve into a social reform movement. The agrarian reform law, passed under Frei, which was supposed to destroy latifundism, expropriated 3 million hectares. The CD promised to settle 100,000 peasants on this land, but accomplished far less. In reality, as did the Peruvian junta, the law recognized the accomplished fact, the occupation of the land by the peasants. Its "Chileanization" program called for the buying up of 51% of the foreign corporations. Its candidate in the September 1970 elections, Tomic Romero, finished a poor third. Although now an "opposition" party, it holds out the promise of "technical and administrative collaboration" to the UP.

The Chilean Trotskyists numbered in the thousands in the early '40's, but neither its Posadaist or Pabloist evolutions have been prominent under their own banners. But it seems, the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), a pro-Castro student-intellectual grouping, has "Trotskyists" operating within it. MIR advocates peasant and urban guerrilla warfare. Nevertheless, it decided to suspend these operations and support Allende and the UP in the September elections. It has since declared Allende's victory to be an "immense step in the people's struggle to take power", and has called upon the "state apparatus" now to be placed at the "service of the workers' interest".

Chile's population of 9 and a half million has a labor force of 2 and three quarter million. More than a

half million workers are organized into trade unions, the largest being the United Labor Federation (CUT). The Chilean working class has a long revolutionary tradition. The first trade union movement, the Labor Federation of Chile, organized in 1909, adhered to the Communist International in 1921. The CP originated from the Socialist Workers Party founded in 1912 by nitrate workers in Iquique. In 1931, an uprising of the workers, peasants and students forced the resignation of president-dictator Ibáñez. The "socialist" regime of Pres. Carlos Dávila which followed was ousted by the military after 100 days in office. In the late '30's, more than half of the Chilean industrial workers and an even higher proportion of miners were considered to be influenced by "Marxist ideology".

In 1967, the Chilean workers prevented the Frei regime from withholding a fourth of its wage increase to "offset" inflation and to provide capital for industrial expansion by calling a general strike. In 1969, Frei had to request that the US cancel Nelson Rockefeller's visit to Chile because of the "threat" of strikes and "street violence".

With liberalism in Chile now demonstrably bankrupt, the bourgeoisie does what it has always done elsewhere, it reaches for an alternative means to keep the masses under control, and calls upon "socialist" opportunists to take the responsibility for preserving the social order. It must, of course, pay for these services by reforms, whose cost is felt by some layers of the ruling class more than others, e.g., the large landowners. In other Latin American countries, where the ruling class is either unwilling or unable to pay the price, or the socialist-reformists are incapable of holding the masses in check, the alternative chosen is a police state headed by military Bonapartists.

However, the backward countries, and not only in Latin America but throughout the world, are not just repeating the experience of the advanced in this respect. As the business section of the NY Times

of Dec. 6th pointed out, nationalist rhetoric is "the one theme common to political groups from the extreme left to the extreme right". Thus, it finds that the anti-American imperialist statements coming from Chile "would have sounded familiar to a staunchly anti-Communist Brazilian technocrat or to a Columbian businessman intent on making money ...", and that in addition to "far left" urban guerrillas in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, there are "nationalists of the right" who are hostile to the US, and who desire to run an elitist and authoritarian "form of state socialism".

It is the growing inability to solve capitalism's contradictions in the under-developed sectors along with the recognition of imperialist responsibility for the retarded nature of the productive forces as compared to the advanced countries -- a recognition which the capitalist world market develops in increasing measure -- which increasingly propels the masses into struggle against imperialism, its comprador servitors, and capitalist relations in general.

In the new post-war conditions, and without a revolutionary working class leadership, the latest varieties of Bonapartism -- the Peruvian military junta, the Tórres regime, Perón even before, and also a Fidel Castro -- are able to emerge.

The socialist-reformists in Chile, as have their predecessors elsewhere, prepare the way for one or another type of Bonapartist. The Chilean centrists of the Posadaist and Pabloist schools are following a well-marked road of class betrayal in adapting to the overt socialist-reformists, the Allendes, instead of warning the masses against entertaining the slightest illusions in them, instead of preparing the workers and peasants for a socialist revolution to place the workers in alliance with the peasants in power.

In Bolivia and Peru, the centrists are making an error similar to that of the Polish CP, which, utterly confused by the Zinovievist and Stalinist Cominterns, supported the Pilsudsky coup in May 1926. The

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LABOR PARTY... (cont. from p. 117)

on the basis of interacting objective and subjective factors.

Of course, the labor party as an accomplished fact, as an already functioning arena, would have required the revolutionary Marxists in the US at that time to work within it. But the question at issue was whether the Marxists should advocate and help create this arena. Would this "intermediary" party have the possibility of becoming a "genuine mass party", or could it become a "hindrance to the progressive evolution of the working class"?

Today as in the '30's, the CP attempts to prevent the development of independent working class politics. In line with the "peaceful co-existence" policies of the Soviet Union, and true to its own reformist and counter-revolutionary nature, it seeks an "anti-monopoly" coalition with the liberal wing of the ruling class.

In making its turn from ultra-leftism to the "anti-fascist popular front", it played a major role in disorienting the working class, and in lining it up behind Roosevelt. Today, its influence is comparatively insignificant. It may conceivably forego its hoped-for bloc with the liberal Democrats for an "independent" labor party in the future on two possible bases: that the vicissitudes of Soviet-style "socialism in one country" requires it, as in 1939 with the Stalin-Hitler pact, or else and more likely, that an irresistible movement develop within the trade unions for a labor party, as the liberal Democratic political alternative becomes less palatable to the workers. In that event, the CP, through its National Coordinating Committee for Trade Union Action and Democracy, together with all other varieties of reformists will flock to its banners to ensure that it becomes and remains a labor party of the British type.

However, as an examination of the history of British politics will confirm, and especially in recent years, there is no way out for the

working class on the basis of bourgeois politics--and trade union politics remains bourgeois politics, as Lenin made clear in What Is To Be Done, in his polemic against Economism, against prostration before working class spontaneity, as a section of the Russian socialist movement was propounding.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which had continued to raise the slogan of a labor party since the discussions with Trotsky, for over a quarter of a century, has now abandoned it for Black and Chicano multi-class parties.

In her attack on Bernstein's opportunist "revisions" of Marxism in Reform and Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg noted that the first reformists are required to pay an inadvertent tribute to Marxism. While attempting to pull its revolutionary teeth, they must declare themselves to be its devoted disciples. In the same way, the SWP in discarding the essence of Trotskyism for opportunist adaptations to petty-bourgeois nationalism is forced to declare that the racial, ethnic and nationalist parties which it presently recommends, will, in some undisclosed manner help initiate a labor party, i.e., a class party which can unite all workers in the US.

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LATIN AMERICA... (cont. from p. 120)

Bonapartist Pilsudski was also hailed by the Polish Socialist Party and the "left" as a friend of the working class and of socialism.

Unfortunately, these "Trotskyists" have "forgotten" that Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution requires that a working class vanguard party be constructed. How much easier it is to help the Bonapartists, the fortuitous agents of the "objective process" into power over the workers and peasants as a step toward "socialism". But it was just this belief that state ownership "even of the Bismarckian sort" was socialism that Engels attacked in Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.

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TROTSKYISM TODAY (Part IV) - by Harry Turner

Spartacist and A.C.F.I. "Unity" Negotiations

Two organizations cannot occupy the same political space for long. Either their political correspondence increases and finds its organizational expression in unity, or else their politics diverge as objective circumstances act on and are acted upon by each organization in accordance with its own nature.

In the case of the Spartacist group and the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI), first one and then the other took place. Unity negotiations were followed by a final breach and a divergent development.

The Spartacist group's expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) several months prior to ACFI gave it a distinct advantage over the latter. As the only organization to the left of the SWP, as the putative bearer of the revolutionary banner of Marxism which the SWP had abandoned, it began to attract new forces toward it, primarily from the student milieu, together with a sympathetic periphery of ex-members and sympathizers of the SWP. It managed to recruit in this period several members of the American Socialist Organizing Committee (ASOC), the left-wing faction of the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), the youth organization of the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation (SP-SDF).

Shortly after the suspension of the members of the Reorganized Minority Tendency (RMT) from the SWP and its emergence as ACFI in the summer of 1964, the Spartacist group's James Robertson proposed that, as both had political agreement on essential questions, their two groups unite. Proceeding at a languid and desultory pace, initially through literary exchanges, and then through 8 meetings between their leading representatives, unity negotiations had reached a dead end by October 1965.

[An examination of "Marxist Bulletin No. 3--Part IV", published by the Spartacist League (SL), of the minutes of these sessions and its preface, should prove illuminating to an objective observer. The SL,

in attempting to use the minutes to justify its own behavior only succeeds in proving that both leaderships were more concerned with organizational manipulation and control of the fused organization, should it ever come into being, than with their responsibility for building a viable section of the Trotskyist movement in the US.]

As though taking part in a quadrille, first Spartacist comes forth aggressively as the wooer with ACFI in retreat. Then the reversal, ACFI becomes the ardent swain with Spartacist in the role of reluctant partner. At intermission, the two parties are found in a mutually uneasy and distasteful embrace. [The steps of the dance are related only to the narrowest organizational aspect of politics. The existing political differences which are raised, are not the real focus of the negotiations, but are only advanced as a defensive reflex, and largely to achieve leverage on the "important" question--who will swallow whom.]

As a result of the initial successes of the Spartacist group, Robertson was convinced that his organization, at that time, perhaps, four times as large as ACFI, could successfully digest the latter. Wohlforth, fearful that ACFI might well be the eaten and not the eater, at first wants only an exhaustive literary discussion on all outstanding political and organizational questions. Only later does he agree to meetings of the leaderships. But he then proceeds to demand immediate organizational collaboration and fraternization at all levels before his organization will decide whether or not unification is desirable.

Robertson, fearing that Wohlforth and ACFI might lead some of his new

flock astray, counters by insisting that Wohlforth first make a commitment that unity is "possible or principled". Having received it at the 5th session, he then demands that ACFI accept the onus for the split in 1962, as the central question, without which, unity will not take place. Robertson has, evidently decided by then that the kind of unity which he had in mind was not possible, that ACFI and its talent, and especially Wohlforth's literary ability would not be at the disposal of an organization which he, Robertson would dominate.

The character of the leaders of organizations, can play, as Marx has pointed out, an important role in accelerating or delaying developments. This subjective factor, will and should have a certain weight in negotiations between organizations. But revolutionary Marxists, scientific socialists, begin not from subjective considerations, but from the objective tasks with which the movement is faced, and to which the subjective factors are, in the final analysis subordinate. For serious Marxists, the vital considerations are the perspective with which the organization proposes to function, and the program which it elaborates, the strategy and tactics it develops in relation to both the objective situation and the prevailing level of working class consciousness.

It was at this point that the International Committee of the Fourth International (IC) intervened to remind both groups of the vital importance that the construction of a revolutionary vanguard party in the US would have for the international revolutionary struggle. As both Spartacist and ACFI had expressed agreement with its international perspectives and program, the IC called upon both groups to work toward agreement on American perspectives as the basis for unity.

Shortly thereafter, at a meeting in Montreal, the delegations from the Spartacist group and ACFI, at first independently and then jointly, met with Gerry Healy, the national secretary of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) and secretary

of the IC, and agreed to work for a consummation of the unity after the London Conference of the IC in April 1966, and to prepare an American perspectives document for presentation at the conference.

But not without a struggle. Robertson wanted a written guarantee that the IC would not again "interfere" in the "internal" affairs of the American section, as in 1962, and was ready to break off negotiations unless he received it.

Gerry Healy, of course, understood that Robertson, in the name of democratic centralism was demanding, in effect, a federative relationship with the international movement, of the type that the SWP had achieved in the post-war period, in which each national movement conducted its own "business" without having to account for its activities to the international--in essence, a reversion to the national practices of the Second International. Healy was, quite properly, opposed to any such understanding.

A national section of the international movement must, of course, develop leadership with the capacity to determine correct strategy and tactics, not apart from the international movement, but as an integral and essential part of it. These sections bear the direct responsibility for constructing a working class vanguard party which, as a result of its deep roots and intimate knowledge of the concrete conditions of struggle, can initiate and respond correctly to them. Obviously, for an international movement of this kind, there can be no question of giving and taking "orders".

At the same time, the international party of the world proletariat must operate on the principle of democratic centralism. It has, not only the right but the duty to intervene, to criticize the work of the national sections, to point out opportunistic and/or sectarian errors in the work, and to demand that their politics be congruent with those of the international movement. The weaknesses of any of its parts is, of course, a weakness of the

international as a whole.] The successes of any of its sections strengthens all sections. The revolutionary break-through, a socialist revolution, especially in one of the advanced countries, would shortly place the socialist revolution on the agenda in all capitalist countries, and the political revolution as well in the degenerate and deformed workers' states.

Unknown to Healy and ACFI, Robertson's intransigence had divided the Spartacist delegation. While all its delegates, at that time, accepted Robertson's petty-bourgeois nationalist position that Healy's intervention in 1962 violated their national rights, two of them, Geoffrey White and this writer, had insisted that the unity of revolutionary Marxists on the basis of the existing fundamental political agreement into a nucleus of a Leninist vanguard party was a far more important question than formal guarantees of "independence". [However, this division never came to a head because Healy proposed a formulation with which all could agree, that, both groups based themselves on the "decisions of the first four Congresses of the Communist International", on the work of the "Founding Conference of the Fourth International", and on the IC international perspectives document; and that, on this basis, "tactical disagreements on work" in the US "would not be an obstacle to unity".] The IC reserved the "right to make its political position... known to the delegates at the Unification Conference..." Discussion on "all past differences" was to be suspended until after unity had been consummated, when it would be continued in literary form.

The owl of Minerva flies at dusk. Seen in retrospect, it was, obviously, a mistake not to have fought out the question of 1962 at Montreal, together with the issue of a working class orientation for the united organization as against the Robertson propagandist approach.

While Robertson would, probably, have convinced the majority of his delegation to break off negotiations,

a fissure would, in all likelihood, have been opened in his ranks. His real petty-bourgeois nature would have been revealed to, at least, a section of his membership, and the basis would have been prepared for a healthier unity with some of the Spartacist group later on.

[It was only much later, after Robertson had called a halt to the turn toward the trade unions and toward the construction of a network of rank and file caucuses on a program to unite the racially divided workers in struggle against special oppression, that this writer began to understand the real meaning of his emphasis on the role of the SL as a propaganda group.]

The propaganda group label was not merely a sober recognition of the "realities", but the expression of a pragmatic outlook, which ignored the growing crisis of American and world capitalism. [Robertson was without a cohesive perspective for the building of the revolutionary party, and was proposing a type and level of activity which seemed to him "sensible" and also, of course, comfortable, i.e., work to which he was suited, work with the petty-bourgeois strata.]

Shortly before the London Conference, Wohlforth attacked the "rough" draft which Robertson had presented at the last moment to a joint meeting of Spartacist and ACFI, on the floor and later in writing, for not providing "the basis for a proper perspective for the fused movement", for being without a "perspective on the development of the class struggle" in the US, nor of posing "any strategic orientation around which the fused movement could be built". [Wohlforth was then roundly attacked for attempting to prevent unity. He had, however, only spoken the truth.]

At the London Conference, Robertson was again to demonstrate that his primary concern was not the construction of a section of the party of the international socialist revolution, but rather, in building a petty-bourgeois personality cult,

(to be continued)

IN DEFENCE OF TROTSKYISM

To the YSA National Convention Delegates:

You, who have joined the Young Socialist Alliance, have dedicated yourselves to the cause of socialism. You believe that your organization and its parent body, the Socialist Workers Party, is committed to the construction of a Leninist and Trotskyist working class vanguard party. You wish to be armed politically and theoretically in order to play a fitting role in the fight against capitalist and imperialist oppression.

And yet, as you read the works of the great Marxists, do you not at times, become uneasy at the divergence between theory and practice? Your mentors in the YSA will, of course, assure you that its present line is only the "creative application" of Marxist theory to the "new" reality--and see how profitable it all is! Of course! So say all opportunists disguised as "Marxists".

History has known all kinds of transformations, said Lenin. The Second International of Engels became, under Kautsky, the strongest support for European and world capitalism. The Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky was also transformed into its opposite. From an organization dedicated to the liberation of humanity from class oppression, it became, under Stalin and the Soviet parasitic caste, the greatest single barrier to the world socialist revolution.

And the party of Trotsky? Compare the present politics of the YSA-SWP to that of Trotsky's, or even of the YSA-SWP before 1961.

Take the anti-war movement, for example. For the revolutionary communists, the fight against war is a class question. The Trotskyists, at the time of the second World War and the Korean war, understood that the struggle against war is inseparable from the preparation of the working class for the social revolution. Today, the YSA-SWP seeks bigger and better class-less "single issue" marches and demonstrations, in close "cooperation" with liberals and Stalinists, to "compel" the ruling class to "end the war in Vietnam". As if pacifist sloganeering has ever forced a ruling class to end a war!

As for the working class, the SWP long ago abandoned serious attempts to establish roots within it, and limits its role to that of observer and commentator from afar. It concentrates its attention on and active intervention in petty-bourgeois arenas, and primarily on the students, while repeating ritualistic incantations about the "working class".

Why the transformation? After Trotsky's death, the leaders of the Fourth International proved unable to understand and withstand the difficult objective conditions of the post-war period, in which the Stalinist system expanded into Eastern Europe and China, accompanied by the growth of world capitalist economy.

The SWP seemed able to resist Pablo's revisionist conceptions--in which Stalinism was seen as compelled to become revolutionary despite itself, in which the "epi-center of the world revolution" had shifted to the "Third World"--until the Cuban revolution. It then also found, along with its international co-thinkers in the United Secretariat, that the working class in both the advanced and under-developed countries was, in effect, bribed and conservatized, and, in the "new" conditions, no longer fit to carry out its historic mission, as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky had believed. Instead, substitutes for the working class

and its revolutionary party were sought and found in the students, the peasants and in "revolutionary" nationalism.

The SWP now gives its uncritical support to every petty-bourgeois panacea from Black nationalism to "sisterhood is powerful", in addition to supporting Castro's Bonapartist rule over the Cuban working class. It has discarded the labor party slogan, in fact, while fraudulently representing the class-less Black and Chicano parties which it advocates now, as its forerunners. The recent series in the "Militant" on the Black Panthers even attacks them for "sectarianism" for departing from "revolutionary" Black nationalism toward a class conception, the unity of Black and white workers for the socialist revolution! Sections of the United Secretariat--in the name of Trotskyism, no less--ignore the working class for peasant and urban guerrilla warfare.

But the "new" reality, which the SWP and United Secretariat observed through empirical spectacles, is also being transformed. The post-war economic expansion is changing into a world capitalist crisis, linked integrally to the growing crisis of Stalinism. The workers in the advanced, the backward and Soviet-bloc countries are all in revolutionary motion. But the party of Lenin and Trotsky must be rebuilt, if the new revolutionary opportunities which are now developing are not to be again transformed into defeats. The youth, student and worker, can play a vital role in this process.

We in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER call for the building of an American section of the international Leninist and Trotskyist working class vanguard party on a program to unite the racially divided working class in struggle against all forms of special oppression, in its own immediate and fundamental interests and for the socialist revolution.

We believe this perspective to be a correct understanding of Trotsky's contributions on the Negro question, not the distortions of the SWP, which tries to cover up its opportunism by converting Trotsky into a Black nationalist, nor that of other so-called Trotskyists, who have altogether discarded Trotsky's position on this question.

We call for the organization of rank and file or left-wing caucuses in the trade unions with this perspective incorporated into a comprehensive program of transitional demands. We believe that a network of such caucuses can develop into a leadership of the organized working class, can become at a revolutionary moment, workers' councils, "Soviets", organs of "dual power" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

We ask you to compare the program of Trotsky which our newsletter upholds and advances, with the current YSA-SWP revisionist and anti-working class program.

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