

## Turn the Guns the Other Way!

# NEW MASTERS FOR BANGLA DESH



Not for Long the Cheering—Bengalis in Jessore Greet Indian Army.

The power rivalry between Pakistan and India has once more broken out in war. Using the pretext of the just Bengali struggle for self-determination and the refugee problem, India took control of the fighting, with the connivance of the Awami League, in order to accomplish its design of eliminating Pakistan as a serious rival and establishing "Bangla Desh" as a client state.

Standing behind these tinpot imperialists are the various big imperialist powers and their allies, the bureaucracies of the deformed workers states. The U.S. and China are banking on the stability and strength of the Pakistani militarists; the USSR and to a lesser extent Britain pin their hopes on Indira Gandhi's ability to consolidate a state out of the oppression and exploitation of countless minorities inside India, and now, through expansion, into the rest of the sub-continent.

As of this writing, the Indian army has established an iron hold upon the East Bengalis waiting only for the right moment to complete the disarming of the loosely knit Mukti Bahini—guerrilla arm of the collaborationist Awami League.

India plans a long military occupation of East Bengal to achieve the aim of transforming East Bengal into a client state with formal independence. The Soviet bureaucracy is falling all over itself to offer "aid and technicians" to help the impoverished Indians consolidate their rule in Bengal while extending Soviet influence into the area. The crucial rail links, classic artery of British imperial plunder, have been reopened between Jessore and Calcutta for the transfer of prisoners of war.

In the West, Ali Bhutto has now replaced Yahya Khan to "reconcile the army and the people" and institute a few reforms in the face of an intransigent oligarchy of 22 families who control the economy of West Pakistan. Bhutto presently enjoys the confidence of the oligarchy as the man to quiet the mass outbursts which have rocked Pakistan in the wake of the military disaster in the East. The U.S. is backing Bhutto in the hopes that a facelifted regime will preserve the Pakistani army as the main U.S. strategic mainstay in the region.

In all of these maneuvers and intrigues and especially in the Indian military operation, one fact emerges with crystal clarity: the just struggle of the Bengalis was entirely subordinated and integrated into the interests of the predator India at the expense of the predator Pakistan.

Under these conditions to call for support to the Bengali independence struggle is to play into the hands of Indira Gandhi and the Bengali national traitors. Revolutionary defeatism, the policy that calls upon both armies to turn their guns

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## OLD GARBAGE, OLD PAIL:

# Fake Lefts Tail After NPAC

The December 3-5 National Peace Action Coalition conference held in Cleveland reconfirmed the rightward drift of the U.S. left into the pacifist swamp of class collaboration. Cannon once said of pacifism that "in the face of actual war it thrusts the workers like sheep, unarmed and defenseless and without a program, into the slaughter." The American worker, who is not yet class conscious, is also no fool, and has been conspicuous in the peace movement by his absence. He is understandably reluctant to participate in peace marches which demonstrate only the respectable, middle-class and impotent character of the left, and to sit through interminable harangues by strike breakers and wage freezers like Lindsay and Hartke or sellout piccards like Reuther and Livingston.

### NPAC "Discovers" the Working Class

Five years of tumultuous strike activity by U.S. labor, contrasted with five years of impotent peace crawls, have finally driven home to the left that something is missing from the struggle against the war, namely the working class. Virtually every political tendency at the Cleveland NPAC conference—from the student-vanguardist Socialist Workers Party to the police-vanguardist Workers League—called for a drive to recruit workers to the next peace crawl. The SWP called for more leaflets at the factory gates; the non-SWP leadership of NPAC (Gage-Colby, Lafferty, Gordon, Williams) and the International Socialists called on NPAC to call an anti-war congress of

labor and to build a labor section; Progressive Labor merely wanted NPAC to proclaim that unemployment is bad and trashing ROTC buildings good; and the Workers League called on NPAC to take the fight against war into unions by calling for union leaders off the Pay Board, a general strike against the war and the wage freeze and a labor party in 1972, demands which the Workers League claimed "posed the question of power for the working class." None of these groups which in the past have episodically attacked NPAC for class collaboration—like PL, the WL or IS—saw fit to do so at this conference. IS and the WL, famous for their fits of Stalinophobia, now respectively call on this Stalinist popular front formation (with Senator Vance Hartke on its steering committee) to call labor congresses or build labor parties.

Such a "labor congress" or "labor party"—unless based on a clear break from class collaboration, could only have as its purpose deepening the class' political ties to the liberal bourgeoisie.

While the IS, PL, and the WL project the road to power through NPAC, the Labor Committee submitted its latest "How to End a Depression in a Day" resolution which projects the road to

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## RISE AND FALL OF THE PANTHERS

*Continued...*

# NEW MASTERS FOR BANGLA DESH

against their own rulers, is the only policy which can achieve the aspirations of the working masses.

In order to understand the basis for opposing the India-Pakistan war and determine a consistently internationalist proletarian policy, it is necessary to review briefly the history and class alignments in the region.

## **Divide and Rule**

British imperialism did its work well. "Divide and rule" was conscious British policy in India since the early nineteenth century. Lieutenant-Colonel Coke, Commandant of Moradabad, laid down the principle: "Our endeavor should be to uphold in full force the (for us fortunate) separation which exists between the different religions and races, not to endeavor to amalgamate them. *Divide et impera* should be the principle of Indian government."

The main instrument of this policy, inaugurated in 1909-10 by Lord Minto, then Viceroy of India, was the system of separate communal elections based upon religion and providing the minority Moslems with special privileged representation.

This Indian version of "community control" was the perfect handle to sharply stimulate national antagonisms. The "preferential" treatment of oppressed Moslems further fanned communal hatreds. The ruling stratum and their British masters could then intervene as the arbiters over the unruly antagonisms of the "barbarous" and "uncivilized" masses.

The ultimate fruit of these policies was the Partition of 1947 which meant the deaths of hundreds of thousands in the greatest cross-migration of history. The Partition created the multi-national state of India and the anti-national theocracy of Pakistan.

West Pakistan's economy is dominated by 22 families who control 66% of industrial capital, 70% of all insurance and 80% of all bank capital. The newness of industry, its dependence upon state licensing and the dominance of the landlords and gentry in a swollen military and bureaucracy have combined to give the old aristocracy and the generals great political weight.

With Partition, the Hindu landlords and money-lenders fled East Pakistan (East Bengal) to Calcutta where they remain in waiting to this day. Following their exodus, land redistribution effectively destroyed feudalism and created a small landholding peasantry.

The land reform itself was undermined in the fifties and sixties through depressed agricultural prices and adverse terms of trade channeling the already meagre peasant surplus into West Pakistani rather than Hindu pockets. Especially during years of poor crop yields, indebtedness grew and the countryside became polarized once more. In this milieu no new indigenous national bourgeoisie or big landlord class developed.

## **The Awami League**

The leading class in East Bengal today is a national petty bourgeoisie of professionals, traders, shopkeepers, intellectuals, rural kulaks and functionaries. The Awami League, servile and reactionary from birth, is the political representative of this class.

The Awami League's founder, Suhrawardy, supported the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956 and was ardently pro-American during his brief tenure as Pakistan's Prime Minister. Awami League "volunteers" moved physically against left-wing parties on many occasions. Unable to break West Pakistani dominance through electoral activity on an all-Pakistan basis, the Awami League, still faithfully constitutionalist, advanced a program of regional autonomy.

The December General Election gave the League an overall majority in the country. On March 25, Yahya Khan moved 70,000 troops of the elite Pakistani army into East Bengal while mass hatred and opposition reached a fever pitch. The troops committed wholesale slaughters, turning millions into refugees who fled across the border into West Bengal.

The Awami League temporized, delayed, and when it became clear that the hour to move had already past, threw itself into the open arms of

the Indian bourgeoisie.

Socialist support to the military victory of the independence struggle, even under the miserable leadership of the Awami League, would be principled and obligatory so long as that struggle remained under Bengali control although receiving aid from bourgeois regimes or deformed workers states. The Awami League, however, crossed over the line when it handed full military control over to the Indians and became a mere pawn in the chauvinist appetites of the Indian bourgeoisie.

In the epoch of imperialist decay, the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations (not to speak of the national petty bourgeoisie) will always prefer some form of imperialist dominance to arousing the very force which can sweep it out of existence.



It must be remembered that the ruling classes of India and Pakistan appeared on the scene during the long shadows of imperialism's decline. Hemmed in by the imperialists, neither Gandhi, Bhutto, nor the Awami League are able to complete even the democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution.

The perspective of permanent revolution begins from the premise that the proletariat alone can shoulder and bring to completion both the democratic and socialist tasks of the colonial revolution. Only when the proletariat provides a clear pole of attraction can the petty bourgeoisie, especially the peasantry as an ally in the democratic struggle, be drawn along in its wake.

## **To Catch a Thief . . .**

The bureaucracies in the deformed workers states vie with one another in abasement before the bourgeoisies of India and Pakistan.

Chou En-Lai made China's position clear as far back as April when he stated unequivocally: "Your Excellency [Yahya Khan] and leaders of various quarters in Pakistan have done a lot of useful work to uphold the unification of Pakistan and prevent it from moving towards a split. . . Here it is most important to differentiate the broad masses of the people from a handful of persons who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan." Chou went on to object correctly to India but in the service of the now defunct Yahya Khan: "At the same time we have noted that of late the Indian government has been carrying out gross interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan by exploiting the internal problems of your country."

Pravda, with equal obscenity, attacks China for "shameless interference" in India's internal affairs and for "giving moral and political support to adventurist, extremist groupings." These counterrevolutionary bureaucracies can offer the peoples of the subcontinent only new betrayals and no way out.

## **Subcontinental Proletariat**

The subcontinent's first great labor struggles coincided with the first militant national wave against British rule in the period of 1906-10. The strike wave reached its height with a six-day general strike in Bombay. The Bengali working class was even then pushed to the forefront of the struggle in the railroad strikes, especially the strike in the Eastern Bengal State Railway and the strikes in the Government Press at Calcutta.

In the modern period, Yahya Khan replaced Ayub Khan in the face of mass riots and continuous strikes in early 1969 east and west in Dacca,

Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Chittagong. Again the railway workers displayed exemplary militancy with sitdown strikes and other actions for which they paid with their lives. It was during these struggles that the Chinese bureaucracy stepped up its support to the Pakistani ruling class and blacked out all reportage of the workers' struggles. It should be noted that during the army repressions of March 1971, despite the absence of an organized mass movement, workers in Lyallpur, a Punjabi industrial stronghold, seized factories, hoisted the red flag and were forcibly ousted.

The real center of the Bengali class struggle is Calcutta and not Dacca. It is there that a better organized, larger and more class-conscious workers' movement exists. While in East Bengal there are no mass left parties and the various Maoist groups are small and profoundly disoriented by the Chinese stand, in West Bengal there are a number of mass parties including the CPI (M), a quasi-Maoist party which severely compromised itself when it entered a coalition government; there are also small but militant Naxalite groups operating in the countryside.

Bengal itself is divided between East and West. The Indian central government oppresses the West Bengalis as thoroughly as Pakistan oppressed the East Bengalis. Serious support for self-determination in Bengal includes the right of reunification of all Bengal upon the abrogation of Partition.

If the West Bengali counterparts of the Awami League were to call for the Pakistani army to "liberate" the West from India, what should be our stand? "Critical support" for the Pakistani army—the present stand of the Healyite "International Committee" on the Indian intervention? In either that case or the one which has already occurred, self-determination becomes a fiction and the so-called independence struggle a sham.

Bengal may prove to be the weak link in the subcontinental chain, and might be the spark to the socialist revolution in that region. The Calcutta proletariat as part of the all-India proletariat linked to East Bengal by national ties, could with a correct policy advance the world revolution enormously. Lenin in "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up" observed: "The dialectics of history are such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real



**The Real "Heart of the Struggle": Indian Troops Advancing on Jessore.**

anti-imperialist force, the socialist proletariat, to make its appearance on the scene."

To the East Bengalis we must say: Do not be fooled. Break the hold of the Awami League which is putting you under the control of a new oppressor. To the Indians: Oppose the victory of "your" army but use the opportunity to fraternize with your class brothers and advance the all-India revolution. To all Bengalis: An all-India revolution is the shortest route to a genuinely independent Bengal if that is your desire. To the Pakistanis: Losing East Bengal is losing a rope around your neck. Your ability to take power in your own hands is advanced by this defeat suffered by your rulers.

For revolutionary defeatism on both sides in the India-Pakistani war! Down with the national betrayers of the Awami League! For the right of secession for East and West Bengal; for the right of both sections to abrogation of Partition and a united Bengal! For a socialist federation of the subcontinent! ■

# WAR, REVOLUTION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

The American left in general has responded to the India-Pakistan war with gross opportunism conditioned but hardly excused by abysmal ignorance of the Leninist attitude toward self-determination struggles. The supposed "Trotskyists" of the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers League are no exception, both falling into step as the "vanguard" of the Indian army rearguard. (The SWP, as we shall see, has at least the "excuse" that it stumbled over such an issue thirty years ago, long before the tail-ending of bourgeois-led "mass" movements of betrayal came to constitute the core of its politics.)

In the 24 December issue of the SWP's *Militant*, Tony Thomas hails the Indian victory:

"Pakistan's reactionary occupation troops are being routed in Bangla Desh by the combined strength of the Indian armed forces and the Bengali freedom fighters. . . . [who are] cheered by the Bengali masses, who hope this will mean an end to the bloody terror. . . ."

Cheering aside, the real balance of forces in the "combined" operation is clear to the bourgeois press, which has reason to be thankful for the Indian army. The 11 December *Economist* assessed the significance of the "mass participation":

"For the moment the Mukti Bahini have been pushed to one side. Indian commanders have given the credit for some small defeats of Pakistani troops to the guerrillas—credit which almost certainly was undeserved. But the guerrillas have a use: in guarding captured roads and installations which would otherwise consume valuable regular troops, in acting as guides and in causing trouble behind the Pakistani positions. The politicians of the Awami League are following in the baggage train of the Indians—from where, no doubt, they will be whisked into prominence at the moment of triumph."

The issue is not the extent of mass jubilation over the Pakistani defeat, but the meaning for the working masses of the forces which entered the war and the outcome of their conflict. Everyone knows what the meaning of the Indian victory must be: (1) Pakistan's elimination as a serious threat to bourgeois India's hegemony over the subcontinent, and (2) control over Bangla Desh for India.

The *Militant*, in fact, refers to the war as one in which "both sides are fighting for their predatory interests. . . ." And further:

"Capitalist India has intervened for its own interests—interests that evidence shows are not the same as those of the Bangla Desh struggle for self-determination. It intends to impose a moderate government subservient to India and will use its military presence to accomplish that objective."

Despite this, and despite India's own record of vicious suppression of minorities which the *Militant* duly notes, we are supposed to conclude that the Indian war has

"...nonetheless provided an opening for the Bangla Desh national liberation struggle to receive important assistance in ridding Bangla Desh of the tyranny that has forcibly kept it part of Pakistan."

And:  
"Although India did not impose the demand for separation on the Bengali masses, it is true that its war with Pakistan helped bring that separation about. The Bengali freedom fighters correctly utilized this objective situation to help get the Pakistani tyrants off their backs."

The *Militant* has done a poor job of kicking sand over its opportunist tracks, not because it is unskilled in covering a betrayal with "criticisms,"

## Lenin on Nationalism "of the Worst Sort"—

### THE LIMITATIONS OF SELF-DETERMINATION

In 1916 Karl Radek argued against self-determination since in his view it meant that "it is allegedly the duty of Social-Democrats to support any struggle for independence." Lenin answered:

"From the standpoint of general theory this argument is outrageous, because it is clearly illogical: first, no democratic demand can fail to give rise to abuses, unless the specific is subordinated to the general; we are not obliged to support either 'any' struggle for independence or 'any' republican or anti-clerical movement. Secondly, no formula for the struggle against national oppression can fail to suffer from the same 'shortcoming'. Radek himself... used the formula... 'Against old and new annexations.' Any Polish nationalist will legitimately 'deduce' from this formula: 'Poland is an annexment, I am against annexations, i.e., I am for the independence of Poland.' Or I recall Rosa Luxemburg saying in an article written in 1908, that the formula: 'against national oppression' was quite adequate. But any Polish nationalist would say—and quite justly—that annexation is one of the forms of national oppression, consequently, etc.

"However, take Poland's specific conditions in place of these general arguments: her independence today is 'impracticable' without wars or revolutions. To be in favour of an all-European war merely for the sake of restoring Poland is to be a nationalist of the worst sort, and to place the interests of a small number of Poles above those of the hundreds of millions of people who suffer from war. Such, indeed, are the 'Fracy' (the Right wing of the P. S. P.) who are socialists only in word, and compared

with whom the Polish Social-Democrats are a thousand times right. To raise the question of Poland's independence today, with the existing alignment of the neighbouring imperialist powers, is really to run after a will-o'-the-wisp, plunge into narrow-minded nationalism and forget the necessary premise of an all-European or at least a Russian and a German revolution. . . .

"...The Polish Social-Democrats cannot, at the moment, raise the slogan of Poland's independence, for the Poles, as proletarian internationalists, can do nothing about it without stooping, like the 'Fracy', to humble servitude to one of the imperialist monarchies. But it is not indifferent to the Russian and German workers whether Poland is independent, or they take part in annexing her (and that would mean educating the Russian and German workers and peasants in the basest turpitude and their consent to play the part of executioner of other peoples).

"The situation is, indeed, bewildering, but there is a way out in which all participants would remain internationalists: the Russian and German Social-Democrats by demanding for Poland unconditional 'freedom to secede'; the Polish Social-Democrats by working for the unity of the proletarian struggle in both small and big countries without putting forward the slogan of Polish independence for the given epoch or the given period."

—"The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 349-351.

but because in this case its betrayal is so egregious. The question fairly cries out for answer: What "objective situation," what "important assistance," i.e., what big neighbor's bourgeois army should now come to the "aid" of the Bengalis to rid them of their new masters? The truth is that the Bengalis are now stuck with an occupation army which is bigger, better armed and logistically more favorably situated than Pakistan's army ever was.

For the SWP, of course, the touchstone is the "mass participation" in the struggle for self-determination, despite the military and political control of the movement by the Indian government. "At the heart of the war," says the SWP, is "the struggle of Bangla Desh for self-determination." Further:

"The significant degree of mass participation in the armed struggle against the capitalist rulers of Pakistan and the independence of the struggle has given it a revolutionary character surpassing anything seen on the subcontinent since the independence struggle against British imperialism. It therefore merits the unconditional support of all who call themselves socialist."

The SWP assures us that self-determination for Bangla Desh is "at the heart of the war" and applauds "the independence of the struggle." Less skillful opportunists might have actually attempted to prove these crucial claims; the SWP just asserts them, confident that those who over the past years have swallowed "progressives" Leroy Jones and Vance Hartke will have learned by now not to scrutinize too closely the latest "progressive," "revolutionary" force—the Indian bourgeoisie.

The East Bengali masses have been deceived and betrayed; their struggle has become a pawn in the war of one bourgeois power against another—so the SWP and the Workers League support the capitalist hangmen of tomorrow against the capitalist hangmen of yesterday.

Of course the aspirations of the masses for independence are important. Their fulfillment is impossible with any policy but that of revolutionary defeatism on both sides. That is the only pol-

icy for anyone to whom the sacrifices of the Bengalis mean more than an opportunist justification of their present plight facing Indian tanks.

#### Healyite "Principles" Oil the Tanks

We appreciate the frankness with which the "International Committee of the Fourth International" (now reduced to the Anglo-Saxon international of Healy and Wohlforth—see *Workers Vanguard* No. 3) has proclaimed itself waterboy for the Indian bourgeoisie's army. The SWP "merely" justifies the capitulation of the Bangla Desh leaders to the Indian army; the Healyites openly support the Indian army. The 20 December *Bulletin* declares:

"The International Committee of the Fourth International was the only organization to support in a principled manner the right of Bangla Desh to secede from Pakistan."

What "principled manner"? The answer is soon forthcoming:

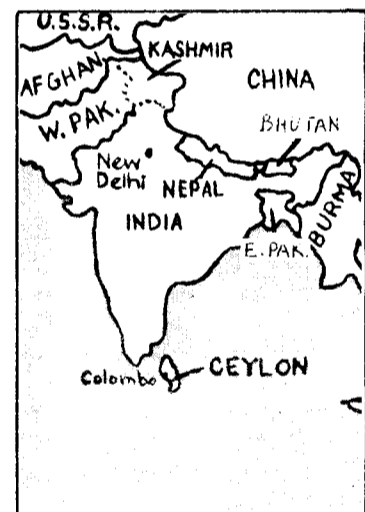
"We critically support the decision of the Indian bourgeois government to give military and economic aid to Bangla Desh."

Lest the statement appear to be a sellout, the statement flops back onto orthodox ground within a few lines:

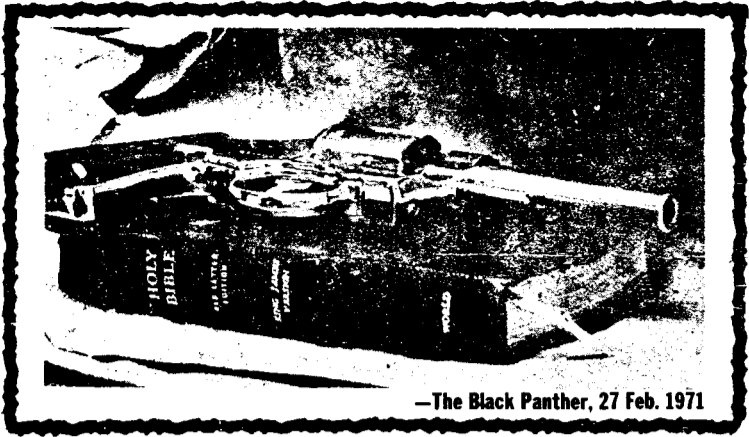
"At the same time the ICFI urges Indian and Bengali socialists to place no confidence whatever in the capacity of the Bengali and Hindu bourgeoisie to carry through any of the tasks of the Indian democratic revolution."

And that, comrades, is undoubtedly not only "principle" but "method." We can have it either way, or both. The Indian bourgeoisie cannot, of course, "carry through any" of the democratic tasks—presumably including, of course, national self-determination! Yet the statement talks of "critical support" and terms India's role in Bangla Desh "military and economic aid." "Military aid" is generally understood to mean, for example, selling or giving arms to another country. To describe the Indians as providing "military and economic aid to Bangla Desh" is about like

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# RISE AND FALL OF THE END OF THE

The spectacular and violent split in the Black Panther Party can be viewed as the symbolic end to a period in American radical politics. The impact of the Panthers, in vast disproportion to their actual size and strength, indicated the pervasive black nationalist mood of which they were the most militant expression. Following the collapse of the liberal-oriented civil rights movement, virtually all U.S. radicals saw the struggle of black people against racial oppression as the central and overriding contradiction within American capitalism. The Panthers' popularity, enhanced by the vicarious black nationalism of white-guilt liberal circles, coincided with the rejection by impatient petty-bourgeois radical students of a perspective based on the revolutionary role of the working class, black and white. The current split, with tragic implications for the defense of jailed Panthers, certainly gladdens the hearts of racists and cops, but has far-reaching implications for the left as well. No longer can the Panther leadership use unquestioned moral authority to claim automatic allegiance from militant black youth and uncritical support from radical whites regardless of their particular experiences and views.

It is important to recognize that the Panthers came into being at the ebb of the mass black civil rights movement, as a selection of the best black militants in the battles waged over the corpse of the movement. The particular character of the Panthers was shaped by two interrelated developments which marked the death of the respectable civil rights movement of King, Farmer and the early SNCC. One was the movement's obvious failure to change the living conditions of the black masses—in particular, its inability to do anything about the terrorization of the ghetto population by the cops, the armed force of the bourgeois state. This point was driven home by the anti-cop "riots" that swept the ghettos from 1964 to 1967, which proved that militant blacks were through with the non-violent reformism of the SCLC and CORE. The other major development was wholesale ruling-class purchase of black leaders—not only moderates like Farmer but also self-styled black power advocates. The sordid fate of the black power movement was personified in individuals like Roy Innis, who drove the whites out of CORE and later hustled tickets for the Frazier-Ali fight in partnership with General Electric. Another example is Leroy Jones, black power ex-beat poet, who became aide to His Honor Mayor Gibson and prominently assisted in his attempt to destroy the Newark Teachers Union. The Panthers were thus defined negatively, in reaction against the dying civil rights movement on the one hand and the rise of "pork chop" nationalism on the other.

## **Ghetto Uprisings and the Myth of Urban Guerrilla Warfare**

It was clear to all that the ghetto uprisings, which began in Harlem in 1964 and continued with undiminished intensity until Newark in 1967, marked the end of the old civil rights movement. What was not clear was how the uprisings affected the future of the black movement. Rather than recognizing the ghetto outbursts for what they in fact were—the final spasm of frustration and fury in the wake of a movement that had raised great hopes and activated enormous energy only to accomplish nothing—the left wishful-thinking saw in the ghetto-police battles the beginning of mass revolutionary violence which presumably had merely to be organized in order to be made effective. The notion that the ghetto was a base for urban guerrilla warfare was common not only among black nationalists, but was accepted by most of the left, from serious Maoists like Progressive Labor to the pundits of *Monthly Review*. The Panthers were outstanding in their willingness to face jail and even death for their theory.

The ghetto uprisings did not give the black

masses a sense of their own power. They did just the opposite. During the rioting, it was blacks' own homes that were burned down and the cops who went on a killing rampage. The riots proved that police brutality was not an isolated injustice that could be eliminated through militant action. The cops are an essential part of the armed force of the state; if defeated locally, they came back with the National Guard or Army. To drive the cops out of the ghetto and keep them out was equivalent to overthrowing the American state; thus as long as the majority of white workers remained loyal or only passively hostile to the government, black activism could not liberate the ghetto. It was not their lack of formal organization but a sense that they really could not win that gave the ghetto uprisings their spontaneous, consciously self-sacrificing character.

The Panthers chose to make a stand on their ability to purge the ghetto of police brutality when experience had shown the black masses that this could not be done given the existing over-all balance of political forces. The Panthers, realizing that the masses could not be organized to aggressively confront the police, developed a conscious policy of substituting their own militants for the organized power of the masses. In so doing, they developed a self-image of a band of warrior-heroes avenging the historic injustices visited upon the downtrodden black population. Adventurous black youth joining the Panthers did not see themselves as building a successful social revolution, but anticipated "leaving the Party in a pine box" with a dead cop to their credit, having done their share to avenge the centuries-old oppression of their people.

The Panther leadership knew they were standing up to the cops in isolation from the black masses. In his essay, "The Correct Handling of a Revolution," Huey Newton contended that armed Panthers would set an example which the rest of the black people would follow. Written after thousands of blacks had battled the cops and lost in Harlem, Watts and Chicago, Newton's argument had a forced and unreal quality. History was about to give Newton a swift and deadly counter-argument.

## **The Panthers Pick Up the Gun and Are Defeated**

Taking advantage of California's liberal gun laws, the Panthers applied their theory. At first their tactics appeared successful. Newton's armed patrols in Oakland went unmolested. The Panthers held an armed rally in Richmond commemorating the murder of Denzil Dowell by a deputy sheriff, and faced the cops down. Most spectacularly, Bobby Seale led a group of armed Panthers to the State Capitol during a debate on gun control, and received only a light prison sentence. Taken aback by the Panther flamboyance, and uncertain how much support they had in the ghetto, the authorities at first demurred. But beginning with the wounding and jailing of Newton in October 1967, and gaining steam with the killing of Bobby Hutton and the arrest of Cleaver in April 1968, a coordinated national campaign to wipe out the Panthers was launched by local police and the FBI operating in many cases with the assistance of cultural nationalist groups (the murder of Los Angeles Panthers by members of Ron Karenga's US). Over the past few years, the murders of Panthers have continued and virtually the entire leadership has been imprisoned on capital charges.

Contrary to Panther theorizing, the crackdown on them did not provoke mass ghetto rebellions. In fact, the Panther's real weakness can be seen by comparing the response to their persecution with the spontaneous eruptions of ghetto rage at the assassination of Martin Luther King.

The Panthers' feeling of desperate isolation as the police rifle sight zeroed in on them is expressed in a moving account by Earl Anthony, a

former Deputy Minister of Information who later split from the Party in the direction of mainstream nationalism. Writing after the Battle of Montclair, where three Panthers were killed by the cops in Los Angeles, Anthony reflects:

"I kept thinking to myself... about the ease with which the Panthers were being killed, and I couldn't do anything about it, and nobody I knew could do anything about it. And I thought about the thousands upon thousands... of black people who have been murdered, and nobody could do anything about it... What really burned me inside was that I was forced to realize the untenable position the Party and other blacks who dare to put their toe to the line are in. I knew that white people didn't really care that Little Tommy, Captain Steve, and Robert were gone, or that the pigs were scheming the murder of the rest of us... I had learned to accept that attitude from whites. But the painful reality was that many blacks had it too. When you got down to it, we were pretty much alone. Not many people really cared..."

—Earl Anthony, *Picking Up the Gun*, pp. 138-39.

## **The Panthers Defend Themselves and Move Right**

Isolated, with repression bearing down on them, the Panthers shifted the focus of their activities to legal defense work in an effort to gain the broadest possible support. The Panther alliances with white radicals were not motivated by any realization that American society could only be revolutionized by an integrated working-class movement, but by the material needs of their defense campaign. As Seale openly admitted, the Panthers' support for the ill-fated Peace and Freedom Party was not based on a desire to establish an integrated radical third party, but by a belief that the PFP was a convenient vehicle in gaining left liberal support for defense of Newton. The other widely divergent groups supporting the PFP, such as Progressive Labor and the Independent Socialist Clubs (now the International Socialists) were no less opportunistic, although in their case the motivation was chiefly a desire for a recruiting vehicle.

The Panthers' tendency to move closer to liberalism, implicit in their support of the liberal program of the PFP, was made explicit in the equally abortive United Front Against Fascism, launched in 1969. Guided by the Communist Party's legal apparatus, the UFAF was an attempt to create an alliance of everyone to the left of Nixon-Agnew on an essentially civil libertarian basis. The UFAF's main programmatic demand—community control of the police—combined liberal illusions over the nature of the bourgeois state with black nationalist illusions that the oppression of black people can be ended through "control" of ghetto institutions.

The Panthers' overtures to the liberals were not very successful since the Panthers were too notorious for defense by bourgeois politicians. A few West Coast black Democrats, like Willy Brown and Ronald Dellums, protected their left flank by coming out for the Panthers. Some politicians like Cleveland's Carl Stokes, questioned whether the police might not have actually violated the Panthers' rights! The Panthers were somewhat more successful in garnering support and money from the cultural wing of the liberal establishment, as indicated by Leonard Bernstein's famous party where the "beautiful people" met the Panthers and paid handsomely for the titillation of exposing their bourgeois sensibilities to the black revolution in safety, an expensive delight somewhat recalling the Roman arenas. But despite their efforts to present themselves as simple anti-fascists, the heat continued to come down on the Panthers.

Although the Panthers since 1969 have clearly given up street patrols in favor of defense rallies

# THE PANTHERS: BLACK POWER ERA



Eldridge Cleaver Greeted by  
"Anti-Imperialist Prince" Sihanouk.

and soirees, they have not officially abandoned their claim to be the vanguard of urban guerrilla warfare. In the current split, the Cleaver wing points to this contradiction and claims with some truth that Newton's Oakland group has deserted the original Panther banner.

Along with their turn toward the liberals, the Panthers launched a series of ghetto social work programs, exemplified in their "breakfast for children" drive. The new activities were designed to gain support from the black masses who had not rallied to the confrontationist image, as well as give the Panthers a more humanitarian image when facing white middle-class juries. Thus, Panther attorney Lefcourt forced the undercover agent in the New York 21 case to admit that the defendants spent most of their time doing good works in the community and not plotting to blow up buildings.

The "breakfast for children" program is also a rather ridiculous attempt to apply literally the standard Maoist "serve the people" strategy. While Mao's Red Army could give some real material aid to the Chinese peasants in protecting them from rapacious landlords, helping with the harvest and the like, the notion that the Panthers could compete with the Welfare Department or the Baptist Church in feeding the ghetto poor is simply ludicrous. But the fundamental flaw in the "serve the people" line is not that it doesn't work, but that it strengthens the paternalistic character the Panthers already present in their self-image as avenging angels of the black masses seen as grateful clients of a revolutionary organization, not as potential conscious revolutionists in their own right.

The Panthers' need for activities like the "breakfast for children" program to improve their image in the ghetto destroys the myth that they are a spontaneous expression of black militancy. Some radical groups—notably the International Socialists, who followed the Panthers right up to the gates of Peking Stalinism—contended that one should support the Panthers regardless of their politics because they were the highest organic expression of ghetto political consciousness. In contrast, the Panthers have always regarded themselves as a highly self-conscious vanguard tendency. On the one hand, they sought to win the loyalty of the ghetto youth from competing groups, mainly the cultural nationalists. On the other, they beat the ghetto life style out of their new recruits (while glorifying it in their press), recognizing that a lumpenized life style is incompatible with serious and sustained revolutionary activity. The contention that lax political standards should be employed in judging the Panthers because they are an authentic cry from the soul of the black masses is not only fac-

tually false but reflects a patronizing attitude toward blacks that borders on racism.

## Glamor and Terror

The Panthers' serious internal difficulties, manifested not only in the present decisive split but also in the endless series of expulsions, reflects the impossibility of building a revolutionary organization with street gang methods. Because the Panthers recruited adventurous youth without a stable axis, they could only prevent the disintegration of their organization into competing warlordisms through the imposition of a kind of military terror. New recruits were assigned fifty push-ups for failing to memorize the Panther program, and pressure was put on them to do two hours of reading a day. It is argued that such coerced internal political life is necessary in any radical organization not composed primarily of middle-class intellectuals. But the history of the proletarian socialist movement in the U.S. and elsewhere yields many examples of organizations in which articulate and politically able industrial workers though often lacking formal education, shaped policy, and did not merely memorize a program by rote, like a prayer. This was possible because the socialist movement recruited workers to a comprehensive program for long-term political goals. The Panthers, on the contrary,



Soul Shake: Chicago's Mayor Daley and Jesse Jackson.

recruited on the basis of a radical street gang mentality, with its attendant personal, ethnic and geographical loyalties. The Panther program did not shape their organization and its activities, but was treated as a decoration like icing on a cake. The Panthers' concept of rule through terror, and its application to internal factional struggles as well as relations with other radical groups, can no longer be ignored by the opportunists who tailed after the Panthers and their popularity, hoping it would rub off. In discussing the factional struggle with Cleaver, Newton simply said "We'll battle it out" and "...I have the guns," to which Cleaver replied, "I got some guns too, brother." (*Right On!*, 3 April 1970) In a like manner, the Panthers responded to criticisms of their "United Front" with the CP and liberals by physically throwing the critics out of the UFAF conference (see *Spartacist West*, #18) and making repeated public threats against all left critics. At no time has the Panther leadership reacted to criticism by seeking to politically discredit their opponents within the radical constituency. At no time have they recognized that building a revolutionary party requires methods in any way different from conducting a street gang rivalry.

Apart from terror, the main element holding a street gang together is a power mystique, manifest in the warrior-hero cult of the Panthers. Seale testified to the importance of glamor to the Panthers in noting that a number of members left the Party when ordered not to wear their uniforms except on Party assignment. The best expression of Panther glamor-mongering is the ascending order of hero worship, culminating in the cult of Huey Newton which appears even more absurd than the Stalin and Mao cults because of its imitative character.

The disastrous effect of building an organization through hero worship is apparent in the split, which has been dominated by personal rivalries and clique politics. The split originated not in

clear political differences, but in accusations that Chief of Staff David Hilliard was playing favorites in allocating defense funds and expelling out-of-favor Panthers, like "Geronimo" Pratt, to avoid the responsibility for their defense. But there are political differences implicit in the split. Each faction occupies one of the two poles around which Panther politics have revolved. The Cleaver group represents the anti-cop confrontationism characteristic of the early Panthers while Newton's group reflects the liberalism and social-work do-goodism of the defense campaigns. In terms of internal dynamics, the Algiers group tends toward reconciliation with mainstream Black Nationalism, while the Oakland group has gravitated toward liberal reformism sometimes more naked than that of the Communist Party. The actual faction fight has touched these differences only marginally, and has been conducted almost entirely in terms of competing heroes, character assassination and counter-retailing of atrocity stories (e.g., the claim that Cleaver is keeping his wife prisoner, the accusation that Hilliard is doping Newton). The main programmatic demand of the Algiers group is a call for collective leadership and an attack on the personality cult, while the Newton group has defended itself by asserting the personality cult, namely Newton's own.

Sections of the left have of course attempted to find a qualitative political superiority of one wing over the other, as a rationale for drawing close to it. Perhaps the crudest attempt to paint one of the wings as "Marxist" or close to it was that of the assertedly Trotskyist "Workers League" of Tim Wohlforth. Wohlforth hailed Newton's proclaimed embracing of the dialectic in a fit of organizational appetite early last year. Newton very soon thereafter announced his peace with black capitalism and the church, teaching Wohlforth again that "dialectic" is a word of four syllables and "method" of two, and that it takes much more than the mouthing of the two words to make a Marxist, or even a potential Marxist. To make his short-lived praise of Newton more grotesque, Wohlforth printed fulsome praise and carefully selected revolutionary proletarian quotes from Newton in the same article in which he defended, against SWP-YSA criticism, his view of the New York police "strike" as "a reflection of a very general, deep and profound movement of the working class"! (15 February *Bulletin*) "Only the Workers League"... dares to suck up to the Panthers and defend the "job action" of their mortal enemies, the cops, in the same issue of the same publication.

Hero worship is one of the ways bourgeois ideology enters the revolutionary movement and destroys it. Its corrupting nature is evident in Huey Newton's \$650 a month penthouse, paid for out of Party funds raised in defense campaigns, while rank-and-file Panthers hide from the police in rat-infested hovels. The Panther paper justifies Newton by noting that he had "stood up and faced the pigs (from which he was wounded and spent two years in prison)" and that he had "put his life on the line in the fight to end this racist, exploitative system." The paper went on to state: "Huey and his generals of staff should have the best as they plan their party's strategy." (*The Black Panther*, 27 February 1971) The belief that the past sufferings of militants entitle them to the good life at rank-and-file expense is an important subjective justification for bureaucracy in the labor and radical movement. Moreover, left-wing leaders can continue to enjoy the good life only with ruling-class cooperation, obtainable by holding back the organizations they are supposed to lead against it. Many present leading AFL-CIO bureaucrats were beaten, shot at and jailed in their youth. Newton's penthouse and the Party's defense of it indicate a deeply anti-socialist attitude. The revolutionary movement is not like a

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medieval joust where the best knight gets the castle. Its purpose is to destroy the castle.

### Lumpens, Hippies and New Left Ideology

An analysis qualitatively superior to the Workers League's general pattern of alternating denunciation and grovelling before the Panthers was written by "L'il Joe" for the 15 March 1971 Bulletin. The author, no longer with the Workers League, well analyzed the tension between the "national" and "class" orientation of the Panthers:

"The Black Panther Party was organized as a nationalist organization. Unlike the other nationalist groups, however, it was organized for the most part, by ghetto Blacks—the most oppressed sections of the ghetto youth—the unemployed and if employed, employed in low paying industry. As nationalism is a middle class ideology of 'unity of race or nation' rather than 'unity of class,' the Black Panther Party, organized by and for Black working class youth necessarily took on a class character.

"Hence in its earliest development the Black Panther Party was thrown into conflict with nationalism itself. The Black Panther Party, however, externalized this struggle by declaring itself 'Revolutionary Nationalist' as in primary opposition to that which they described as 'Cultural Nationalism.'

"What the Panthers would not do was confront the fact that 'cultural nationalism' and ultimately 'Black Zionism' under the guise of 'Pan Africanism' was the logical conclusion of Black nationalism by virtue of the fact that Black people in America share not a national, but a cultural or racial identity.

"By externalizing their struggle against 'Black nationalism' or 'cultural' nationalism, the Black Panther Party was able to prolong, to 'put off,' an inevitable explosion within the Black Panther Party itself. While denouncing 'Cultural' nationalism and maintaining itself as a racial rather than a class organization—'Revolutionary Nationalist'—the Black Panther Party was able to make criticisms of sorts, while at the same time bowing to the pressures of the Black middle class 'nationalists' themselves."

To avoid the Marxist contention that the organized working class is the key revolutionary element, the Panthers came up with the theory that black lumpens are the revolutionary vanguard, and that all employed workers, black and white, have been bought off by the ruling class. The Panthers' "theory" of lumpenism is a mixture of self-aggrandizement and impressionism. Its role is similar to the theories of "student power" and the "new working class" that were popular in SDS a few years ago: our revolutionary organization consists largely of lumpens (or students); therefore lumpens (or students) must be the vanguard of the revolution. This kind of "theorizing" unfortunately does not merit serious consideration.

A lumpen life style has very different social roots among ghetto black youth and middle-class whites; but in both cases youth rebel against the prospect of holding down a meaningless job, raising a family and suffering a deadly "respectable" life. Such rebellious attitudes are not merely justified, but are the subjective raw material out of which revolutionary consciousness is made. No one will be a revolutionist who does not hate a society that makes life for working people boring, trivial, deadening and often heartbreaking. But a political movement which isolates itself in a social milieu hostile to normal work-a-day society must become irresponsible, individualistic and ultimately cynical and contemptuous of the mass of working people. It is precisely that task of revolutionaries to penetrate the mainstream of social and economic life and explode "normal work-a-day" society on the basis of its terrible oppressiveness—the very oppressiveness which drove individuals to become revolutionaries in the first place.

### The Left's Panther Cult

The Panther split is another nail in the coffin of the New Left. For years, the U.S. left has defined itself in terms of supporting this or that militant action or opposing particular acts of oppression and injustice. Within the issue-oriented movement, support for the Panthers has been one of the few common elements that prevented the left from fragmenting completely through "doing one's own thing." The net effect of the Panther

# END OF THE BLACK POWER ERA

influence on the left was negative, not only because the Panthers' own politics never transcended black nationalism and crude Stalinism, but because Panther-worship and uncritical concentration on their defense campaigns prevented the political interaction essential to revolutionary program and strategy. It was Cleaver's presence at the head of the ticket that enabled the PFP to bring together a collection of left McCarthyites, Yippies, orthodox Maoists (Progressive Labor) and "third campers" (IS) into an unprincipled, liberal-program "unity" for a time. In a like manner, uncritical support for and from the Panthers was one of the few concrete issues the diverse anti-labor elements in the old SDS could unite around in expelling the "Worker-Student Alliance" tendency. The Panther split proved once again that hero worship and tail-ending are no substitute for the struggle for Marxist clarity as a foundation of a revolutionary party.

Since their inception, the Panthers have been a test for the predominantly white American left as a whole—a test of its ability to apply Marxist analysis, and a test of its consistency and courage. The absence of a Leninist vanguard party made the ruin of the Panthers likely if not strictly inevitable. Lacking a link to the revolutionary party of the working class, organizations fighting special oppression stand isolated from the rest of the working class and endangered by the problems and backwardness of their particular, isolated areas of struggle. The extreme result of such a situation is "self-determination for everybody" with every organization and particular struggle competing for a larger share of the capitalist pie.

It is important to note the significance of how the Panthers were defeated. That the Panthers were defeated physically by the state rather than politically through the intervention of the vanguard party means, in effect, that many of the lessons of their demise will surely be lost. It means that more despair and less consciousness of what went wrong has been created in many of the best subjectively revolutionary elements. On a smaller scale, the difference is not unlike that between the destruction of a bureaucracy like, say, the North Vietnamese by American tanks and bombers instead of by the North Vietnamese

workers in political revolution.

But did any of the various left organizations show by their attitude toward the Panthers the fitness, the right (or for that matter even any intention) to construct the vanguard party which was lacking? Nearly all self-proclaimed Marxist organizations failed the test, most of them repeatedly on a variety of issues and occasions. The gutless IS, loudly proclaiming their anti-Stalinism, tailed the Panthers throughout the process leading to their embrace with the Stalinists and their liberal allies in the United Front Against Fascism. The SWP-YSA, the most vociferous "Marxist" proponent of black nationalism, consistently ignored the Panthers' systematic errors and violations of proletarian ethics until, we presume, they became scared. They refused to sign a protest issued by the Spartacist League against the beating and exclusion by the Panthers of radical tendencies selling their literature outside a Panther "Birthday Party" celebration in Berkeley, California, in February 1970. Their proclaimed reason for refusal was their unwillingness to intervene in Panther internal affairs—as if physical attacks on competing radical tendencies were an "internal affair"! But they were shortly to repudiate the Panthers as part of their general "orthodox" shying away from the guerrilla warfare line they had preached—for others—for years. (See Spartacist No. 20, April-May 1970, "World Trotskyism Rearms" for an analysis of their newly-discovered Leninist opposition to guerrilla warfare strategy when their European co-thinkers proposed that the U. Sec. implement its pro-guerrilla stance.) The SWP's new criticism of the Panthers whom they supported for so long, is fundamentally criticism from the right, expressed CP-fashion in orthodox-sounding rhetoric about the need to rely on the movement of the masses. The SWP criticized the Panthers also for not being nationalist enough; the scattered references in Panther leaders' speeches to class struggle (of which the Workers League briefly made so much) were too much for the thoroughly reformist SWP to swallow. In an article "Which Way for Black Liberation" in the December 1969 Young Socialist, the YSA leadership condemned the Black Panthers for "waving the little red book, or calling this the year of the gun" instead of "reaching out to the broadest masses of the community" around "the questions of black control of the schools, ending police brutality, better jobs"—precisely the issues the liberals can campaign on. The YSA's critique is thus not a critique of the crude Panther brand of Maoism, but an attack on their attempt to popularize their conception of communist consciousness as opposed to the SWP's classless community reform line.

### From Black Power to Communism

If the Panther split is disorienting for the "white" radical movement, it is devastating for the black radical movement. With the demise of the Panthers as a united organization, no national black organization exists which can claim the allegiance of large numbers of radical blacks. The civil rights movement, which attracted young militants through its social activism and a sense that it was engaging in decisive political battles, is long dead and buried. The mainstream black nationalists are openly and unashamedly on the payroll of "the man." Localized and ad hoc groups like black student unions or tenants' unions cannot have serious revolutionary pretensions, whatever their members might think. The Panthers were the only organization which could seriously claim to be both black and subjectively revolutionary. And now the Panthers are no more. Two competing apparatuses exist in disarray, stripped of moral authority. The only black organization now existing which can claim both a degree of militancy and rudiments of national structure is the Black Workers' Congress. BWC leader James Forman, assertedly converted to anti-imperialism from his SNCC liberalism, expounds a policy of separate organizations of black workers and a view of Marxism as handbook of how-to-run-an-organization-and-be-serious. The BWC appears at this time to be capable of sowing considerable revisionist confusion especially among unionists, but not likely to acquire the widespread moral authority enjoyed by the old Panthers. There is now no place for a black revolutionist to go... except the integrated proletarian socialist movement.

The shrivelling of the civil rights movement in the fires of Watts and Detroit, the rise of pork-chop nationalism and the external and internal destruction of the Panthers cannot be explained in terms of the problems of particular organizations

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## WORKERS VANGUARD

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## SELF-DETERMINATION...

termining the U. S. Army in Vietnam "advisors"!

Marxists support the right of movements of self-determination to seek aid from the deformed workers states and from bourgeois states. We do not support them when the struggle becomes no longer their own, when it becomes transformed into an instrument of an oppressing power's aggrandizement. And in no case can we support, however "critically," the very policy by which a large nation's bourgeoisie takes control of the struggle through overwhelming military force and subordinates it to its drive for expanded hegemony—precisely the case in the India-Pakistan war, as only a political child could fail to see.

For the edification of any political children in the Pabloist and Healyite camps—that is, those whose position is rooted in ignorance and not deliberate betrayal—we suggest a look at the front page of the 26 December New York Times under the headline "LONG OCCUPATION OF EAST PAKISTAN FORESEEN IN INDIA":

"All the evidence indicates that the Indian Government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would like to remove the Indian Army from the eastern region if only because of the heavy expense. But beyond that, the Indians are politically embarrassed by the leadership vacuum there and the large role India must play—since this feeds the arguments of critics that India wants to annex East Pakistan.

"Virtually all foreign diplomats here share the Indian assessment of the volatile situation and the need for keeping the army on. They regard as myopic, for example, the Nixon Administration's call for immediate withdrawal of the Indian troops, since they believe that without the soldiers there probably would be massacres by Bengalis seeking revenge against those who collaborated with the Pakistani troops."

Clearly the Indian military presence is intended to prevent the unrest in bone-poor Bangla Desh, temporarily stripped of a solid bourgeois state apparatus, from taking root among the proletariat and peasantry and spreading to uneasy West Bengal. In other words, Comrades Healy and Wohlforth, Indian troops entered the war to expand Indian hegemony and prevent social revolution, and they stay in Bangla Desh for the same purpose. And further, comrades of the SWP, that is also precisely why the "leaders" of the Bengali struggle have been so quick to cooperate.

In a front-page article on the conflict (Workers' Power, No. 48) the International Socialists correctly analyze India's aim as the creation of a client state in Bangla Desh. But true to form the IS dares not swim against the stream of petty-bourgeois liberal-radical opinion, and so it concocts a metaphysical theory of "two wars going on simultaneously": one for Bengali self-determination, the other between India and Pakistan. This enables the IS, while opposing both India and Pakistan, to refrain from having to explain in plain words that the self-determination struggle has been decisively subordinated to Indian appetites for unquestioned hegemony over the subcontinent. The IS "two wars" position is simply a convenient way to disappear the problem. Consider this hypothetical analogy: "In the U. S. there are two anti-war movements—that of the working class and that of the liberal wing of the imperialist bourgeoisie." But the problem is precisely that the latter element entirely dominates the anti-war movement. The task facing the Marxists is nothing other than to pose clearly the

essential class character of such a political formation and to raise demands which break the working class from subordination to the bourgeoisie, not to think up a comforting rationale that the Bengali self-determination struggle is alive and well, suspended above the class realities in some other astral plane.

In a polemic with the SWP in 1942, it fell to Max Shachtman's lot to place the general principle of support to self-determination struggles within a context of Leninist regard for concrete reality. The issue was China. Should socialists support China's war against Japanese imperialism on the grounds of self-determination for China, or had such support become merely, as Shachtman charged, back-handed assistance to U. S. imperialism which not merely assisted, but controlled the Chinese forces? Shachtman's Workers Party held that

"with the spread of the World War to the East, the just struggle for the national independence of China has been decisively integrated into and subordinated to the reactionary inter-imperialist war and that it can therefore no longer be supported by the revolutionary Marxists."

—"China in the World War," The New International, June 1942

John G. Wright of the SWP had sought to bolster his case for continued support to China with the analogy of foreign interference in the American Revolution and Civil War. Such interference, he argued, did not make Marxists renounce those just struggles, and neither should U. S. aid to Chiang deprive him of military support from socialists in the war against the Japanese. Shachtman effectively disposed of the analogy:

"If we go back to Wright's fabulous historical instances, the answer to our present problem becomes still simpler. The Russo-French rivalry did not dominate the American Civil War; the Anglo-American war with Japan does dominate the war in the East, and only a purblind dogmatist or a man in a haluk [whirling dervish's trance] can regard it as a sort of minor side-show in China's war with Japan.

"Baron von Steuben was a great drill-master of the American colonial army and Rochambeau and his French monarchist forces were a most valuable aid to the American colonial bourgeoisie; but the latter was at all times the real master of its political and military position. On the other hand, the American General Stillwell, as head of the Chinese general staff, symbolizes the decisive subordination of China's struggle to the interests and exigencies of the imperialist war between Washington and Tokyo...."

—Ibid.

### What Lenin Really Said

What then are the guidelines for socialists who seek to support self-determination struggles but, unlike the "International Committee" and the SWP, do not want to give direct or indirect aid to the bourgeoisie? The answer lies in one of the sides of Lenin's thinking on the question which has been systematically obscured, and which must be largely unknown today to most radicals.

Lenin argued for support of self-determination struggles in general. Most radicals are familiar with this, the predominant side of his emphasis, outlined especially in his polemics with comrades like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Radek. But Lenin also clearly described cases in which the right to

self-determination and other democratic demands were overshadowed by larger considerations—when an existing, supportable struggle for national independence became absorbed into and subordinated to another thing entirely, when it became merely an arm (even if a "popular" or "mass" arm) of imperialist aggrandizement.

According to Lenin, socialists could support the Serbian struggle—even though bourgeois-led—for freedom from Austria until that struggle became, as happened by 1914, merely an appendage of the Tsarist war with the Hapsburgs. To continue raising the demand for Serbian independence under those concrete conditions would simply be service by socialists to the Tsarist military, diplomatic and propaganda effort. Under the conditions of the imperialist war among the big powers, the Bolsheviks did not prate of self-determination for Serbia. They did not talk, SWP-fashion, of the Serbian "freedom fighters" correctly utilizing the "objective situation" of Tsarist ambitions in Europe "to help get the [Austrian] tyrants off their backs." They supported Serbian independence no less in general, but the question had become for the time being abstract. Toward Poland during World War I the Bolsheviks took a similar stand. In the particular case, Lenin argued, support for Polish "independence" became actual support to whichever imperialist side happened at the moment not to possess Poland and hence was willing to "free" it.

"Nicholas the Bloody, Khvostov, Chelnokov, Milyukov and Co. are, of course, entirely in favour of Poland's independence—they are heart and soul in favour of it now, when this slogan, put into practice, means victory over Germany, the country which has deprived Russia of Poland. Let us not forget that before the war, the creators of 'the Stolypin labour party' were wholly and unreservedly opposed to the slogan of the self-determination of nations and Poland's right to secede.... Now that Poland has been taken from Russia they are in favour of the 'independence' of Poland (from Germany; but on this point they maintain a discreet silence)...."

"But how can we help liberate Poland from Germany? Isn't it our duty to do so? Of course it is, though never by supporting the imperialist war waged by Russia, be it Tsarist, or bourgeois, or even bourgeois-republican, but by supporting the revolutionary proletariat of Germany, by supporting those elements in the Social-Democratic Party of Germany who are fighting against the counter-revolutionary labour party of the Sudekums and Kautsky and Co."

—"Peace Without Annexations and the Independence of Poland as Slogans of the Day in Russia," Collected Works, Vol. 22, pp. 138-140

The achievement of the democratic and socialist aspirations of the working masses of the Indian subcontinent can only come through proletarian revolution and, ideally, through a united socialist federation of the area, including present-day India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh and Ceylon. As a step toward such a solution the demand for self-determination and opposition to all "great nation" encroachments must be raised. The proletarian revolution in the existing nations of the subcontinent will be the easier to achieve as their workers free themselves from the necessity imposed by their ruling classes to oppress other nationalities and religious minorities. Pakistan's defeat in East Bengal is in itself a step in this direction—but the victory of the Indian bourgeoisie constitutes an equal step in the opposite direction. The cheering in East Bengal will not last. The workers and peasants will learn the lessons of their betrayal; the opportunists who tailed after their treacherous "leaders" and now capitulate directly before the Indian bourgeoisie can learn only new avenues of betrayal. ■

and the defections of particular leaders. Rather, these developments prove the impossibility of building a black liberation struggle independent of the rest of American society. The civil rights movement failed because the oppression and degradation of black people is deeply rooted in the American economy and society and cannot be eliminated through legalistic reforms. Only a socialist economic system can lift the ghetto masses off the bottom of the economic order. That the black power protests of H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael produced a movement of Uncle Toms in dashikis and professional strike-breakers was not because the movement was always composed of corrupt opportunists. The black power advo-

cates realized the ghetto was not economically viable. If black power meant more black principals, welfare department heads and police chiefs, then only the ruling class could finance a substantial increase in the black bureaucracy. And the ruling class always demands a return on its money. The Panthers could not defeat the cops because the cops are an essential part of the capitalist state and the Panthers could not defeat that state. Given that fact, the Panthers could only alternate between the bitter consequences of heroic adventurism or appealing to the liberal establishment.

The oppression of the black people cannot be ended by black activists alone, but only by the

working class as a whole. The breakup of the Panthers' organization and authority creates greater opportunity—but only opportunity—for the struggle for an integrated proletarian socialist vanguard party. The process is in no sense inevitable; there will always be plenty of hustlers and romantic rebels to attempt endless repetition of the old mistakes and betrayals. But the intervention of Leninists among radical blacks can stimulate the understanding that the liberation of black people will be both a great driving force of the American proletarian revolution, and a great achievement of the revolution in power. That revolution will be made, not in the name of black power, but of working-class power—communism.

# For Union Rights Under Any Flag!

NEW YORK—On December 15, members of the National Maritime Union demonstrated in front of the Federal Building to publicize their opposition to legislation permitting the sale of five laid-up passenger ships to foreign-registered companies. This "runaway shipping" means increasing unemployment for NMU seamen as the companies increase their profits by employing low-paid foreign seamen and maintaining sweatshop conditions. The demonstration was called by the NMU Militant-Solidarity Caucus, an opposition group within the union, in order to highlight their militant alternative to NMU President Joe Curran's policy of appealing to Nixon and the "friends of labor" on the grounds of patriotism.

The protesters carried placards and distributed literature calling for strike action and solidarity among all the waterfront unions to enforce demands for U.S. union-scale wages and job conditions for all seamen while in American ports, the organization of a militant international maritime union, nationalization of shipping without compensation under workers' control and with the right to strike, the restoration of full manning scales on all ships and a workers party based on militant trade unions.

The fight for these demands means the fight against the wretched labor traitors of the Curran machine, which offers NMU seamen only class collaboration, national chauvinism and endless sellouts. The September-October issue of the NMU's official organ, the *Pilot*, offers an extreme example of the attempt to salvage a membership base through dividing the world working class. Curran's column, "Passing the Word," bemoans the loss of jobs in American industry and its implications for American empire. He declares:

"What we as a nation do in this area—to protect our economy and our standards of life and decency against sweatshop competition from these multi-national international conglomerates—will largely determine the future of American transport and most of the rest of American industry. It will, in fact, largely determine the future of our nation as a world leader."

With his patriotic speeches Curran can only appeal to the very interests who prefer a healthy profit to "the national interest." In place of strong union action, Curran prefers to beg favors from his friends in Congress by the same lobbying tactics used by the shipping interests, despite Joseph Curran, Jr.'s acknowledgment that "we just don't have the same amount of money to throw around."

The New York Times of 10 December noted that:

"In 1970, for example, the [shipping] industry gave Representative Edward A. Garmatz, a Maryland Democrat who is chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, more than \$30,000. Mr. Garmatz ran for re-election unopposed."

Curran's tactic is to invoke his patriotism, the importance of "American flag" shipping for "defense" and "the future of our nation as a world leader," and drums up public support from fellow bureaucrats, organizations like the American Legion and "citizens" like Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago. These are perfectly willing to rally 'round the flag—it isn't costing them anything.

Curran's bright idea is to demand that "foreign industries, insofar as their commerce with us is concerned, conform to the same standards of health and decency which we require of our own



NMU Militants Demonstrate at Federal Building in New York.

industry" and hastens to add "I mean labor standards as well as safety standards." But what is to implement and enforce these noble sentiments except union action? Curran makes his appeal to the interests who are in the shipping business for profits and nothing else. He is eager to demonstrate that he has their best interests at heart: "We do not advocate government ownership or excessive government regulation. Certainly that would not answer the workers' problems." Curran's "answer" to "the workers' problems" would seem to be nothing else but the patriotic good will of their employers!

The problem, of course, is real. The *Pilot* notes that U.S. shipping has sunk to seventh place in the world, with the number of ships down to 699, and quotes a Federal Maritime Commission official that the "U.S. flag merchant fleet will sink to 400 ships."

Seamen must fight runaway shipping, but they cannot do so by appeals to the shippers who seek cheap labor and the government which protects the companies' profits. They must demand U.S. union-scale wages and conditions for any ships entering U.S. ports and enforce that demand by united labor action. Curran's inaction and patriotic rhetoric mean not only the loss of NMU jobs, but also the depression of the wages and working conditions of the entire working class, and the fanning of national antagonisms which cripple the class in the face of capitalist attack. Once the bureaucracy is ousted, seamen, with their wide international contacts and past traditions of militant struggle, can play a leading role in a united, international working-class fight. ■

Continued from Page 1

## NPAC

power through the Federal Reserve Board. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced not to "the crisis of revolutionary leadership" as in the *Transitional Program*, but to the crisis of inflated paper money. What the Labor Committee presented was not a program for socialist revolution but for "socialist reconstruction" which is a jazzed-up version of the pacifist biblical exhortation to turn swords into plowshares. The Socialist Labor Committee handed out a leaflet titled "Dissolve NPAC" but which actually called for dissolving the Old Left and replacing class struggle with psyche struggle. Like the disillusioned Wilhelm Reich, they repudiate Marxism; only time will tell whether they follow the footsteps of their mentor into the warm bosom of the Republican Party. To quote Trotsky:

"If socialism aimed at creating a new human nature within the limits of the old society it would be nothing more than a new edition of the moralistic utopias. Socialism does not aim at creating a socialist psychology as a prerequisite to socialism but at creating socialist conditions of life as a prerequisite to socialist psychology."

### NPAC Splits (?)

Most of the actual debate of the conference was taken up with a "disagreement over tactics" expressed in the two resolutions of the NPAC leadership: the SWP and the Gage-Colby-Lafferty-Gordon-Williams proposals—a "struggle" whether to parade up Fifth Avenue or down Pennsylvania Avenue! The divergence in the NPAC leadership was obviously a result of the poor turnout for November 6. In addition, the Gage-Colby & Co. resolution called for a labor anti-war congress, but this was hardly mentioned in the discussion. The SWP's main argument was that the greater the distance from the White House the more "independence" the action would have, while Gage-Colby & Co. claimed that the closer to the White House, the more impact. IS meekly reminded the adversaries that if they were really worried about the "independence" of the anti-war movement from bourgeois political parties, they might try not inviting bourgeois political speakers, but IS' participation in NPAC as loyal builder of the next action was not made conditional on excluding bourgeois speakers. The Workers League as usual played attorney for the SWP by lambasting Gage-Colby & Co. for "crossing over to reformism, crossing over to Stalinism"—as if the SWP was not doing the same thing. Subsequent coverage in the *WL Bulletin* sought to exaggerate the division among the NPAC tops—between those who want to make the anti-war movement more frankly a tool of the liberal electoral campaigns and those who want to preserve its nominal "independence"—as a significant political rupture, rather than a tactical falling out among thieves.

Ironically, though the conference took place under the slogan "Hands Off Kent State," two SDSers from Kent State were physically excluded by NPAC marshals for allegedly having made verbal threats to disrupt the conference and allegedly having told an NPAC supporter at Kent State to take down his literature table. Certainly the latter action, if true, constitutes an indefensible violation of democracy within the movement, but if the NPAC conference were to constitute itself a trial body of the left for gangsterism, then the first groups to go would have to be the SWP and the WL for their participation in the beating and physical expulsion of the SL-RCY and PL-SDS at the July NPAC conference in New York City.

As might have been expected, the WL, IS and PL (and needless to say the SWP) copped out on the basic revolutionary internationalist obligation to support the military victory of the NLF forces against U.S. imperialism—although they all claim to support this position! All were too busy distorting their supposed principles in order to make themselves more acceptable to the NPAC leadership. The fight waged by the Spartacist League-Revolutionary Communist Youth for class struggle and internationalism stood out in sharp relief against this background of class collaboration and pacifist social patriotism on the part of the fake-left conciliators. ■

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