

VANGUARD newsletter

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Editors—Harry Turner, David Fender, Eddi Tullio

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Terrorism and Communism



The Struggle in the Schools

A United Front for Defense

The Spartacist School of Slander and Character Assassination

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LOCAL DIRECTORY

Berkeley-Oakland: PO Box 5261,
Oakland, Calif. 94605

New York: PO Box 67, Peck Slip
Station, New York, NY 10038

Boston: David Jones
617-262-3820

St. Louis: PO Box 22134
St. Louis, Mo. 63116

The sixth installment of our series, "Fundamentals of Capitalist Crises--'Neo-Capitalist' Theory and the Working Class," will appear in our November issue.

TERRORISM AND COMMUNISM by Henry A. Platsky

In the epoch of imperialist decay--the absence of revolutionary leadership and its effect upon class and national struggles cannot be more clearly seen than in the Middle East. The working class in both the Arab nations and Israel have responded, in the absence of such leadership, to the mixture of nationalist demagogy and "socialist" rhetoric emitting from their respective ruling classes. It is of little surprise then that petty-bourgeois radicals in the Arab countries have turned to guerrillism and terrorism in frustration.

A stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie has reacted with revulsion to the symptoms of advanced capitalist decay. These people--coming from the intelligensia for the most part--lack a scientific world view and respond empirically to each developing stage of capitalist crisis. Having developed an overestimation of the powers of their own intellectual abilities, they tend to discount the consciousness of the oppressed masses--especially of workers, because they have not yet responded in a revolutionary manner to the crimes of the ruling class against their own and other oppressed peoples. This radicalized layer has then veered from outbursts of petty-bourgeois frustration and adventurism to outright reformism

and reliance on enlightened sections of the bourgeoisie, in a pattern that will be repeated endlessly until a working class vanguard party can intervene in history.

The crazy-quilt politics that emerge from this stratum would be laughable were it not for their tragic results. The actions of the Japanese "Red Army" and the Black September group directed against innocent Jews, which have also resulted in the deaths of others, have reaffirmed the need of Marxists to take a clear position on terrorism and its causes so as to try to eliminate any and all confusion in the minds of advanced workers and in the circles of would-be revolutionists. The history of the Middle East itself, particularly the his-

very since the second World War lent itself to this confusion.

The state of Israel was born out of the US-British struggle for imperialist hegemony in the economically and militarily important area of the Middle East. The US, emerging as the most powerful imperialist force after the war, utilized the Jewish refugees of the fascist concentration camps, who were then languishing in detention camps throughout southern Europe, as diplomatic pawns in an effort to mobilize public opinion to support the creation of a "Jewish Homeland" in the Middle East. Through direct US government gifts and loans and the contributions of agencies such as the United Jewish Appeal which are controlled by US Jewish businessmen or politicians, the Israeli state became reliant upon US aid and thus a valuable ally both diplomatically and militarily. The British, who were now allied with the reactionary Arab potentates, had now retracted their previous "sympathy" for a Jewish homeland, because of their fear of a nationalist upsurge in British dominated territories. But the US and Zionist leaders, with the help of the Soviet Union, were able to outmaneuver the British within the UN and obtain a mandate for the partition of the British territory of Trans-Jordan into a Jewish and Arab state.

In order to solidify Zionist rule in the newly-created state, the Zionists embarked on a calculated drive of intimidation and repression against the large Arab minority in the area. The massacre of hundreds of unarmed people in the Arab village of Deir Yassin in 1948 by the ultra-Zionist Irgun forces (with silent approval from the more moderate Zionist forces) and other such acts resulted in the driving of well over half-million Palestinians from their homes. The Israeli government has to this day refused to take historic responsibility for this--creating a focal point for the national antagonism of the Palestinian Arabs.

Since that time, Israel has play-

ed the role of a loyal constituent of the imperialist camp. Israel's direct military participation with France and Britain in the invasion of Egypt during the Suez crisis of 1956, its policies of diplomatic support to the imperialist forces in Korea, Vietnam, Algeria, the Congo, et. al., have earned it the rightful hatred of revolutionists and oppressed peoples throughout the world.

In the Middle East, Israeli policy has been one of brutal, blatant expansionism and the intimidation and oppression of the Arab masses. In 1948, Israel was able to occupy the Negev Desert and other areas as a result of the war between it and the Arab states upon its partition as a separate state. Israel grabbed the Sinai Peninsula in 1956 and retreated only after a direct threat of intervention by the Soviet Union (a useful diversion from its own activities in Hungary at that time) and diplomatic urgings by the US. But after the 1967 war, Israel retook the Sinai Peninsula, along with the west bank of the Jordan River and parts of Syria. Arab people living within Israel and the occupied territories have been accorded the treatment of a conquered people.

Arab Bonapartist leaders have used the inflamed national antagonism of the masses against the Israeli state to prop up their own oppressive regimes. The Israeli bourgeoisie has been able to use the national antagonism of the Arab masses and the machinations of the Arab ruling cliques to justify to Jewish workers a case of defense against extermination. The passivity and fears of Jewish workers in turn causes confusion among the petty-bourgeois radicals both inside and outside the Middle East, who see the Israeli working class as hopelessly reactionary, pro-Zionist, etc. These circles look toward the "wretched of the earth," the peasants, to provide the mass base for a guerrilla war against Israel. The adventurist tactics of these radicals are meant to inspire the Arab peasants in

much the same way that the Narodniks hoped to inspire the Russian peasants before the October Revolution.

The working class tendencies because of their own ideological confusion and outright betrayals have been unable to establish any long lasting base among Arab and Jewish workers and to counter the influence of the petty-bourgeois adventurists. The parties of the Second International, having long since dropped any pretense of support to national liberation struggles in favor of outright support to the policies of the imperialist masters (and carrying out these policies when in office with as much finesse as the imperialist politicians themselves) have never been able to win even a small section of the Arab masses to their banner. The Stalinist Third International forfeited most Arab sympathy after it dropped its support for national struggles against the "democratic" imperialists in favor of an alliance with them during the second World War. Stalin's uncritical support for the creation of the state of Israel helped to further isolate the Stalinist parties from the

masses. The policies of uncritical blocs with the national bourgeoisie lost the remaining cadre of the Stalinized "Communist" parties to the prisons and firing squads of Iraqi, Egyptian and other military cliques. The Stalinist party of Israel is now neatly divided into pro-Zionist and pro-Moscow wings, neither of which have or deserve any serious consideration from Jewish workers. The small Fourth International had been unable to take advantage of the betrayals of the other tendencies to build its own ranks among the Arab and Jewish workers. Whatever work was done has been lost due to Pabloite destruction of the Fourth International shortly after the partition of Palestine. The groupings of the United Secretariat and the International Committee have all adapted to either Arab nationalism or guerrillism. It is no surprise that the petty-bourgeois guerrillas, the Arab national-bourgeois leaders, and the Zionist-"socialist" demagogues have been able to divide and confuse the workers of both the Arab and Jewish peoples.

(to be continued)

THE STRUGGLE IN THE SCHOOLS by Susan Viani

On September 8, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) president, Albert Shanker, triumphantly announced to 60,000 teachers that, in this three year contract, the union, "didn't win its demands for improved working conditions, but it didn't lose anything."

So another contract was ratified that contained minimal wage gains, no curriculum advances and more "security" in terms of 320 "student service officers" and 1,200 "safety aids", both posed as a superficial answer to the real question of "security". Clearly, this contract does not meet the economic or the educational needs of either teachers or students.

Shankers' triumphant rejoicing of a contract that "didn't lose anything" is not an isolated question. Only three days before, the Detroit Federation of Teachers accepted a one year contract with neither pay increases nor educational advances. This contract even went so far as

to include a provision that, if the Detroit Board of Education did receive money in the middle of the year, the Detroit Federation of Teachers would not demand extra pay. The effect of these sell-out contracts will be felt in all unions especially in the preparation of similar capitulations.

Shanker, by accepting the pittance given to him by the ruling class through the Board of Education now engages in his poor public relations campaign to prove that he has achieved a "satisfactory" settlement. In this period of capitalist decline he demonstrates that labor leaders of this type are incapable of defending workers'

gains much less advancing workers' interests.

Yet these attributes of labor "leaders" are not confined to the UFT or Shanker. In defense of their privileges the labor bureaucrats of the AFL-CIO including UFT leaders, cooperate with the anti-labor policies of the Democratic and Republican Parties of the ruling class. All of these labor misleaders have refused to launch a serious fight against Nixon's Pay Board in efforts to satisfy their "friends" in the ruling class, while at the same time "quieting" the rank-and-file with theatrical displays of pseudo-militancy. Shanker's posturing and exploitation of the problem of violence in the schools helps to cover up the bankruptcy of capitalism and its inability to provide real answers to real questions.

The fundamental cause of this mounting violence, whose victims are primarily workers and the poor, is the increasing social decay felt first and foremost in the ghetto neighborhoods, in the high rate of unemployment, in the inability of youth to find jobs, in inadequate housing, the degradation of the welfare system, in the growing anger and frustration which is also manifested in crime and addiction. These are real problems which cannot be hidden or treated with band-aid panaceas.

Mr. Shanker is unable to propose approaches dealing with these problems and their logical outcome. Are we supposed to believe that if enough "safety aids" are hired then the violence will disappear? By advancing the demand for "law and order" to achieve "security" in the schools, Shanker opens the way for violence and repression. Yet the Black and Puerto Rican people increasingly understand their situation as a manifestation of the systematic violence by capitalism in the special oppression of minority groups.

Safety in and around schools can only be achieved to the degree that teacher-workers, parent-workers and the students as future workers can

attain workers' control of the schools, the community, and of society. The formation of teacher-parent-student self-defense squads under the leadership of the teachers' union and the unions to which parents belong, in coordination with student organizations, can provide greater security for teachers, parents and students who are all victims of the increased violence and crime bred by the deteriorating society.

And logically, only within the struggle for unity for the interests of all workers will the quality of education be raised for both students and teachers. However, the issue of improving the content of education, so important to both students and teachers seems to have been quickly abandoned. The majority of students are being "trained"--especially those belonging to minority groupings and the more poorly paid working class sectors--for either the "army of the unemployed" or for becoming semi-skilled low paid workers.

As do workers in general, the teacher-workers and parent-workers have to unite to defend their class interests against the attack by the ruling class on the working class. The burden of the developing world crisis is to be placed on the shoulders of US workers by destroying their wage and living standards in order to compete with US imperialism's international rivals and to maintain the volume and rate of its profits. This is what Nixon's pay-freeze and Pay Board are all about! This is why the program of US big business demands that the education of the students and the conditions of the educators continue to deteriorate further and faster.

It is in defense of the interests of the working class and in preparation for its counter-offensive against the ruling class that VANGUARD NEWSLETTER in cooperation with Socialist Forum has helped organize the COMMITTEE FOR RANK AND FILE CAUCUSES (CRFC). As a principled united front agreement, CRFC's two point program calls for: a

rank-and-file caucus in the UFT linked to rank-and-file caucuses in other unions in a regional and national network committed to lead a fight to stop government repression of the unions and to drive out union bureaucrats that concede to these crack-downs; and a call for the building of an independent workers' party based on the rank-and-file.

CRFC is a transitional organization which unites the rank-and-file struggles in defense of the class interest of the workers. The revolutionary Marxists can, in working in the CRFC fight to raise the consciousness of the workers to class, i.e. socialist consciousness. This is achieved not by presenting abstract or mechanical approaches but in the struggle for the program of transitional demands.

In contrast to CRFC's perspective for rank-and-file struggle within the existing organizations of the working class and its call for the rank-and-file leadership of the organized, unorganized, unemployed and all the oppressed is the program of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). This program calls for workers not to struggle within their own organizations against the bureaucrats but rather demands that they go outside the unions to a "new", "pure", "class-for-itself" organization together with the "community" and students. Thus, the NCLC in reality only preserves itself as an elitist formation

A United Front For Defense - Introduction by Les Brown

Stalinism, attempting to stifle revolutionary opposition to its disorientation of the international working class, through its shifts from right opportunism through ultra-leftism to an openly reformist program, has resorted to the most vicious of hooligan tactics possible culminating in the murder of Trotsky, Trotskyists, and in the liquidation of the entire generation of Bolsheviks. The left struggles in the US have also witnessed numerous examples of hooliganism in the past.

"pontificating" to the workers from the outside.

Despite the origins of Lyn Marcus in the Trotskyist movement, he has never understood Cde. Trotsky's words in Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay that:

"...in spite of the progressive degeneration of trade unions and their growing together with the imperialist state, the work within the trade unions not only does not lose any of its importance but remains as before and becomes in a certain sense even more important work than ever for every revolutionary party. The matter at issue is essentially the struggle for influence over the working class. Every organization, every party, every faction which permits itself an ultimatic position in relation to the trade unions, i.e., in essence turns its back upon the working class, merely because of displeasure with its organization, every such organization is destined to perish. And it must be said it deserves to perish."

Shanker and other trade union bureaucrats prove themselves incapable of defending the workers' basic interests. This defense can only be achieved by forging the unity and solidarity of the working class in struggle against the Shankers and other "labor lieutenants" of the ruling class.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER is presently in a united front together with Socialist Forum (SF) and the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) for defense against strong-arm tactics within the radical movement whether directed by the Communist Party (CP) or any other "socialist" formation.

On September 27th, more than 50 participants demonstrated against left hooliganism in front of the Marc Ballroom, in New York City, at a meeting called by the CP. The Spartacist League, the Workers

League, and the International Socialists, who had all been invited to participate were noticeably absent.

[We in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER will unite with all organizations in the radical movement in order to stop any form of vigilantism that is used to stifle open discussion and debate within it. Attacks against socialist organizations by opponent tendencies only further expose the bankruptcy of their political programs and their inability to deal with these opponents on theoretical and political grounds. This incapacity was demonstrated by the Workers League at a demonstration which it had called in its attack on the supporters of

Once again the socialist movement is witnessing incidents of Stalinist hooliganism and thuggery exercised by the Communist Party against several of its political opponents.

These attacks have also been witnessed from other quarters of the socialist movement. Last March, in a burlesque imitation of Stalinist gangsterism, Workers League members assaulted leafletters from Vanguard Newsletter and Socialist Forum at a Workers League unemployment demonstration.

The revival of "Moscow Trial" type slanders is being used to incite and "justify" these hooligan assaults against socialist opponents of the Communist Party. These hooligan attacks are meant to stop public debate among differing socialist tendencies.

The recent series of hooligan attacks by the Communist Party have been directed against the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Starting with George Morris' slanderous Daily World column of Oct. 19, 1971, the Communist Party has resurrected against the Labor Committees those forms of hooliganism so commonplace to Communist Party practice in the 1930's and '40's against the Trotskyist movement and other socialist currents.

While leafletting in front of the CP's Center for Marxist Education recently, Labor Committee member Don Phau was attacked by CP thugs, one

the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses (CRFC) and members of Socialist Forum and VANGUARD NEWSLETTER and their exclusion from the demonstration for distributing a leaflet supporting the demonstration.

[We in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER want to make clear that while fully denouncing the attacks of the CP, etc. If the same organizations were themselves threatened with attack we would extend the same support to them.

[Reprinted below is the united front agreement by National Caucus of Labor Committees, Socialist Forum and VANGUARD NEWSLETTER printed in the September 5-11, 1972 issue of "New Solidarity."]

of whom was tentatively identified as New York State chairman Rasheed Storey. Phau was later treated in the hospital for a broken nose.

At the CP's Trade Unionist for Action and Democracy (TUAD) conference in Chicago on July 1-2, Labor Committee members were beaten and forcibly expelled by gangs of CP goons.

To prepare the atmosphere in their organization for these acts of thuggery, the Communist Party has employed against the Labor Committees and other socialist opponents the most vicious types of slander--"CIA agents", "government disrupters"--used to create hysteria in their own organization against Labor Committees and eventually other socialist opponents. These are charges the CP continually throws out even after they have been publically discredited by an independent commission of inquiry! Now as then, the CP is using similar methods against another of its opponents as it has against the Labor Committees. The recent slanders by the Communist Party that the single issue anti-war movement is "racist" is intended to have the same effect against the Socialist Workers Party as had the Oct. 19

and subsequent "CIA" charges against the Labor Committees. That is, by inciting their membership against the "racist" SWP, the Communist Party is preparing the basis for future hooligan attacks against that organization.

The undersigned socialist organizations denounce the recent escalation of Stalinist thuggery and associated forms of political hooliganism within the socialist movement. We affirm our right to free dissemination of periodicals, pamphlets and leaflets in the fashion customary within the socialist movement. We will jointly put our organizations on the necessary footing for self-defense of our meetings and our right to distribute literature. We also call upon other workers' and socialist organizations to join in our united front for defense against hooliganism with the clear understanding that all participating organizations are free to publicly discuss

and criticize the program and practice of the other organizations.

The current debate in the socialist movement must be furthered in an atmosphere of freedom to debate and organize opposing points of view. This common statement of defense is aimed at those organizations who would resolve those debates by other means.

The only effective way our right to organize can be defended is when the defense of those rights is guaranteed by socialist and workers' organizations united in their aversion to Stalinist hooliganism, rather than through dependence on any section of the capitalist state---the police, courts, etc.---for our rights within the movement.

National Caucus of Labor Committees
Socialist Forum
Vanguard Newsletter

RESIGNATION FROM INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Dear Comrades,

September 25, 1972

In late June of 1972, the Committee for a Workers Government (CWG) formally dissolved into the International Socialists (IS). The justification for this move was the implementation of what Trotskyists refer to as the "French turn." As will be shown, this "turn" to the IS was unprincipled and opportunistic.

The degeneration of the CWG to the present state of Shactmanite reconciliation first surfaced in the discussion that that group, then the Communist Tendency (CT), had with VANGUARD NEWSLETTER in September of 1971. Until these discussions, the CT maintained that its politics were so similar to those of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER that fusion was only a matter of formality. After these discussions the CT took concrete steps towards fusion. It was not until much later that certain members of the CT expressed reservations concerning fusion, not because of political differences which had developed, but rather in contention that VANGUARD NEWSLETTER did not practice what it preached. The real reason, however, was not

political but personal--a personal bloc between Robins of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER (with whom the CT did have political differences on the question of Israel, protective tariffs and the expanding productivity of capitalism) and a Brigham-Stacey bloc which had been formed against Cde. David Fender, then a member of the CT. The struggle that ensued witnessed the most vile slanders and character assassination campaigns by the CT against the comrades of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER. This practice, evidence of the petty-bourgeois malady surfacing in the CT, became a hallmark of the group which was to win them the honor of becoming panderers of the left with their publication of "Red Flag."

The article by Brigham in the

first and only issue of "Red Flag" was a compilation of political dishonesties and an insult to the intelligence of anybody aware of the facts. The origin of the CT left opposition in the SWP did not begin with a political battle on the questions of defence, women's liberation or the anti-war movement. Discussions took place in the YSA --neither Brigham nor Stacey were in the SWP at the time--and they were not carried out in any serious political manner, although from time to time there was the thin cover of politics. Reality was never a hindrance to the CWG.

After the publication of "Red Flag", the CWG, prompted by the subjective reports of Robins in New York, decided that IS was the place to be. It was assured by Robins that IS had made a turn to the proletariat and was recruiting workers, consequently, the tactics of the "French turn" as formulated by Trotsky, would be applicable for the recruitment of workers to a Trotskyist program.

However, there is a basic defect in this analogy with 1936. What are the conditions that faced Trotsky which justified the tactic of turning to the parties of the Second International? Firstly, capitalism was in extreme crisis, a crisis so extreme that the bourgeoisie was turning to fascism. The bankrupt Third International dominated by Stalin had made a 180 degree turn from ultra-leftism to opportunism and sought to "fight" fascism by supporting "progressive" elements in the bourgeoisie. The Social Democratic parties were enjoying a large influx of workers who were being recruited to left-wings within these parties. Therefore, the Trotskyist parties and groupings, which were not more than propaganda groups, decided to enter these parties in order to recruit these newly radicalized workers to Trotskyism and the "Transitional Program."

Needless to say, this is not the case in the present-day IS. By and large, the class composition of IS is petty-bourgeois: a likely amalgam of professional Shachtmanites,

student radicals on a workerist kick and New Lefters (in the words of Stacey, "there are only a handful of real workers in IS).

Another justification for entry into IS was the hypothesis that IS was a centrist grouping "moving left." "Moving left" signified nothing more than the geographical gravitation of IS to the proletariat. Again we must look beyond the impression of a leftward movement and discuss the politics involved in this turn. This is what the CWG still refuses to do.

According to Cde. Robins, a worker in the US today, "is not a worker;" he is not class conscious; he is deeply infected with a petty-bourgeois mentality. This being correct, it would then seem that the duty of every revolutionary is to seek to instill a class consciousness in this worker via revolutionary politics. The IS responds to this problem by unleashing the pernicious politics, the ideology and methodology of Shachtmanite empiricism in the tradition of the petty-bourgeois struggle against Trotskyism. As will be shown these politics are expressed not only in the characterization of the workers' states, but also, due to its method, falters on the problem of bringing revolutionary politics to the class, and thereby only helps bind the proletariat more tightly in the chains of capitalist exploitation. This is the "left turn" the CWG praises.

The class nature of the Soviet Union is not a question which is consigned to history books, but is actively bound up with the liberation of the proletariat. When the pages of "Workers Power" characterizes the Nixon-Peking-Moscow conferences as imperialist gatherings, when the Vietnamese and world Stalinists are once again proceeding to betray another revolution, and the IS characterizes the struggle between the workers' states and the US as an inter-imperialist conflict, then indeed the Russian question is very real and relevant. As Trotsky put it in In Defense of Marxism:

"To employ the term imperialism for

the foreign policy of the Kremlin --without elucidating exactly what this signifies--means simply to identify the policy of the Bonapartist bureaucracy with the policy of monopolistic capitalism on the basis that both one and the other utilize military force for expansion. Such an identification, capable of only sowing confusion, is more proper to petty-bourgeois democrats than to Marxists."

This policy of the IS is not the policy of Trotskyism, but rather of the petty-bourgeois reaction to Trotskyism, Shachtmanism. Nevertheless, the self-ordained Trotskyists of the CWG persist in terming their unholy alliance as a "Trotskyist regroupment."

It was by no accident that Trotsky drew the analogy:

"In the last analysis, a workers' state is a trade union that has conquered power. The difference in attitude in these two cases is explainable by the simple fact that the trade unions have a long history and we have been accustomed to consider them realities, and not just categories in our program."

If we examine the IS posture towards the trade unions we find the same ideology, the same methodology, at work--Shachtmanism.

As was stated above, the CWG concluded that the IS is a Trotskyist organization, but this is hardly the case. Trotskyism is revolutionary Marxism in the "epoch of imperialist decay." The "Transitional Program" was developed on the basis of this analysis of capitalism to solve the crisis of revolutionary leadership. If IS were a Trotskyist organization turning to the proletariat, it would propose bringing the "Transitional Program" to the proletariat. However, IS rejects the program of transitional demands. In the draft of the "Tasks and Perspective" adopted at the last IS national convention, Ron Taber stated:

"We must continue to work...on the development of a transitional pro-

gram. Since the point of departure for such a program must be a view of the state of capitalism as a world system...."

Apparently the "Transitional Program" of Trotsky is inadequate and does not give an analysis of capitalism as a world system, i.e., it does not deal with the "capitalist" workers' states. More correctly, the document should have read: "... the point of departure for such a program must be the bureaucratic collectivist viewpoint."

This opposition to Trotskyism is woven throughout the document which is at a total loss to explain the "reformist mentality" of the working class, let alone derive a perspective which would deal with this malady. Rather, the document adapts to backwardness and prefers to instill "self-consciousness" in the class. There is no perspective, strategy or tactics designed to win the class to revolutionary socialism--as is to be expected from a petty-bourgeois radical formation which has discarded transitional demands in favor of "broad macro-demands embodying a pro-working class solution."

On the question of the labor party, its contradictions, its importance to the class, and the role revolutionaries must play in it, the IS glibly abstracts the party from its social foundations. In a manner quite appropriate to arm-chair adventurers, Taber, gazing into his crystal ball, attempts to predict the forms the party may take:

"More likely than not it (the labor party) will be a hybrid formation, involving various forms of rank-and-file organizations, militant locals, a leftish International or two, plus a fair share of independent worker-socialists and socialist intellectuals."

Why fight in the class for a labor party, when it is so much easier to sit in one's soft chair and prophesize. But this is again, the method of IS, the same IS with which the CWG has fallen in love.

It is common knowledge among Trotskyists that the bourgeoisie endeavors to tie the unions to it by bribing the trade union bureaucracy. Thus the trade unions also have their reactionary aspect. However, the proletariat is by no means blind to this phenomenon, and consequently can be mobilized around a revolutionary program and an alternative leadership as this contradiction is sharpened under conditions of capitalist crisis. But what work does IS conjure up for the trade unions? "Organization in the class at the lowest possible level," that is recruitment at the lowest common denominator. Although the form for this orientation is the rank-and-file caucuses, the content is limited to "democratic struggles." Struggles to replace the bureaucracy? Why bother when it is less difficult to pressure local leaders (sic bureaucrats) or the "young group of leaders." So much for struggle.

The IS concept of rank-and-file caucuses, pragmatic to the core, is not that of a network of trade union organizations struggling to win the workers to the program of transitional demands. No, IS rejects this completely, and calls this type of caucus sectarian. The IS bastardization of rank-and-file caucuses is

a low level network of "leftish" trade union organizations which combat the "unself-consciousness" of the "militant labor stratum." Of course this caucus can only be spontaneously formed around apolitical shop floor issues. To build rank-and-file caucuses, IS will emerge its student-workerists in these "on-the-floor-struggles." This is nothing more than an industrial version of what PL (who recently discovered state capitalism) attempted to do on the campus with its worker-student alliance.

These are the politics of International Socialists, the very same politics with which the CWG justifies its entry. Be it in the guise of "Trotskyist regroupment" or the "French turn," the actions of the CWG cannot be considered anything but a cowardly abandonment of Trotskyism commencing with the refusal to principally unite with VANGUARD NEWSLETTER and culminating in its reconciliation with Shachtmanism.

It is precisely for these reasons that I have disassociated myself from International Socialists and have joined VANGUARD NEWSLETTER the only organization mobilizing the working class around Trotskyist politics.

Fraternally, David Jones

THE SPARTACIST SCHOOL OF SLANDER AND CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

by Ed di Tullio

Political tendencies claiming to represent the working class are being tested and differentiated at an increasingly accelerated pace in this period.

All organizations lacking in political clarity and capacity are being thrown into internal crises of deepening intensity. VANGUARD NEWSLETTER observed in its first issue in 1969, in quoting from the preface from the pamphlet, Spartacist League Split:

"The post-World War upsurge of world capitalism and the development of deformed workers' states, produced incredible theoretical confusion and shattered the world

movement of Trotskyism. The sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism in the United States and on a world scale, the beginning of the economic downturn, heralds the beginning of greater clarity. The ebb in the revolutionary socialist movement, as seen by its fractionation into small circles, will, in the coming period, be reversed, as objective circumstances make clear the programmatic basis for its

reconstruction."

The political clarity already attained since those words were written has begun to make it more difficult for petty bourgeois tendencies to hide comfortably behind proletarian disguises that helped them "recruit" would-be revolutionists from a restless student milieu in all the advanced capitalist countries--the attractive power of "the intellectual splendour of Marxism," as Trotsky called it, being effective even in the hands of those who use it as a talisman. However, potential revolutionists do not resign themselves to stumbling about in thickets and by-ways following guides who cannot use a compass, once the clearly marked road of proletarian revolution is pointed out. It is now being pointed out, by the compass of Trotskyism, to an increasing number. Not a few are finding a correct program in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, which has clarified in the process the current conditions of the international class struggle.

In the US an example of a sectarian tendency whose hopeless disorienting efforts increase under stress is provided by the leaders of the Spartacist League (SL). Unable either to correct or justify the chaotic middle-class mentality and methods their supporters witness at first hand in that organization, it prefers to limit criticism to the organizational plane as much as possible. A leadership is responsible for political direction primarily, and its politics is what it must defend. But political criticism is what the SL now shows it fears most, hence its emphasis on personal and organizational considerations in much of its polemics. In fact, the SL today is a sorry example of retreat from the program of proletarian revolution which becomes more disorderly the more effectively that program is advanced by others.

It has demonstrated over a period of years an organic incapacity to face the most urgent task of this period: establishing a programmatic basis for the reconstruction of the

world Trotskyist movement, and thus for the proletarian revolution, through "discussion, debate and principled unity in action by those who see themselves as revolutionary socialists"--as VANGUARD NEWSLETTER has called for from its inception. It has been substituting instead a display of enthusiastic identification with orthodox Trotskyism, taking care at critical moments to adjust the proletarian theory it utilizes to the requirements of the petty bourgeois milieu so dear to them. Proving particularly incapable of participating in principled united fronts proposed by VANGUARD NEWSLETTER for intervention in workers' struggles with the transitional methods of Trotskyism, the SL consistently fails the test of revolutionary practice--up to now, as we will see, always under the cover of verbal adherence to formally correct positions borrowed from Trotskyism. (A detailed analysis of the nature of this tendency is made in the back issues of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER and in the pamphlet Spartacist League Split.)

Unable to answer the arguments or counter the proposals of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER on the basis of revolutionary Marxism and the historical experience particularly of Bolshevism--which is the source of everything we say or do and which informs our own revolutionary experience--the SL has responded with scurrilous methods that have nothing to do with Marxism, but which formerly they were careful to keep out of their press and confined to their own and other small circles: unbridled personal attacks, systematic character assassination, elaborate distortions, lies and mountains conjured up out of molehills likewise existing chiefly in their imaginations. The exposure of the SL as incapable of carrying out the program of proletarian revolution--i.e., in this epoch, the program of Trotskyism--under its mask of an immodest acceptance of the honor of formally adhering to it, has now impelled them to rush its method into print, in the Fall issue of "Spartacist" and the September issue of "Workers Vanguard."

They have thus somewhat relentlessly succeeded in achieving public recognition as "heroes" of the method of bourgeois scribblers aptly described by Lenin: "to lie, scream, raise a hullabaloo, and keep on reiterating lies on the off-chance that 'something may stick'."

The reason for this method of polemics which by itself sufficiently proves the SL's incapacity for principled politics and its hostility to Marxist methods, to which allusion has already been made, is the fear that the new generation of revolutionists which will assemble on the proletarian road of Trotskyism will pay no further attention to sects, and will be helped by the theoretical and political clarity of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER--its organizational principles and methods, its strategy and tactics--which in sum total clear that road and beckon others to it. Incapable of breaking with its middle class mentality, the SL covertly rummages for "reasons" to justify not following the proletarian road. Until they can explicitly "condemn" the proletarian road, instead of saying forthrightly "Do not follow it!", they muster limp shafts of abuse against the comrades who assemble others on it. That their invective is only a smokescreen to cover a growing hostility to Trotskyism and a helplessness before critical situations, becomes even clearer when one learns that simultaneously with its efforts against VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, the SL rushes into print in the August-September issue of its Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY) Newsletter with a shrill, hopelessly eclectic, uncomprehending, formalistic, and sectarian torrent of disorientation and muddle not only against Cannon and the SWP in bending to patriotic pressures, but also against Trotsky himself!

With typical petty bourgeois disrespect for the revolutionary tradition, the SL lightmindedly asserts that the "Proletarian Military Policy" (PMP) advanced by Trotsky as part of the strategy to turn World War II into proletarian revolutions was--a "decisive departure

from Marxism!" Trotsky forgot, it seems, "the basic Leninist concepts of the bourgeois state and army!" The policy was "new" and had nothing to do with any historical experience of Marxism! Trotsky thus led the Bolshevik-Leninists of 1940 into a departure "from the clear principled thrust of Leninism" by substituting instead of a policy with a "reformist thrust" and "reformist concepts." The PMP was "social patriotic" and led to the defense of the "fatherland". Thus the responsibility for the SWP's interpretation which resulted in "a proposal for the unions to make the bourgeois army more democratic to prosecute the war" is lumped together with Trotsky's policy. Further, any comrades today who support the proletarian military policy of Trotsky as VANGUARD NEWSLETTER emphatically does, can "only" be "social chauvinists who support 'their' government's war aims!" After all, Trotsky's policy led the proletarian vanguard to the decision "to help the bourgeoisie wage its imperialist wars, to provide it with cannon fodder!"

Startling revelations! How fortunate for our edification that the SL's modesty allows it to learn even from Shachtman, who it appears "caught the core of PMP's reformist thrust" despite "a complete repudiation" of the dialectical materialist method of Marxism, as the SL acknowledges, and thus could nevertheless correct Trotsky! Mastery of the dialectical materialist method, the SL teaches the "younger comrades", has precious little to do with correct policy. Shachtman could sometimes do very well without it! But this is only a typical characteristic of petty bourgeois politicians, as Trotsky pointed out; viz., "a disdainful attitude toward theory and an inclination towards eclecticism", extending now for SL even into Shachtman's dust bin. It will pick up what "gems" it can regardless of the low opinion it has of their source, whether it be a Shachtman or a Trotsky--its opinion of Trotsky, if it is still not clear, is evident from its opinion that he

based his policy on mere "assump-
tions," on "expectations," and on
"an apocalyptic vision," and from
the inability of these muddlers to
find in Trotsky's writings on mili-
tary policy during an international
slaughter fraught with revolutionary
possibilities more than--"fragmen-
tary material!"

That the scribblers rush to nip
at the heels of both VANGUARD NEWS-
LETTER and Trotsky is natural
enough, as this series hopes to
make obvious: they attack the same
program and methods. The sally on
Trotsky's military policy is part
of the SL's fond hope to uncover in
VANGUARD NEWSLETTER what it calls
"one of the more rotten little blocs
of all time," a "bloc" between Cds.
Harry Turner and David Fender.
Fender, it turns out, "is some kind
of extreme 'socialist' militarist,"
an "enthusiast" of "his own version"

of an "ultra" proletarian military
policy, whom presumably nobody
should come near, at least not Harry
Turner. But the truth is that the
answer to the question, "Can we be
called militarists?" is, as Trotsky
put it, "Yes--in a certain sense"
we in the proletarian vanguard of
Trotsky and in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER,
are all "militarists"--"We are pro-
letarian socialist revolutionary
militarists!"

We intend to take up point by
point the charges against VANGUARD
NEWSLETTER, so typical of that strata
of the hapless sectarian intelli-
gensia the SL represents politi-
cally, not for the sake of polemics
with a sect, but rather to clarify
questions of some import for revolu-
tionists and to point to the program
and methods that will assemble the
party of proletarian revolution.
(to be continued)

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE DEGENERATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND OF THE
CENTRISM OF THE SWP - For a return to the Proletarian Road of Trotskyism
- Part II

Introduction by David Fender

✓ In Wohlforth's series erroneously
entitled "In Defense of Trotskyism,
An Answer to those who Vilify our
History" he displays his dubious
talents of attributing to his oppon-
ents anything that suits his needs
and then railing against them. This
series like much of Wohlforth's
writings displays quite a forensic
dexterity of shadow boxing, windmill
charging and tearing up of his own
straw men.

✓ Wohlforth began the series with
an attack against "an untitled anon-
ymous document." We will not attempt
to defend explicitly this document,
but suffice it to say that we find
ourselves in general political soli-
darity with it as opposed to Wohl-
forth's hysterics and that in de-
fending ourselves we defend a common
political line.

✓ In the "Bulletin" of July 24,
1972, comrade Wohlforth attempts to
"deal with David Fender who has
clearly had his influence on" the
"anonymous author." Wohlforth
begins his task with a few inac-

curate statements of my history
spiced with personal barbs, all
designed to cast a shadow on my
character. Political hack writers
can't resist making their unsavory
brew more tantalizing with bits of
gossip, hearsay and character assas-
sination devoid of any real politi-
cal content.

✓ After a lengthy quote from the
section that appeared last time,
Wohlforth states that, "We do not
view the question this way. We
agree that the assessment made in
the Transitional Program that the
crisis of leadership has been
brought about primarily by the
degeneration of the Communist
International." Our most subtle
comrade Wohlforth tries here to
make us out as being opposed to
the Transitional Program and him-
self in perfect consonance with it.
We must inform comrade Wohlforth
that the Transitional Program was
adopted in 1938 and was an assess-
ment made on the revolutionary
experience up to that time and that

we too are in perfect agreement with that assessment. The assessment we made, however, was of "the last 30 years since the founding of the Fourth International," which is stated more than once in the very quote that Wohlforth uses. Our assessment was that the opportunities have not been lacking during that period and that the Fourth International had failed "to provide a valid alternative to the crisis in leadership," and therefore, "The crisis in leadership...has ultimately been the crisis of the leadership of the Fourth International itself." Wohlforth, in his typical evasive manner, tries to worm his way around this assessment by stating that, "The question of the crisis of leadership is not a matter of opportunities here or there but of the fundamental task of actually breaking millions of workers from the leadership of Stalinist and social democratic parties." Unless comrade Wohlforth wishes to claim that this task can be done at any moment he chooses, then it is "a matter of opportunities here and there" such as in Vietnam, Bolivia, Algeria, Ceylon, etc., where instead of "breaking millions of workers from the leadership of Stalinist and social democratic parties," the Fourth International capitulated to these parties preparing the defeat and not the victory of the proletariat. The history of the International Committee (IC) is likewise.

Most of the young Communist parties of the Third International had yet to completely break with ideologies of their origins, such as social democracy and syndicalism, or to substantially root themselves in the working class when the Stalinist bureaucracy began to manipulate these parties for its own ends.

In fact, the bureaucracy used these very weaknesses to drive out the strongest, most knowledgeable and serious cadres who quite naturally tended to side with the Left Opposition. The names of Victor Serge, Rosmer, Nin, Sneevliet, Ver-ecken, Cannon, Shachtman, Peng Shu-tse, Chen Tu-hsiu and many others testify to the quality of the cadres which comprised the International Left Opposition.

Wohlforth continues, "The Fourth International is to be judged not by its progress or lack thereof in a numerical sense in this period or that but by what it does to resolve this crisis politically and theoretically in each country." The phrase "numerical sense" is Wohlforth's own straw man. Far be it from us to gage our success in numerical terms or dollars and cents as it seems Wohlforth and Co. actually do. No, we have found that the Fourth International and IC for that matter, have been lacking at those particular historical junctures where organizations are put to the supreme test--where the question of taking power is posed. The metal of both the Fourth International and the IC has on many an occasion been malleable enough to alloy themselves with the parties of "Stalinism and social democracy" instead of resolving the "crisis politically and theoretically" and "breaking millions of workers from the leadership" of these parties. But the political bankruptcy of these organizations at the crucial junctures in history is not incongruent with their day to day politics. It is for this reason that we say a new Trotskyist International must be built basing itself on the founding documents of the Fourth International in 1938 and on an objective assessment of the historical period since and not on the phantasmagoria of the likes of Wohlforth.⁷

The International Left Opposition while containing communists with outstanding revolutionary credentials and abilities was, nevertheless, in most countries--especially in Europe, and in particular France, the center of the Left Opposition--primarily petty bourgeois in composition. The lack of any working-class base combined with the increasing political confusion and isolation from the working class,

led to constant in-fighting with many of the outstanding militants deserting the Opposition for "greener pastures." Much of the in-fighting was over organizational and tactical questions carried on by personal cliques. Trotsky fought hard to straighten out the disputes, especially in France, although without much success. But Trotsky's major thrust was to integrate the comrades into the living politics of the proletariat, and it was for this reason that Trotsky supported the French comrades who proposed an entry tactic into the SFIO in 1933. The results of the "French turn" were more positive in the United States and Belgium than elsewhere. In France things looked very encouraging at first, but soon deteriorated as the bourgeois pressure from the impending crisis made itself felt.

After a fight with a minority similar to the Oehlerites in the USA, the Communist League voted at a national conference the 29th of August, 1934, to enter the SFIO "with their program and their ideas." Once in, however, a dangerous tendency began to express itself among many comrades. Many comrades began to adapt to centrist tendencies and to compromise the program to make blocs with them. A similar phenomenon took place in the Bolshevik-Leninist faction of the Socialist Party in the USA as Trotsky pointed out in a letter dated May 25, 1937. In "From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene," Trotsky quotes his letter and says: "In both of the documents (a) the private letter of Max about the convention, and (b) Shachtman's article, 'Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party' mentioned in the above letter, Shachtman revealed excessive adaptability toward the left wing of the petty-bourgeois democrats--political mimicry--a very dangerous symptom in a revolutionary politician!" (p.107, In Defense of Marxism). Cannon himself stated: "There is no doubt at all that the leaders of our movement adapted themselves a little too much to the centrist

officialdom of the Socialist Party." (Cannon, History of American Trotskyism, p. 238)

The adaptation of the French comrades was more serious, however, and its consequences were more immediate. In less than a year Trotsky began demanding that the comrades prepare to leave the SFIO, but he met with considerable resistance. The tendency led by Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank refused to leave, and Trotsky denounced them along with the centrists as having "capitulated before the social-patriotic wave." This was only to be a harbinger of the nationalism that was to manifest itself in the Fourth International through its predominantly petty-bourgeois composition and leadership--the traditional transmission belt of bourgeois ideology in the working-class movement.

While the Molinier-Frank faction capitulated outright, the other leaders of the Bolshevik-Leninists had paved the way for their capitulation. The latter had not wanted to criticize the centrists openly and had been tolerant of the politics of the Molinier-Frank faction. In spite of the fact that the French section was able to increase its numbers, the petty-bourgeois leadership had proved that it was unable to root itself in the working class and to take real advantage of the opportunities that were open to it. "We possess at present in our own history an important example of a missed opportunity or rather a spoiled one," was Trotsky's comment. (Trotsky, "After the Crisis of the Bolshevik Leninists")

The petty-bourgeois composition of the International Left Opposition was no accident, but rather the result of the historical period which in itself left its imprint on the cadres. Until 1933 the Opposition was forced to concentrate its efforts in and around the Communist parties, cutting it off from the majority of the working class which in most countries still remained under the influence of Social Democracy. The gangsterism of the Stalinist CPs on the

other hand not only made it difficult for us to reach what working class base the CPs had, but also cost us the lives of many of our outstanding cadres. On top of this the historical international defeat of the proletariat culminating with the rise of Hitler in 1933 left its mark on the already too few struggling comrades of the Opposition. As Trotsky pointed out earlier in regard to China: "the strangulation of the Chinese revolution is a thousand times more important for the masses than our predictions. Our predictions can win some few intellectuals who take an interest in such things, but not the masses." So it was with the International Left Opposition. The ebb of the working class movement internationally served only to isolate the cadres even further. It was the result of the pressure generated by these defeats as well as future ones that laid the basis for the desertion of whole groups back to Stalinism, Syndicalism, Social Democracy, and the endless swamp of Centrism-- such as the SAP (Socialist Workers Party) of Germany which, soon after having signed in 1934 the "declaration of the four" calling for the formation of the Fourth International, rapidly degenerated to supporting popular frontism and becoming an outspoken enemy of Trotskyism.

The Communist Left in Spain, led by Andre Nin and Juan Andrade, in 1934 broke with Trotsky over the question of entry into the Socialist Party. Instead they made a fusion with the Spanish Bukharinists, the "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc", led by "the nationalist-Catalonian philistine" Joaquin Maurin, to form the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification). The POUM criticized the politics of the Popular Front as class collaboration, only to do an about face in February, 1936, and enter into an electoral coalition, finally entering the Catalonian Popular Front government itself. Two of the organizations which signed the "declaration of the four" were from Holland (the RSP and the OSP).

They then fused to form the RSAP (Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party) led by H. Sneevliet. Sneevliet also balked on the question of entry, supported the POUM, and flirted with the London Bureau. Vereecken in Belgium split over the question of entry, and the Polish section as a whole opposed the attempt to found the Fourth International and showed great hesitation on the entry question.

Sectarianism abounded. From everywhere came criticism from the "left" against Trotsky. But it was these very same "leftists" who refused to soil themselves by carrying out the entry tactic into Social Democracy that ended up being the merry bed-fellows of the hopeless centrists of the London Bureau variety. For Trotsky the entry question was very important. It was the difference between complete stagnation and degeneration into a self-amusing discussion group of intellectuals on the one hand; and, on the other, the active participation in the life and struggles of the proletariat as a foundation upon which to build new parties equal to the historic tasks that they faced.

After the defeat in Germany with the rise of Hitler, the International Left Opposition became the Movement for the Fourth International, and its main center quite naturally became France. With the debacle of the "third period," 1929-1933, the Stalinists turned to the Popular Front tactic to deal with the new upturn in the workers' movement and the threatening new world conflagration which threatened them. From 1933 to 1938 there was a slight recovery from the economic crisis which had shaken the world--due in part to the preparations for WW II--which produced in its turn a new rise in the class struggle. In the USA there were the two successive waves in the rise of the CIO, in Spain the revolution broke out in full thunder, and France witnessed the great strike wave of 1936.

Although world events dictated it, the French comrades were little prepared to become the center of the

struggle of the Fourth International. "Before its entry the French section was in a state of complete stagnation." Such was Trotsky's opinion. The section did, however, "In spite of the two splits, both at the time of the entry and the time of the exit, as well as big mistakes and hesitations, ... conclude the SFIO chapter with a large and incontestable gain." (Trotsky, Writings 1935, p. 31) But gains were not to last. "In France the regeneration began with the entry into the Socialist Party. The policy of the Socialist Party was not clear, but it won many new members. These new members were accustomed to a large milieu. After the split they became a little discouraged. They were not so steeled. Then they lost their not-so-steeled interest and were regained by the current of the People's Front. It is regrettable, but it is explainable." Trotsky, "International Bulletin," December, 1969, p. 26) The French section was neither capable of keeping the gains it made during its experience in the SFIO nor of making any significant gains during the mass strikes of 1936. The "general historical current" proved to be "too strong." Nor was the section able to improve its social composition during this period. "A new radical tendency directed against the general current of history in this period crystallizes around the elements more or less separated from the national life of any country and for them it is more difficult to penetrate into the masses. We are all very critical toward the social composition of our organization and we must change, but we must understand that this social composition did not fall from heaven, but was determined by the objective situation and by our historic mission in this period." (Ibid., p. 25)

Trotsky went on to caution that the above did "not signify that we must be satisfied with the situation," and that he "did not wish to say that we must reconcile ourselves with the impotence of our French organization." On the contrary Trotsky was proposing at that very moment that the French section enter

the PSOP (Workers and Peasants Socialist Party). But the short-lived entry into the PSOP also did not produce anything "because of the state of disintegration of the Trotskyist movement in France during this period." ("la Quatriem International," Pierre Frank, p. 39) The expulsion of the Trotskyists in November of 1939 from the PSOP followed Daladier's interdiction of all communist organizations in September. When the French section officially reestablished itself in June of 1940, they called themselves the "French committees for a Fourth International," and adopted a nationalist political position. Almost every section at one time or another during the war, including the International itself, was to concede the "profound revolutionary implications" of the "masses" struggle for "national liberation" in "France and the other occupied countries." The nationalism expressed by the Fourth International and its sections may not have been done in the same blatant manner of the Second International during World War I, but regardless of how subtly the nationalist position was expressed, the consequences were no less disastrous for the Fourth International than they were for the Second International.

The necessity of war that forces itself upon the bourgeoisie demands that all its forces be mobilized to their utmost, that society itself be regimented and disciplined and that any and all areas of possible dissent be ferreted out and suppressed. The whip must be applied by the bourgeoisie in accordance with the gravity of the crisis and the seriousness of the actual threat. The crack of this chauvinist whip is reflected first and foremost through the petty-bourgeoisie into the workers' movement. The experience of the Second International in the First World War was conclusive proof of this fact. Unfortunately the newly founded Fourth International was to undergo a similar experience with the arrival of the Second World War.

(to be continued)