

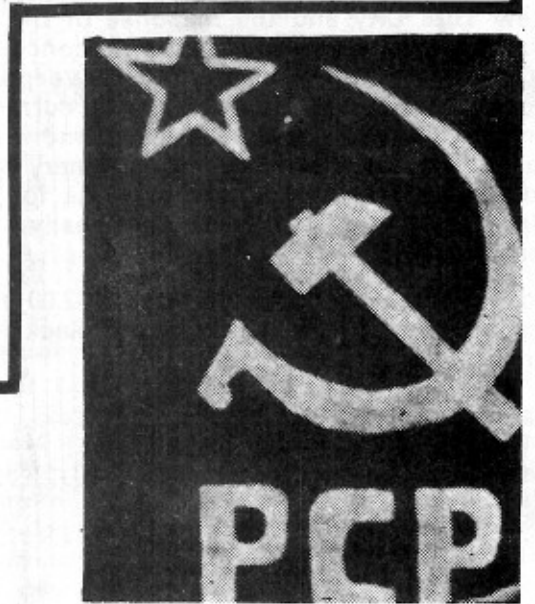
SOCIALIST VOICE



Reconstruct
the Fourth International!

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

What Are the Communist Parties?



Revolutionary Perspectives for Southern Labor
The Spartacist League's Scandalous Chauvinism

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Business Manager's Notebook

The response to the first two issues of *Socialist Voice* has been highly gratifying. The need for reviving a serious Marxist examination of the world has never been more neglected than it is today — or more desperately needed. It is therefore important that we ensure a larger as well as a continuing readership. Subscriptions have been coming in at a steady rate, but the number must increase if *Socialist Voice* is to grow. Therefore let me urge each reader to subscribe and get others to do so as well.

In addition to subscriptions, we need to increase our readership nationally and internationally through individual sales. If you know of a newsstand or bookstore likely to handle *Socialist Voice*, please drop us a note with its address. Subscriptions and newsstand sales are important as an addition to workplace and street sales.

The distribution of *Socialist Voice* is our main problem, given the size of the LRP. We have no lack of articles or material from the archives of the Marxist movement. In future issues, we will continue our series of the New South with articles on the nature of the American capitalist class and the black struggle in the U.S. We will also continue our examination of the degeneration of the Russian revolution with articles on Russian imperialism and the crisis and devolution of the Russian and Russian-dominated state capitalist economies. As well, crowded out of this issue because of the length of other articles was an assessment of the slowly developing mild-left reformist current in the U.S. labor bureaucracy, which stretches from Winpisinger of the Machinists to Sadlowski in the Steelworkers.

Let me also call to the reader's attention that we also print and publish a monthly topical propaganda bulletin, *Socialist Action*. We urge our readers to subscribe to this publication as well.

Comradely,
A.R.

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Published by the *League for the Revolutionary Party*

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Where We Stand:

The Spartacist League's Scandalous Chauvinism

The Spartacist League (SL) is one of several centrist groups that claim to represent the continuity of the Fourth International. The SL boasts that it (unlike the other Pabloite movements) is building a genuinely principled international tendency. James Robertson, the Spartacists' founder and a member of its Central Committee, recently returned from an international tour and reported on his findings at a public meeting held in New York City on January 29th of this year. It is this forum to which we draw the reader's attention. It exploded the Spartacist League's phoney claim to internationalism. Unfortunately, the performance was of such a character that it added a new, ugly, and damaging stain on the reputation of Trotskyism which Robertson falsely identifies himself with.

Robertson spoke for ninety minutes, giving what was heralded as an analysis of the world conjunctural situation. It was somewhat incredible that the leader of a group which characterizes Russia, China and similar societies as "workers' states" had nothing at all to say about most of them — with one exception. But that political oversight quickly paled into insignificance. In the course of his meandering travelogue, Robertson delivered a series of chauvinist epithets that insulted the revolutionary capacities of the working classes everywhere and denigrated almost every non-white, non-American and non-English speaking people that got in his way. His theme was to blame the working masses for the weak state of the revolutionary movement.

Robertson warmed up with the sneering comment that the Vietnamese victory over imperialism was a "big deal" and was "not really as important as the defeat of the workers in Indonesia" because "not many people live in Indochina." After this cavalier dismissal of 56 million Indochinese people and a struggle which has had enormous consequences for imperialism, he really got going.

"The Greek population exists by selling its children or selling Swiss watches to one another."

Albania, the only "workers state" Robertson saw fit to mention, was a nation of "goat-fuckers."

"Northern Europe is dripping with fat," so the workers of this region can be "bought off with slight adjustments." Similarly, the foreign workers in these countries can also be bought off and when deported would "only end up supporting popular fronts."

Canada was not worth considering (although the Spartacist tendency has a group in that country) because it is only the "fringe on the surrey extending fifty miles north of the U.S. border." Non-English speaking North America (Mexico and Quebec, with the most advanced class struggles on the continent) was specifically ignored in this talk, which was supposed to deal with the world revolutionary setting.

As for the U.S., the one country where Robertson believes that Trotskyism has an "unbroken tradition," it too "is a jaded

country" which, like Northern Europe, "drips with fat if you exclude the Negro (sic) from the statistics." But Robertson saved his vilest spleen for the American blacks: "The black population burned down the ghettos and it's now waiting for the Jews to come back and open up the drug stores." High prices charged by storekeepers in the ghetto were attributed to the fact that "black kids rip them off." And that was his entire analysis on this subject, from beginning to end.

Robertson's remarks would have been disgusting from anyone, but coming in a public presentation from the leader of a "revolutionary" organization based in the world's foremost imperialist country, they were nothing short of a scandal. Even more scandalous was the Spartacists' justification of Robertson's vicious cynicism — in the name of Marx and Lenin!

Lenin was absolutely unequivocal on the question:

"That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or 'great' nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view."

Robertson's comments were put forward seriously. They were not even meant as remarkably bad jokes, and the SL in its cynical defense never claimed them to be. Even had that been the case, such insensitivity would have been impossible for a revolutionary leader, for as Lenin went on to say:

". . . Nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice; 'offended' nationals are not sensitive to anything so much as to the feeling of equality and the violence of this equality, if only through negligence or jest — to the violation of that equality by their proletarian comrades." ("On the Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation'," December 31, 1922; in *National Liberation, Socialism and Imperialism*, International Publishers, pp. 168-9.)

There is, as Lenin's warning suggests, a political explanation for Robertson's behavior. The Spartacist League is Pabloite: that is, it holds that the dozen countries where state power was conquered by Communist Parties since World War II are ("detorted") workers' states — which means that the socialist revolution was made under the leadership of petty-bourgeois Stalinists or nationalists. Such a notion abandons the Marxist understanding that the proletariat is the only revolutionary class in this epoch.

Pabloism by its nature is a capitulation to the petty bourgeoisie in theory and practice. It leads its followers to a petty-bourgeois outlook rather than to champion the historical interests of the working class. Given the variety of layers of the

petty bourgeoisie, pulverized by capitalism into an asteroid belt between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the different branches of Pabloism (and of centrism generally) make their capitulations in different ways. Some, like the United Secretariat majority led by Ernest Mandel and Pierre Frank, defer primarily to the petty-bourgeois leaderships of nationalist "third world" struggles. Others, like the American SWP, make their foremost obeisance to the labor bureaucracy, the petty-bourgeois leadership of the working class in the imperialist countries. (The SWP has become the cheerleaders and torch bearers for the mild-left bureaucrats, the most recent of which is Ed Sadlowski of the United Steelworkers.) Most centrists manage to submit to both of these petty-bourgeois tendencies at once.

The uniqueness of the Spartacist League, what many leftists mistakenly regard as its "sectarianism," is that it does not capitulate to the nationalism of the oppressed nations — because it directly reflects the attitudes of the privileged sections of the American working class. The SL provides a left cover for the labor aristocracy's contempt for and fear of the oppressed workers.

The Spartacists appear very left only because there does not exist a real left current in the union bureaucracy of the United States. A rising class struggle in the future will undoubtedly cast up, as in the past, such a left bureaucratic centrism presenting itself as a battling revolutionary force. (The articles in this issue on the Communist Parties and the Southern class struggle illustrate two possible variants.) This is what the Spartacists are a foretaste of, what they are laying the propaganda basis for now: a real militant reformism with, as they say, at least one demand from the Transitional Program. Therefore they don't buy the milquetoast Sadlowskis. One look at the British left Labourites of today on racism, or the left bureaucracy in the American past, will show that national chauvinism is just as virulent a disease on the "left" as among the right reformists. And Robertson presents it to us now.

The singlemindedness of the SL points to a specific political conception within the general line of Pabloism. Pablo's abandonment of Trotskyism in favor of petty-bourgeois capitulation was predated by the Shachtmanites' break from the Fourth International in 1940. In giving up on the revolutionary gains made by the workers through the Bolshevik Revolution, Shachtman was originally a *left* centrist reflection of the cynical retreat of the left reformist labor bureaucracy and intelligentsia. Shachtman's "Third Camp" was not equivalent to the later "third world" politics. While it subsequently stood for the support of pro-Western ex-colonial leaderships, it placed its original and long-term faith in the left sections of the trade union leaderships of the democratic (imperialist) countries; these were the "advanced" sectors to be won to the "socialist" cause.

Shachtmanism differed from the broader development of Pabloism only in the direction of its capitulation. The Pabloites of various lands used their pro-Stalinism to reflect adaptations made to other petty-bourgeois currents. The historic links between Pabloite and Shachtmanite groupings were not accidental; the method was the same.

The Spartacist League is a Pabloite-Shachtmanite hybrid. It cloaks its quite direct acceptance of the outlook of the labor aristocracy in the so-called advanced cultures with the veneer of Trotskyist orthodoxy on the "workers' states." In fact, as we showed in the article "Permanent Revolution in Southern Africa" (*Socialist Voice* No. 1), it was only the Spartacists' support of Russian imperialism that permitted them to come

to the delayed support of the anti-U.S. imperialism struggle in Angola.

The uniqueness of the SL also lies in its clarity. Other Pabloites waver over exactly what class forces created the "deformed workers' states." Not so the Spartacists, who boldly state that the petty-bourgeoisie (in "exceptional circumstances," but the exception has been the inevitable rule) can make the socialist revolution. Similarly, very few if any other Pabloites (or Shachtmanites) would express their chauvinism so baldly as does Robertson. In fact, they would recoil in anger — to their credit.

Robertson is certainly not a racist in the Hitlerian sense; it is not at all a question of genetic inheritance. Nor do the Stalinists in the USSR wish to physically exterminate the Jews; they merely want to eliminate them as an identifiable cultural entity different from the Great Russians. Such is the SL's view. Let the Albanians and the Greeks learn civilized behavior. Let the blacks give up their unproductive rage ("nothing much happened after the ghetto riots," said Robertson). Let them all act like his image of good socialistic white American trade unionists who are the offspring of advanced technological culture and Robertson will welcome them all into the fold.

If the SL's preference for the labor aristocracy had not been made sufficiently clear by Robertson's presentation, his (and other Spartacists') defense of his performance and of the SL's long-standing positions during the discussion period proved the point. The Spartacists' first defense against attacks from the League for the Revolutionary Party (and also from the Communist Cadre organization) was that we were "moralists" for objecting to Robertson's invective.

SL speakers, Robertson in the lead, denounced the "lumpen rage" of the black ghettos — as if anger against oppression is reprehensible and confined only to the lumpenproletariat. We are far from moralists, however, in identifying with the rage of black workers. The SL's effort to lump outraged masses with the lumpen, and to separate them from more solidly employed blacks, is precisely the present political strategy of the left liberals. The unemployed and marginally employed workers for whom capitalism can no longer provide jobs are tossed on the scrap-heap, and their fury is equated with that of the criminal elements.

Similarly, the SL continued to defend its opposition to free immigration from the oppressed countries into the imperialist heartlands on the grounds that it would threaten the "national identity of the recipient countries" (*Workers Vanguard*, January 18, 1974). This position is a sophisticated left cover for the favorite remedy of the labor bureaucracy for unemployment, crime and the other ills of capitalism: blame them on foreign workers. The SL does not support the bureaucracy's present course, but again it serves notice of its future course in a more left setting.

LRP speakers charged that the SL had reneged on the revolutionary obligation to give military tactical support in the anti-imperialist struggle in Angola and in the Palestinian fight in Lebanon when they were under attack by the U.S.-backed right wing and the Syrian army. The SL replied that Lebanon was a "tribal puzzle" whose pieces, apparently, have no relation to world imperialism. Warming to the subject of the Middle East, the SL repeated the familiar Zionist slogan that the Arabs really wanted to "drive the Jews into the sea."

As for Africa, the Spartacists again stressed the importance of the South African whites for the anti-apartheid struggle because of their "privileged access to culture and technology" (*Workers Vanguard*, January 14, 1977); the blacks would be

"wiped out" without whites on their side. In perhaps the most outrageous remark of the evening, Robertson affirmed the SL's support for the "right of the Boers to self-determination" — against a black republic, not the British Empire of 1900! This was a direct appeal to the bourgeoisie's most corrupted allies in the working class.

Responding to angry criticism from the audience, the Spartacists alleged that they, like Lenin and the Bolsheviks, supported the right of self-determination for "all" nations. What a travesty! It would never have occurred to Lenin, nor to any other leftist until the Spartacists, that the "great," imperialist oppressor nations were in need of self-determination. The right of self-determination means the right to secede from an oppressor. The South African whites already have their independence, and use it to enslave the

groups who had come to personify capitalism and its oppression, as well as at the petty nationalisms of his epoch which were stalking horses for Czarist Russian reaction, the main threat against the oppressed and the progressive forces of his day. Robertson, in contrast, aimed his barbs against the nationalism of the oppressed and thereby proved that, in Lenin's words, he "has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view." To be a Leninist is to be an anti-nationalist, but one cannot be a Leninist without distinguishing between the nationalisms of the oppressed and the oppressors.

The SL tried to turn the tables on the LRP by accusing us of acquiescing to racism through our "refusal to defend busing." The SL has indeed mastered the art of substituting slander for

Documents of Struggle

The League for the Revolutionary Party is publishing the major documents that the Revolutionary Party Tendency (now the LRP) issued during its fight inside the Revolutionary Socialist League. Two documents of the series are now available in pamphlet form.

No. 1, *The RSL in Crisis; Behind the Labor Party Slogan.* The first major re-evaluation of the labor party concept by Trotskyists in decades. The persistent use of this slogan regardless of time and place represents a denial of the need for the revolutionary party.

No. 2, *Statement of the Revolutionary Party Tendency.* This document examines the specific features of the decay of the RSL. It resurrects the Bolshevik position on the united front as a front for action, as opposed to a programmatic or propaganda bloc.

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blacks. To guarantee such rights to an oppressor can only mean equating the rights of oppressor and oppressed — and that always comes down to denying the rights of the oppressed. If the South African whites demand "self-determination" on the verge of a black victory in that country, whose side will the South African Spartacists be on?

The equation of the rights to national self-determination of the oppressor and the oppressed is a constant theme of the Spartacists, not only in South Africa but in Palestine and Northern Ireland as well. The equal right of the rich and poor to sleep in the cold is a notorious watchword of the bourgeois democrats, not of proletarian revolutionists who recognize such "equal rights" as a cynical defense of capitalist inequality.

The Spartacists' other repeated defenses against our attacks were 1) that we were wrong to criticize Robertson's words rather than the SL program, and 2) that Karl Marx was also famous for using strong language in describing various nationalities. The LRP, in fact, said a good deal about the SL's program in our intervention. Not surprisingly, however, Robertson and the SLers who followed his lead chose not to answer our politics but instead tried to cover up the impact of Robertson's "great nation" bullying. The Spartacists overlook the fact that program is not just a list of positions — it is everything a party stands for. In this case Robertson's words spoke louder than his purported political message. One who claims to be an internationalist yet breathes contempt for every people but his own, is no internationalist.

As for Marx's language, an LRP speaker pointed out that Marx lived before the epoch of imperialism, before the holocaust of Nazism had painted in bloody colors the depths to which decaying capitalism can descend. Marx raged at those

politics. Our tendency has always made clear that the first obligation of revolutionaries in the busing controversy is to defend blacks from racist attacks. And we have also stressed that "busing is a vicious ruling class attack on blacks and cannot be supported." (For a full discussion, see *Socialist Action*, September 1976.)

Busing for racial integration of the schools is a liberal bourgeois strategy that claims to improve the education of black children by associating them with whites, a claim endorsed by the Spartacist League. In reality, busing is a cover for denying decent education in the cities' financial crisis by cutting school budgets and shifting children from one decaying school to another. Black students are being used as well as cannon fodder in an effort by the ruling class to mobilize the most backward workers against the black oppressed. We stand for the right of black children to attend schools out of the ghetto if they wish. But the SL opposes this right and grants the bourgeois judges the right to allocate schools as *they* see fit, for that is what the busing programs (which the SL wishes to "extend") entail.

It is noteworthy that the Spartacist League does *not* extend its busing program to the factories by advocating preferential transfers of black workers to replace white workers in better-paying jobs. That, says the SL, would be unconscionable interference by the bourgeois state into the trade unions. The state's manipulation of education, in contrast, for them is not a class question. This distinction once again demonstrates their commitment to the labor aristocracy, their consequent trade union chauvinism — and the liberal integrationist, cultural-chauvinist veneer which is the hallmark of the Spartacists. The state must be prevented from dividing the working class, not only in the unions but throughout social

and political life. Wherever the division is attempted it is the task of revolutionaries to identify with the struggle of the oppressed sectors of the class, to try to win the better-off workers away from the bourgeois strategy and to prevent the mobilization of the labor aristocracy against the interests of the oppressed and the working class as a whole.

We note the fact that the Spartacists' own account of the forum in the February 4 *Workers Vanguard* did not quote any of the reprehensible comments which we had attacked, although it summarized the speech at great length. Nor did it deal honestly with the SL's opponents; the article referred to our criticisms only as a "glorification of lumpen rage." The citations from Robertson's speech, however, are proof that our outrage was based on quite different considerations.

The remarks that we cite here were taken down by *Socialist Voice* reporters at the forum. After the forum, a Spartacist official agreed that we could listen to their tape recording of the talk in order to verify our notes. Several days later, however, we were told that "the tapes will not be made available externally." As we replied to the Spartacist League in a letter challenging their refusal:

"Comrade Robertson's talk was public, and it would seem that you would, under normal circumstances, want to have the contents of such a talk widely disseminated. However, we can well understand why you have now decided to suppress such a frank admission of your chauvinist politics. Your cowardly account in *Workers Vanguard* No. 143 testifies to your intent to disguise the content of Robertson's remarks and the real nature of the attack made upon it by the LRP."

We again repeated our challenge to the SL to make the tapes of this public talk available to the left public and the workers' movement.

Since our quotations come from notes taken by several comrades and were checked with those of non-members of our organization who were present, we believe them to be reasonably accurate. If the Spartacists wish to challenge the accuracy of the quoted material, if they wish to argue that Robertson did not make such chauvinist and racist remarks, there is a simple recourse. Make the tapes available. If access to the tapes is given to us (and to others like the Communist Cadre who have requested it) we will publish any necessary corrections. We frankly doubt that the SL will yield the tapes, if only because they contain even more insults and outrages than those listed here.

The Spartacists' international tendency will die aborning. Its implicit orientation to the labor aristocracy spells its doom. For the most oppressed sectors of the workers are where the revolutionary parties must sink their roots. These layers have no stake in maintaining the capitalist system and will inevitably make up disproportionate numbers of the leading cadres of the reconstructed Fourth International. The struggle to forge the International will have to sweep aside the chauvinist conceptions of the Spartacist League, for internationalism abhors the slightest concession to the ideology of imperialism. It will reject capitulation to capitalism in any form — statified, monopolized, or petty — and thereby learn the necessary lessons from the tragic degeneration of the Fourth International. ■

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Class Struggle in the U.S. South

Part 2:

Revolutionary Perspectives for Southern Labor

Murray Finley is the head of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), which has launched its campaign to unionize the Southern textile industry through a boycott of the giant J.P. Stevens Corporation. Finley states, "I believe trade unions are necessary to preserve the American way of life." The triteness of his expression should not fool the reader into dismissing his sentiments as hollow rhetoric. His boycott campaign is proof that he really means it.

ACTWU is the result of the merger of two unions, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the Textile Workers Union, both of which were militant sections of the old CIO built by radical and combative memberships. In recent years, the union leaderships have pushed further to the right in response to the deepening crisis of world capitalism. The Amalgamated has been in the forefront of a rabidly jingoist

fight for protectionist tariff barriers against textile and clothing imports. This fight is the bureaucrats' alternative to a struggle for organizing the unorganized internationally, for higher and equal wages everywhere, for nationalizing and revitalizing the clothing industries. Such a struggle would have revolutionary implications, and needless to say, Finley and his friends do not find it practical.

What they do find practical is the only other alternative: to accept that capitalism in all its decadence is here to stay, to accept the bourgeois strategy of dividing the working class and to accept the bourgeois attempt to prop up a retrograde industry through inflated profits. However, one of the biggest threats to the wage scales of Amalgamated workers is the runaway shops in the South and their low wages. Tariff barriers are unsuitable in this case, and so ACTWU is forced

into its boycott campaign.

We pointed out in Part 1 of this series that to organize a militant and fighting union in the South would mean taking on the whole ruling class of the U.S., not just the local political representatives of capital but the national state. It would ensure an enormous explosion that would reverberate throughout the entire country. And that is no way to "preserve the American way of life" — capitalism and exploitation. We have already noted the historical oppression of white labor and the super-oppression of black labor in the South that the American way of life is based on. To understand the bureaucracy's present strategy, we must sketch in the most recent developments in the Southern class struggle that endanger what the bourgeoisie and the labor bureaucrats wish to preserve.

Potential of Southern Labor

The emergence of the New South as a whole new setting for ravenous exploitation has proved very attractive to American capitalism. But the lure could be a Lorelei. For in its quest for profit and accumulation,



J.P. Stevens boycott conducted by ACTWU ignores real strength of working class. The bureaucracy fears to unleash a potentially revolutionary struggle.

capitalism has weakened many of the powerful props that buttress not only the South but the entire American system. The Southern working class is bigger, more united and more strategically placed than ever before.

The South is now mainly urban. Financial and industrial power rules, and even agriculture is dominated by its more technologically advanced sectors. Industry still exists and is growing in the mill towns, company towns and small-town industrial areas — especially in the textile and apparel industries — but it is the urban bourgeoisie that leads its country cousins, and not the reverse as in the Southern tradition.

Similarly, the modern industrial cities contain the greatest social weight of the working class. The old parochial, rural and semi-rural community relationships are breaking down. Much of the recent flood of immigration to the urban workforce came from the countryside in one huge leap. This sharp “discontinuity” conceals a tremendous radical potential lying just beneath the surface, a surface which seems to reflect a conservative working class consciousness at the moment. A comparison with the period leading up to the Russian revolution is illustrative.

Lenin pointed out that the backbone of the Bolshevik Party that led the 1917 revolution consisted of workers who had emerged from the stifling grip of primitive rural Russia only a few years before. Trotsky, in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chapter 1), wrote:

“In Russia, the proletariat did not arise gradually through the ages, carrying with itself the burden of the past as in England, but in leaps involving sharp changes of environment, ties, relations, and a sharp break with the past. It is just this fact — combined with the concentrated oppression of Czarism — that made the Russian workers hospitable to the boldest conclusions of revolutionary thought — just as the backward industries were hospitable to the last word in capitalist organization.”

In the past, the pattern of Southern industry was quite different from that described by Trotsky. Much of Southern industry was small, isolated and far from modern. The well-known “rural consciousness” and “individualism” of Southern workers were retained under these conditions, and they hampered the growth of collective class consciousness and struggle against the bosses. This pattern was social and far from congenial with Southern workers. Those agrarians who went North to urban Michigan with its modern auto complexes, for example, became a driving force in the creation of the United Auto Workers and the organization of the sit-down strikes in the 1930's. Even in the South, workers in the concentrated urban centers and in the social pressure cooker of the mines developed both militant struggles and advanced class identities.

Today, the barriers to advanced class consciousness are being undermined. Just as the low level and parochialism of Southern industry, together with the vast poverty and endless drudgery of the rural and industrial laborers helps to explain the persistence (not the creation) of racism as a divisive force, so do cooperative work patterns and urban sophistication tend to operate against racism. More exactly, these conditions allow the fundamental common class interests to triumph over the racist divisions within the class.

Part of the modern immigration from benighted rural production into the industrial centers is black, and the potential for radical rebellion among black workers undergoing the social leap is greatest of all. While blacks still have the worst jobs and lower pay than whites, they are differently situated than in the past. They are located in crucial

industries and at the heart of production. Further, the recent history of black struggles has created a social awareness and a political understanding beyond that achieved by white Southern workers.

Given the history of the South, it may appear fantastic that blacks have already been the leaders of important Southern strikes. One example is the organization of the broiler chicken plants in Mississippi. When dominated in the fifties by white workers these plants were unorganized, but with the coming of blacks major union gains were made. The 1972 Mead Packing strike in Atlanta was waged for union recognition and an end to race discrimination. The Mead workers, largely black, won some gains under a leadership which thought of itself — and was thought to be — Communist. In 1972 black and white woodcutters united for a successful strike against paper mills in southern Mississippi. Many of the whites had been Klan members but ended up joining the NAACP, which supported the strike. The NAACP is a liberal and non-working class organization, but the fact that whites would join an organization they had previously hated indicates the radical shifts in consciousness that workers' struggles can promote.

Such struggles, however, have been isolated, episodic, and limited in their political content; the opportunities for the Southern working class remain largely in the realm of the potential. The South is still open shop territory and is generally a region where the bosses' writ runs unopposed by organized labor struggles. The reason is the role played by the labor bureaucracy, both regionally and nationally.

Bureaucracy's Present Strategy

To see this, let us return to the struggle with J.P. Stevens. The formation of the ACTWU represented a defensive step against the deteriorating ability of the Textile Workers to achieve even minimal gains in the organization of their industry. At present, only ten percent of the textile workers in the South are unionized, although there has been no lack of opportunities for growth. The organization of the Oneita Knitting Mills in South Carolina several years ago was an inspiring example of black workers leading a struggle in unity with whites, and in an industry that until recently simply did not hire blacks. The organization of the Stevens plant at Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina about the same time (despite the fact that Stevens refused to negotiate a contract) was another significant victory. But for years the TWUA had preferred to take on the small plants and companies, generally avoiding the big companies in their centers of strength.

Now the new union, for defensive reasons at least, sees the need to take on the giants. The strategy proposed for the organization of Stevens, however, is one that is paving the way for a defeat. A boycott may at times be a useful tactic. But a boycott does not use the real strength of workers at the point of production. The boycott of Farah Manufacturing Company in Texas, which had been organized by the old Amalgamated, was combined with a 22 month-long strike that ended in success. But in the proposed battle with Stevens, a notorious violator of labor laws and court decisions, not even elementary forms of workers' strength are being used. A South-wide strike by even the small percentage of workers in the AFL-CIO would bring the vicious Stevens outfit and its bourgeois allies to their knees.

The situation is worse when the particular nature of the boycott is considered. Only one-third of Stevens goods are sold directly to the public; the bulk is intermediate material sold to manufacturers and other industrialists. Legally, the union

cannot pressure manufacturers to cease using Stevens goods nor can it even urge the public not to buy goods made from Stevens fabrics because of laws against secondary boycotts. While ACTWU may win informal agreements with some of the smaller manufacturers, this strategy remains a cheap substitute for invoking the power of the workers themselves. The fact that the union bureaucrats see this limited trade union struggle lasting as long as five years is an admission on their part of the half-heartedness of their approach. Recently the ACTWU has talked about buying stock in the J.P. Stevens Corporation (to wield "influence") and has closed down its organizing office in the important Kannapolis, North Carolina area. This only accentuates its policy of avoiding the actual mobilization of the ranks for the struggle.

With textiles still the hub of Southern industry, the class struggle in the clothing mills will have a massive impact on other regional industries, particularly the traditional ones (hence the attention being paid to the Stevens boycott). The labor bureaucracy's perspectives on organizing here reflects their weak-kneed leadership of Southern struggles in general.

The bureaucracy's approach to the organization of industries moving to the South (including those unionized in other regions) provides the more rounded picture. The auto industry in recent years has looked Southward. General Motors in particular has set up six plants in the last three years in the Deep South. This "Southern strategy" has been a point of contention with the union during the auto contract rounds, as the UAW has accused GM of using anti-labor propaganda to keep the union out. Irving Bluestone, vice-president of the UAW, was quoted in the *New York Times* (November 17, 1976) as saying that many of the jobs created in the South

were simply those that were being eliminated in the Northern plants, and that the result of these actions could damage the union's ability to bargain nationwide.

The charges are of course true, but if the bosses' line has been successful, the UAW has to share the blame. GM, through its native plant managers and foremen, has gained from appeals to Southern chauvinism. While this chauvinism must be actively fought, it is in part a reaction to the regional oppression that we have analyzed in Part 1. The labor bureaucracy's support for the regional discrimination has allowed GM and other companies to manipulate the feelings of the more backward workers into anti-union sentiments.

GM's agreement, in the 1976 contract negotiations, to remain "neutral" in the UAW's Southern organizing attempts is a joke, but a greater mockery is the UAW's dignifying it by acceptance. George Morris, GM vice-president and chief spokesman, denied that any Southern strategy existed and claimed that the \$2 pay differential between the Clinton, Mississippi plants and UAW plants elsewhere was simply a courtesy to other Mississippi manufacturers. The same *Times* article quoted Morris as saying, "We don't want to have a bad reputation with other employers in the area by setting wage rates way out of line with the others. We don't want to be a skunk at the picnic." And he certainly wants to keep the picnic going.

GM has also made appeals to anti-communism, through warnings against "bringing socialist unions in." While the UAW will be able to argue (truthfully) that it in fact is not revolutionary, it is precisely the bureaucracy's fostering of anti-militant attitudes which contributes to the bosses' ability to fire a rabid anti-communist mood in the South, one that



CIO shipyard workers at an interracial meeting in 1944. CIO had enormous potential to organize and break down racism in the South. The bureaucrats' fear of the consequences led them to abandon 1946 Southern Organizing Drive.

identifies even minimal struggles of Southern workers as being "communist-inspired."

And then there are the simple but basic bread and butter appeals GM has made to the workers. The companies and city fathers contend that unionization will not provide any material gains for workers. While this is a deliberate lie, the fact is that where unions exist their leaderships have been selling out workers right and left. The UAW is no exception; its leadership's history of betrayals paved the way for massive layoffs in auto, leaving thousands of auto workers with precious little to live on. Many workers have a real reason to wonder: is a union these days worth the price of a hard struggle against the Southern capitalists? The UAW did win a representation election at the GM Guide Lamp Division plant in Monroe, Louisiana this past December — a welcome and noteworthy event. But it is the only victory thus far in the recent organizing effort.

The UAW is under pressure from its ranks to solve the "Southern problem" and maintain their jobs. If UAW organizing efforts continue to fail in the South, the tops could well bring their protectionist "solutions" back home; during the auto crisis, Woodcock blamed the layoffs on foreign imports, in effect on foreign workers. Blaming Southern workers is one option the leadership can use to blindfold the membership if auto firms continue to pick up stakes and move South.

As a general rule, the American labor bureaucrats in the last years have shunned direct confrontations with the bosses whenever possible. They have been haunted by the danger that this massive, angry and supremely frustrated working class would sense its real power. The havoc such "anarchy" would cause would mean the destruction of capitalism as the goose that, if it no longer lays golden eggs, is still the source of the only eggs there are — or so the bureaucrats believe. As a substitute, they try to curry favor with the liberal bourgeoisie and to maneuver in the "political" arena. They concentrate on lobbying, wire-pulling, giving contributions, begging, smiling, blustering, sometimes threatening, and related forms of "political action." Their "struggles" take place in the electoral arena, safely away from the masses — i.e., support to the Democratic Party in general and most recently the candidacy of Jimmy Carter.

The bureaucracy's own Southern strategy is an application of this approach: avoiding big confrontations while depending on the Democrats and Carter to help them out. The passivity the bureaucracy exhibits towards battling Southern capitalism is not lost on the directors of Dixie industry: "Indeed, many Southern executives now say the only thing stopping the spread of unions is that organized labor itself has run out of both organizing zeal and useful purposes as an instrument of employee advancement." (A.H. Raskin, *New York Times*, August 15, 1976.) While some of this can be chalked up to anti-union propaganda by the companies, the brazenness of the Southern bosses as they note the discrepancies between the potential of Southern labor and the actions of the labor misleadership points up the treachery of the union bureaucracy.

The no-win strategy of the union bosses is evident. They would like to sell the Southern bourgeoisie on the idea of a nice safe union which will indeed "preserve the American way" and be as unobtrusive as possible. They are caught in a profound contradiction. Neither the local nor the national bourgeoisie is going to buy unionization of the South. It is the wage differentials and the absence of unions which provide the inducement for their investment in the South. The bureaucrats,

for their part, must defend their own vested interest as union leaders and protect the existence of their unions and at least their high-seniority members. The employers' Southern strategy undermines their position and forces them to try to organize in the South. Caught in the contradiction they move cautiously, to say the least.

The Right Alternative

The same deepening economic crisis that forced the union leaders into the Southern organizing effort militates against the bourgeoisie's willingness to tolerate unionization. The crisis, with all its ups and downs, is relentlessly pushing the capitalists and the workers towards a head-on confrontation. The bureaucracy's present strategy of simple timidity cannot last. The bureaucracy is *relatively* homogeneous in its perspectives today. Under the impact of sharpened class conflict, the right versus left split already present in embryo will accelerate. A central issue will have to be the Southern question. The more conservative sections of the bureaucracy will inevitably shy away from leading any genuinely militant struggles against the bosses of Southern industry, and they will increasingly turn their organizing efforts from timid boycotts into direct appeals to the bosses to allow *their* kind of unionization as a way to discipline a rebellious work force. (There exists the possibility that the right bureaucrats will avoid even this kind of unionism, but the historical tendency has been for them to pose such an alternative, as we will show.)

Recently the Stevens boycott campaign launched with great fanfare a group called Southerners for Economic Justice. According to the *New York Times*, the participants included "the mayor of Atlanta, a state senator and several veterans of the civil rights struggles of the 1960's." What is remarkable is not the class collaborationist intent of the ACTWU in looking for bourgeois support, nor the fact that such a committee could be put together in the South, but rather that the attempt netted such a pathetically small catch. Even the liberal sections of the Southern bourgeoisie are lukewarm to the already tepid efforts of the labor bureaucrats and refuse to break ranks with their class brothers. As the economic crisis deepens, some politicians may yet play games with the unions, but the serious sections of the Southern bourgeoisie want no part of them. When the struggle of the workers breaks loose, some politicians and capitalists may buy right-wing unionization as a way to halt a deeper radicalization. However, the social-historical base in the South for effective conservative unionism — an entrenched labor aristocracy — is weak. Far less risky would be the time-honored Southern solutions: direct anti-union violence, and the re-instigation of systematic racial violence.

1946 Organizing Drive

Nevertheless, the boycott strategists of today (and the even more conservative strategists who will be employed tomorrow as the class struggle heightens) have a precedent to rely on in aiming their campaign at the bourgeoisie instead of the ranks of the workers. That is the old CIO's million-dollar Southern Organizing Drive that was designed to crack open the union-busting South in 1946. It was ballyhooed as a crusade. Just as the reformists and Stalinists throughout the world marched with the workers far enough to maintain control, sections of the CIO around Walter Reuther ran a very militant line in order to capture the growing workers' movement that crested

at the end of the Second World War. One part of the CIO program was to protect the union ranks by an energetic organizing attempt in the South, then dominated by the Dixiecrats who represented small town business and agrarian plantation capital.

Unionization of the South, then as well as now, would have had revolutionary consequences for economic power in the United States. Unionization would have meant a head-on attack on the racism that cemented the Solid South and hence propped up bourgeois politics throughout the country. It would have knocked the cheap labor prop out from under the American class structure. It would have upset the delicate relationship between the growing urban centers of capital tied directly to Wall Street and the more primitive sections of the bourgeoisie. However, the Cold War and the witchhunt that eradicated not only the Stalinist but also the revolutionary elements in the union movement set up the conditions that enabled the CIO to retreat. Furthermore, the developing imperialist prosperity allowed gains for the workers which relieved the immediate pressure on the bureaucrats to organize the South.

In the meantime, however, the AFL had lined up openly with the reactionaries to oppose the CIO's organizing drive. William Green, then the top boss of the AFL, proclaimed:

"Workers of the South . . . are patriotic Americans. They cannot feel at home in any organization which seems incapable of cooperating with industry and spends most of its time in trying to destroy private industry. They have nothing in common with the foreign philosophies of the CIO."

Green warned the bourgeoisie that it needed the AFL in the South to keep out the menace of the CIO. Referring to "communist forces" and calling the CIO "carpetbaggers with their repulsive program of trouble and turmoil," the AFL sought to unionize the South by pleading its case to the corporations as a defense against the danger of a massive radical onslaught. George Meany stuck in his oar as well. The present head of the joint AFL-CIO was in the 1940's Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL. His contribution was to brand the CIO as "an organization of communist fifth columnists." Most significantly, the rapidly conservatizing CIO itself soon joined in the same anti-communist campaign. Organizing Director Van A. Bittner replied to the AFL: "Let me make one thing clear. There is no place in the Southern campaign for a single, solitary Communist! This organization of ours is an American organization fighting for America."

Murray Finley's dedication to the "American way" is vintage. The points in common between the crusade of the 1940's and the campaign of the 1970's also include inane attempts to stimulate Southern chauvinism, a weapon that can only boomerang. For example, the Stevens boycott literature publicizes an alleged quote from a union member: "Why should we allow a Massachusetts-founded and New York-based company to come down here and act as if they owned us as well as the mills?" The CIO in the forties said that it was "... backing Southern capital in its efforts to establish Southern owned and controlled industries." The "there's nobody here but us Southern fried chickens" approach fools nobody and reinforces the division between Southern and Northern workers. The headquarters of the Stevens boycott and of the ACTWU happen to be located in New York City, at Union Square ("Union" not in honor of trade unions but of the Union Army in the Civil War!).

The CIO's Southern organizing drive petered out. Its betrayal set back any notion of a proletarian black and white struggle in the South, and left the door open for the petty-

bourgeoisie to take the lead and set limits to the black struggle when it did erupt. The present organizing drive is also trying to sell itself as a protection for the bourgeoisie even more than for the workers. But there is a significant difference. In the 1940's, there had been a recognizable and recent radicalism in the CIO, including real reds. The danger of a mass movement in the South was visible to the bourgeoisie. The sell-out job done by the AFL and then the CIO might have been a logical defensive step for the bourgeoisie to take, if it hadn't proved redundant as the prosperity grew and the radicalism diminished. Today, because of the conservatism of the labor leadership and the apparent quiescence of the workers in both North and South, there is no reason why any serious element in the bourgeoisie would want to buy union protection. Their greatest fear is that even a "cautious" unionization drive could touch off the volcano that is building up beneath the surface of events.

However, the *direction* in which events are moving is also different than in the 1940's. Radicalization is in the offing. Economic decline and not sustained prosperity is the projection for the future. The bureaucrats will do their best to avoid the consequences of class struggle, but unable to prevent it, they will seek to stem the tide. In short, Meany, Finley, Woodcock & Co. may soon have to sell their "preservation of the American way" more aggressively in the bourgeois market, even if they wallow in a timid approach now. Meany's promise of "all out support" to the passive boycott strategy means that he favors whatever moves are needed to defuse a situation fraught with dangers of "anarchy." His experience as a red-baiter and ally of Southern businessmen in the forties will come in handy now.

The Left Alternative

It is a law of social development, in periods of deepening class struggle, that the bureaucracy which rests upon petty-bourgeois strata within the working class is subject to the pull of the two fundamental, polar classes in society. In counterposition to the rightward push of one section, a left-wing section of the bureaucracy develops which reflects the upsurge of the workers in a vacillating way in order to lead it and deflect it. Like the right wing, the left wing will be acting in response to pressure from the ranks, from both Southern workers and workers in more advanced regions. By doing their best to prevent workers from reaching the revolutionary conclusions that will solve their basic problems, they too will strive to maintain "the American way."

The most likely form this strategy will take will be to channel the militancy of the ranks so that the unions serve a "useful purpose as an instrument of employee advancement." That is, their strategy is militant trade unionism. The ideal model for the program and strategy of the left bureaucracy goes something like this: Southern workers should be paid wages roughly equivalent to those of workers nationally. In order to achieve this, the Southern workers must go through the same struggles that other workers went through; that is, a new CIO-type movement of militant industrial unionism should be established in the South, where it never had been successful in obtaining a real foothold.

The left bureaucrats would thus be proposing a re-creation of the wage and class structures of the North. They would, in effect, be *counterposing* a struggle for limited democratic and trade union rights to the necessary struggle for the working class' vital needs. The left bureaucracy, even more than the right, will press for heavier involvement of the bourgeois state

in the trade unions in the future, in order to contain the ranks. They will not openly place the coming struggles in this framework, neither in the way they formulate demands nor in the way they attempt to lead militant struggles. And it is hardly pre-ordained that they can effectively co-opt struggles in time to head off levels of greater militancy. Their exact course will be dependent on the precise tempo of the class struggle and the abilities of revolutionaries to intervene

conception are put forth, corresponding to the particular politics of individual groupings. It is the basic pattern that we are concerned with.

In fact, left groups have not particularly concerned themselves up until now with specific perspectives for Southern labor. Consideration of the South has hardly been ignored, however, as any analysis of black liberation must at least take into account the history of blacks in the South which means



Jimmy Carter grinning at ACTWU officials Jacob Sheinkman and Murray Finley.

decisively. But the need to co-opt workers who will be forced by circumstances to seek radical solutions to gain even minimal reforms will force the left bureaucracy to put forward militant solutions within the confines of bourgeois society.

Centrists' Perspectives

What makes it possible for us to predict this course is the fact that it has already been outlined in advance by those who will be among the left bureaucrats' chief supporters, the centrist groups. The centrists are those leftists who attempt to conceal pro-capitalist policies under a revolutionary guise. Unlike reformists (like the present labor tops), centrists are "for" revolution, but like the reformists they objectively attempt to restrict the class struggle to within the bounds of capitalist society. To them, revolutionary struggle "must" occur before a stage of democratic reform struggles. For Southern workers, the scheme runs like this: Stage 1 is the struggle for solidification of trade unions and the general winning of democratic rights by Southern workers. Stage 2 is promised to be the struggle for revolution. The centrists need not express this conception in an explicit form. Variants of this

largely a history of the South itself. And for groups like the Maoist October League and the Communist Labor Party, their views on black liberation have led them to distinguish the South from the rest of the U.S. in a totally incorrect way.

The October League considers that a "black nation" exists in the South residing in the "black belt" portions; this is a continuation of the analysis put forward on the black question by Stalin in the late twenties. The CLP takes this notion even further by claiming that the South is an internal colony of the U.S. and advocates self-determination for both whites and blacks in the "Negro Nation" of the black belt — in effect calling for Southern secession from the union.

As we noted in Part I, the South has never been an internal colony of the U.S. except during the post-Civil War period of military occupation. As well, the oppression of blacks never took a national form in the U.S.; and the trend is further away from such a development, since blacks have become more absorbed into the working class, and the black migration from the South has meant that blacks form the majority in fewer and fewer sections of the region. It is instructive to note that there has never been a serious or popular nationalist movement that arose in the "black belt."

Revolutionaries do not advocate "national" independence for blacks. We do say that blacks have the *right* to self-determination, but even here we differ with the OL on its meaning. For us, the policy is used to demonstrate to blacks that a workers' state would protect and secure the rights and freedoms of blacks, including the right to secede — as part of the task of uniting blacks around a revolutionary working class solution to capitalist oppression. For the OL, self-determination is a minimal and utopian demand on the capitalist state.

The class struggle itself is responsible for the lack of attention given the "Southern question" by the left. Until recently, most left groups had little presence in the South, as the immediate level of struggle has been lower than elsewhere. As well, the mechanics of the Southern class struggle didn't *appear* to have an immediate impact on the class struggle in other regions. Thus Southern labor struggles did not have the pressing importance on the left that they are now creating.

As the centrists turn towards the South, the more pronounced will be their stagist conception of the workers' struggle. Other left groups provide evidence for this. The Revolutionary Communist Party, in the June 1976 issue of *Revolution* examined the union campaign at J.P. Stevens. It correctly attacked the ACTWU strategy for being weak and not relying on the workers' power. And in noting the move of shops to the South, *Revolution* concluded that the working class must "fight to organize the unorganized in these regions in such a way as to develop the strength, consciousness and unity of the working class from coast to coast." While one can argue little with the statement itself, the RCP offers no other way to do this than through purely trade union perspectives, and indicates that such a fight defined in this way must be a general strategy: "The fight to organize Stevens and *spread unionization throughout the South* is extremely important to the whole working class in fighting the capitalists' attempts to use the conditions in this area to weaken unions everywhere and to pull down the wages of all workers." (Emphasis added)

The Revolutionary Socialist League also covered the fight with Stevens in brief articles in the June 15 and July 15, 1976 issues of the *Torch*. While noting that "mass militant action" is necessary for Stevens workers, the *Torch* not only failed to criticize the union leadership's boycott strategy but in fact hailed it as "an important first step in cracking the southern textile industry."

The *Torch* no longer provides a broader political view of the class struggle in the South. The days prior to the expulsion of the LRP when we put forward such an overview (as in the *Torch* series of late 1974) are long gone. As *Socialist Voice* has previously observed, the RSL leadership has adapted to a typically centrist, stagist view of revolutionary development: today, the struggle for trade unionist and democratic demands; revolutionary politics will be appropriate only in the indefinite future. One form such an approach takes is playing the role of tailist and cheerleader for workers' struggles, rather than offering a revolutionary direction. In the Stevens case, the RSL is actually celebrating a course of action by the bureaucrats which will be a major step towards defeat, along the lines of past organizing attempts by the tops.

In contrast, the RCP at least complains that the bureaucrats' strategy is inadequate. But like all Maoists, the RCP adheres to a two-stage program of "revolution" not so different from the RSL's, despite its formal insistence that one stage is sufficient for the special case of the superpower United States. Its call to "spread unionization throughout the South"

is a variant of the model we ascribed to the left bureaucrats as well as an application of the Maoist minimal first-stage program. If examined beyond its surface value as a "good idea," it turns out to pose a task of immense difficulty for Southern workers, one that is in fact a roadblock. Such a struggle could not successfully be carried out. Either the struggle for unionization must be accompanied by a more advanced stage of struggle on the way to a revolutionary seizure of power, or it will end in defeat.

This is another way of stating the application of permanent revolution to the South. The bourgeoisie is incapable of allowing Southern workers to get even what workers in other regions have gained. This is not due simply to objective economic capabilities but to the key political role of the South and the bourgeoisie's fear that a *movement*, with its threatening implications for U.S. capitalism, will get out of hand and so must be crushed. Any attempt to duplicate the struggles and gains of workers in more advanced regions must tackle the very structure of Southern society, supported by Wall Street. Though this structure has changed somewhat as we have seen, it has remained firm in the principle of keeping workers down and in the systematic exploitation of blacks. The struggle, even if *begun* under the banner of trade union and democratic demands, necessarily *requires* a more profound struggle.

Another centrist group with a special version of stagism is the Spartacist League. In its reprinted founding document, *Black and Red — Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom*, the SL calls for a "Southern organizing drive backed by organized labor," and continues, "The demand for a Southern drive is complementary to the demand for a Freedom Labor Party, and, if achieved, would lay the material basis for such a party by creating an organized Southern base." The Freedom Labor Party notion is previously described as a means "to go beyond ... needed reforms and pose a real challenge to the Southern system and the basic structure of society." Moreover, "The creation of a South-wide Freedom Labor Party would serve as a tremendous impetus for similar action by Northern workers."

The Spartacists have added a new ingredient to the recipe for Southern stagism: a labor party. This tactic is taken from the Marxist arsenal, true enough, but the Spartacists turn it into a reformist maneuver, not a revolutionary one. And because of the undeniable weakness of Southern unions, the SL is forced to insert a prior stage as a base for the projected labor party, a union organizing drive. Thus the SL has cooked itself up a four-stage theory for the South: first, a unionization drive to lay the basis for, second, a South-wide Freedom Labor Party; then a nationwide labor party, and last, presumably, a revolutionary party.

Their call for a labor party cannot be palmed off as one that "really" means a revolutionary party, because the idea of a special revolutionary party for the South is absurd. Unlike the Spartacists, Marxists never call for a reformist labor party as an intermediate step or a solution, since it is neither. The only real answer to the economic and social problems faced by the workers is revolution, and for that a revolutionary party is necessary. At certain times when the workers are moving towards independent class political action, revolutionaries can raise the slogan of a labor party. Rather than opposing the revolutionary party to the organization that workers are striving for whose nature is not yet determined, Marxists urge

that it be a revolutionary party. The struggle for a labor party is in large part a struggle to decide the party's goals.

Necessity for Politics

While the Spartacists do recognize that a political solution is necessary, like the other centrists they place a unionization stage ahead of the party. This is a dangerous inversion which can only lead the workers to disaster. The whole trend of modern decadent capitalism is towards the incorporation of unions into the state. The national government intervenes already in the most minute details of the unions in the rest of the country in order to hedge them in, and will certainly do so in the South unless the workers' struggle reaches the political plane and challenges the bourgeois state. Even the union bureaucrats recognize that politics determines the conditions of unionism, for their chief legislative goal under President Carter is the Thompson bill that would cut through company stalling in representation elections, according to *Business Week* magazine (February 7, 1977). But this is just the bureaucrats' defense of their own interests. A real unionization drive in the South requires revolutionary measures, from a policy of armed self-defense of the working class to ward off the bosses' thugs and police, to a political campaign that will rouse the support of the entire working class and the masses of blacks in the South. Otherwise, the state's use of violence and the bosses' attempts to use racism as a weapon to divide the workers will triumph, bloodily, once more.

The only way to achieve even such a fundamental, minimal necessity for the Southern workers as trade unions is through politics. The centrists are in fact the only school of thought in the workers movement which believes that a stage of industrial organizing should precede any political stage. The labor bureaucrats, as we have shown, know that organizing unions is a question of who controls the power of the state; that is why they kneel at Carter's footstool. Revolutionaries counter with the overthrow of the capitalist state and its replacement by a workers' state as the only solution.

Lenin pointed out, in his struggle against "economism" (the early form of reformism in Russia), that the "economist" strategy of sticking to trade union and economic demands while avoiding political struggles in reality left politics to the liberal bourgeoisie. This meant, in effect, support to the liberals by accepting such a division of labor. The "economists" consciously intended only to postpone revolutionary and independent working class political action, but they in fact capitulated to the liberals' domination of the workers movement. This for Lenin spelled disaster, since he knew that the liberals would inevitably betray the working class.

Today the centrists follow the same "economist" line. The union stage which will lead to a "labor party," a "freedom labor party" or even a "revolution" in the bye and bye accepts the bureaucracy's political domination of the movement and its strategy of electoralism through the Democratic Party. The centrists may well reek with hostility to the Democrats at every breath, as the Russian "economists" did in the beginning to the liberals, but their failure to fight for an alternative permits the present domination by the bureaucrats and therefore by their bourgeois political masters. The centrists' hostility serves only to keep their formal skirts clean.

Few as they are, the centrists infect the crucial advanced layer of the working class that can in the future determine the political direction of the class as a whole. The centrists' strategy paves the way for the future left bureaucrats to grab

the leadership when the workers break out of their present straitjacket. And these elements, like their right-wing brothers, would rather see the workers smashed than permit a collision with the bourgeois state or with the Democrats (although if absolutely necessary, the lefts may be forced to move towards a reformist labor party on a bourgeois program in order to control the ranks).

Revolutionary politics is determined by the objective situation, what is materially necessary and materially possible for the working class. The reformist-"economist"-centrists instead tail the current levels of class consciousness, which is largely determined by the divisive, hesitant, chauvinist and "practical" struggle led by the bureaucrats and their Democratic Party allies. The result, just as in Russia, will only mean disastrous defeats for the workers unless revolutionaries can head them off.

The Revolutionary Alternative

All the factors which a potential South-wide unionization struggle bring into play point to our conclusion: the struggle must break out of the fetters in which it is now held. The national tie-ups of the Southern bourgeoisie, the penetration of the bourgeois state into the trade unions, the central position of blacks within the proletariat, the use of the South as a weapon against workers in other regions, even the present backwardness of Southern workers — all mandate a wider struggle.

We discussed how General Motors propaganda about the unions not providing for workers played a part in defeating organizing drives in Southern auto plants. The worker is partly convinced not only by the UAW's sell-outs but by the labor bureaucracy in general. The unions in the South all too often negotiate sweetheart contracts: at Oneita, for example, a wage increase of a few cents over three years was not tied to any cost-of-living provisions or job protection. Nearby, the miners are openly sabotaged by the union leadership in trying to fight for better conditions. If many Southern workers are convinced today that "the union ain't worth the fight," they will be convinced tomorrow that the fight ain't worth the confines of simple trade unionism. Formal logic dictates that the worker must take the "next step" of trade unionism and trade union consciousness. Marxism however, demonstrates how this "next step" must be transcended from the start as the workers pass through it in the process of reaching revolutionary consciousness and conclusions.

The reformists and centrists will attempt to prevent such conclusions from being reached and will actively fight the actions based on those conclusions. Though subject to the pressures of the ranks, the confirmed reformists can be pushed only so far. They will ultimately ally directly with the capitalists in an attempt to smash a revolutionary offensive by the workers. To pose a trade unionist stage for workers to go through as the centrists do, means establishing a basis for the left bureaucracy. Or else it means that the centrists' substitute themselves for the left bureaucracy. Either way, it is the task of revolutionaries to defeat these pretenders to the revolutionary leadership of our class.

The starting point of a revolutionary approach to any question is to "say what is" to the working class. In regard to the South, workers must be told what we have stated here: that permanent revolution is the necessary political strategy in the South and that revolutionary leadership is necessary in the coming struggles if they are to be successful.

The centrists and reformists carry pro-bourgeois programs into the workers' movement. To this, revolutionaries must counterpose the program of the Fourth International, the Transitional Program, as the appropriate program for an epoch in which the proletariat is the only class capable of solving fundamental democratic tasks. It is a program which connects the reform and democratic desires of the workers to the need for socialist revolution to fulfill these desires.

The transitional demands demonstrate how the proletariat in power, the workers' state, would solve the problems facing the working class today. These include a *sliding scale of wages and hours* — this means to divide the available work up among the available workers with no cut in pay and providing for jobs for all. The workers must not be made to pay for the decay of capitalism; *nationalization of the banks, corporations and large firms under workers' control*, to point to the alternative to bourgeois nationalization schemes and other bourgeois strategies to "solve" the crisis of capitalism; a *workers government*, since only the power of the proletariat organized in its own state provides the real starting point for solving the basic needs of the masses.



Other revolutionary demands include *equal pay for equal work* — *abolish the Southern wage differential*; *abolish racial discrimination*. The struggle for democracy and democratic demands is a necessity for revolutionaries, who point out that they can be fully secured only through the socialist revolution and the workers' state. Revolutionaries also understand that there are sharply different levels of oppression within the Southern working class, based upon geographical distinctions within the South, racial lines, craft lines, unemployment rates, and the like. Many of the most oppressed workers who are not immediately susceptible to union organization (like the unemployed) would be the steamrollers of a militant upsurge if they had the opportunity. The proletariat needs dual institutions like *workers' councils* (soviets) for many reasons, including the ability of such formations to attract the most oppressed layers of the class. The rural poor can also be brought into the workers' councils. *Councils of the unemployed* should be an immediate demand leading in this direction; union action towards such councils is necessary.

Revolutionaries must also intervene in the immediate burning questions that are dividing Southern workers from workers in other regions, including an active fight against regional chauvinism. For example, we do not think building a plant in the South is in itself "worse" than building a plant in other regions; we do not re-inforce and capitulate to the anti-Southern chauvinism of workers outside the South that their relative privileges and labor leadership are responsible for. What we do oppose is that this comes at the *expense* of other workers. In particular cases, we may oppose the farming out of work to the South from plants where there are layoffs. Generally we raise the demand that the trade unions organize the South, and ultimately link our positions to the struggle for jobs for all through the sliding scale of wages and hours.

To campaign for the above demands, programs and conceptions, critical as that is, is not enough. The present

circumstances — the objective situation, balance of forces, consciousness of the masses — must be taken into account. Revolutionaries must fight for the revolutionary program in a form appropriate to present conditions and must consider the various important tactical questions that the present conjuncture in the Southern class struggle poses.

The obvious lack of organization that exists in the Southern working class must be taken into account. We do not abstain from or oppose what at this time would be limited but progressive and important gains for Southern workers — the organization of trade unions. We will give critical support to the present union organizing drives, while at the same time exposing the hesitations, vacillations, class collaboration and inevitable betrayals by the misleaders. For example, we support the merger of the TWUA-ACW as a defensive step against the capitalist attacks, but we counter the miserably weak approach to organizing textile workers as well as the fundamental loyalty to capitalism. We also demand that other unions carry out organizing drives in the South: the labor bureaucrats must be held responsible in their capacity as leaders. It is the *limitation* of the struggle to a CIO-type stage that we oppose.

Due to their particular oppression, revolutionary workers in the South will form a vital component of the proletarian vanguard of the U.S. A unity between black and white Southern workers will be forged, based primarily on the interest of the most oppressed. White workers will be won to fight racism, not by soft-pedaling the issue, but by a militant defense of blacks seen as necessary defense of all workers against the capitalist attacks. Because of their position in industry and their history of struggle, blacks have gained greater consciousness and combativity than whites, underneath the present calm. The black worker is not in the situation of having to wait for whites to defend his rights or for a white-led movement in the working class to arise. Blacks will play a major role in the fight against the inevitable attempts by the bourgeoisie to divide the workers and restore lynch law. The vanguard of the politically advanced and revolutionary workers will undoubtedly contain black workers out of a proportion to their numbers.

The lurking danger for the workers is the one we have discussed at length coming from within the movement. "Common sense" argues that the Southern class struggle must pass through its democratic and trade unionist stage before reaching its revolutionary stage. "Common sense" was also on the side of the Mensheviks in Russia, who forsook a democratic capitalist stage before the socialist revolution. Interestingly enough, the October Revolution was accomplished when only a tiny minority of workers were organized into trade unions.

The South of today is not Russia of 1917. But both belong to an epoch which assigns the completion of the democratic tasks to the revolutionary proletariat. To say that the class struggle must go through a democratic stage is to pave the way for betrayal. In the South the circumstances are even more graphic, for here the Menshevik strategy means that the workers will be betrayed before even achieving what workers in other regions of the U.S. have already won.

The class struggle in the South has the potential to be the geographical tinderbox of the American revolution, being the "weakest link of imperialism" within the most advanced metropolitan country. But if the misleaders of the workers are able to confine the struggle, the South may be used as one of the bosses' most efficient cutting edges against the working class. It is the task of revolutionaries to ensure that history decides in favor of our class. ■

What Are the Communist Parties?

In the last years before his murder in 1940, Leon Trotsky amplified his analysis of the increasingly counterrevolutionary nature of the Communist Parties throughout the world. He observed that they were already quite similar to the classical reformist Social Democratic parties and predicted that they would soon break, in practice, from any policy of defending the Soviet Union in order to safeguard the interests of their national bourgeois states. He cited the continuous loss of membership occurring in many of the major Stalinist parties as a sign of their coming disintegration.

Trotsky's view of the decline of the Communist Parties was of course derived from his analysis of the degeneration of the USSR. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had been the towering act of the revolutionary proletariat in the epoch of capitalist decay. Outside of Russia, however, the bourgeoisie was able to retain sufficient strength within the working class — through the agency of the reformist Social Democrats who represented the aristocratic layer of the proletariat — to turn back the tide of world revolution. What the reformists began, the Stalinists continued. Isolated and economically backward Russia spawned a bureaucratic caste which took control within the apparatuses of the state and Russian Communist Party. The expanding bureaucracy was able to defeat the Trotskyist Left Opposition which stood for the proletarian outlook that had made the October Revolution and fashioned the workers' state. The growth of the bureaucracy was proportional to the degeneration of the workers' state.

The internal degeneration was reflected in the decay of the Communist Parties internationally. The Communist International became increasingly bureaucratized in step with its accelerating submission to Stalin's oligarchy in Moscow. The vacillations and capitulations to capitalism made by the petty-bourgeois bureaucracy in the USSR were mimicked abroad. The net result, according to Trotsky, was that by the end of the 1930's Stalinism was no longer a bureaucratic deformation whose waverings enabled capitalism to defend itself, but it had become a major center of counterrevolution. This was its role both in the international workers' movement and in the USSR, which Trotsky still regarded as a workers' state, albeit a rapidly degenerating one. He accepted the characterization of the USSR as a "counterrevolutionary workers' state."

Trotsky expected that the coming world war would usher in a period of proletarian revolutions similar to the aftermath of World War I. The Stalinist regime in Russia was, to Trotsky, profoundly weak. The counterrevolutionary bureaucracy resting upon the economic foundations of a workers' state was a contradictory social phenomenon which could not survive a new revolutionary upturn. The same war, the same revolutionary upsurge would seal both the reformist character and the doom of the Communist Parties.

The CPs and the Stalinist bureaucracy did become increasingly counterrevolutionary, but not in the manner Trotsky had foreseen. Russia emerged from the war as the world's second strongest power and expanded its social system

and sway into Eastern Europe and Northern Asia. The CPs did not desert the USSR nor did they act like reformists during the war. In the immediate post-war period when world capitalism was shaken to its roots, the CPs provided the traps that ensnared the revolutionary workers' movement in the West, overpowered it in Eastern Europe and derailed the colonial revolutions as well. Like the Social Democrats after World War I, the Stalinists proved themselves to be an ultimate line of defense for capitalism, but in a quite different way.

Revisionist and "Orthodox" Trotskyists

The Trotskyist movement after the Second World War was unable to right itself after its expectations had turned out to be false. This is true both of the "orthodox" Trotskyists who attempted to stick to Trotsky's positions on both the nature of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties, and of the revisionists who considered the USSR to be a new class society (either "state capitalist" or "bureaucratic collectivist"). At first sight the analysis of the new class theorists appeared to be on the mark, for it led to the conclusion that the new society built upon the annihilation of the October Revolution was far stronger than Trotsky had posed, and similarly that the Stalinist parties were hardened cadres representing the new class forces, fully capable of crushing the proletariat. But both orthodox and revisionist conceptions led the Fourth Internationalists, already weakened by the proletarian defeats, to political disasters.

The American Shachtmanites, who had broken from Trotsky and the Fourth International in 1940, came to the conclusion later in the decade that Stalinism was to be distinguished from capitalism as the chief danger facing the working class. They used this conception as a means to lend support to the reformists in the trade unions in their drive to oust the Stalinists and make the unions safe for bourgeois democracy. More generally, as we showed in "The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party" (*Socialist Voice* No. 1), the Shachtmanites assumed that the triumph of Stalinism had destroyed all the gains of the Bolshevik Revolution and, implicitly, that the working class had lost its revolutionary capacity. Thus the bureaucratic collectivists advocated the restoration of bourgeois democracy in Europe after the war and subordinated the struggle for socialism to that task.

The new class theorists were a small but not unimportant factor in disorienting the proletarian movement. Far out of proportion to its momentary numerical strength, the advanced layer of the working class is the key to the success of the proletarian upsurge. By splitting and misdirecting the advanced workers internationally, the Shachtmanites seriously hindered the formation of a forthright, revolutionary alternative to Stalinism. In this sense their theory was part of a self-fulfilling prophecy rather than a Marxist prediction, for the victory of Stalinism after the war was not fatalistically determined — it could have been fought. Their support for the reformists and the reformist democratic program as the

only real alternative to Stalinism not only bolstered the Western bourgeoisie directly, but also pushed the advanced workers into the laps of the Communist Parties which seemed to be the only opponents of capitalism.

The "orthodox" Fourth Internationalists, for their part, turned Trotsky's errors into a cover for their cynical acceptance of Stalinist reaction. Specifically they argued that the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy could carry out the revolution in country after country in place of, and against, the proletariat. One consequence was that the Pablo-Mandel leadership of the Fourth International regarded the Chinese Communist Party after 1949 as reformist or centrist, presiding over a "Workers and Peasants Government" — and called on the Chinese Trotskyists to abandon their own party and to work within the Stalinist party, where many were either murdered or jailed by the Maoists.

The equally-"orthodox" SWP in the United States, although it had wobbled over into a brief alignment behind the CP in the 1940's, generally followed a policy only a step behind Shachtman's of aiding the reformists against the Stalinists in the trade unions. James P. Cannon defended his party's "deliberate policy" of keeping the CPers out of united front committees because "the Stalinists are so much poison in the trade union movement." (*Speeches to the Party*, p. 118). Trotsky before his death had fought with the SWP to abandon their bloc with the pro-Roosevelt "progressives" and to adopt revolutionary tactics toward both "poisons," the Stalinists and the reformists.

The betrayals and gains of Stalinism before, during and after World War II were the material bases for the profound growth of cynicism which was to wreak havoc among the Fourth Internationalists. (We have barely indicated here the importance for Marxists of a correct analysis of Stalinism. A full study of the degeneration of the Fourth International will be undertaken in forthcoming issues of *Socialist Voice*.)

It is impossible to embark on a program of proletarian revolution without being able to deal with the bourgeois tendencies that infect the working class — of which Stalinism is a virulent example. The correction of Trotsky's understanding of the Communist Parties requires the analysis of the Soviet Union as capitalist that has been previously presented in "Capitalism in the Soviet Union" (*Socialist Voice* No. 2). In particular, both Trotsky and the new class theorists were wrong to think that the restoration of capitalism (which, as Marxists now understand, took place with the Great Purges of the 1930's) necessarily would mean the obliteration of all the workers' gains. The nationalization, centralization and tremendous expansion of the Soviet economy were achievements possible only for a workers' state. The Stalinist counterrevolution turned these conquests against the workers, negating them without abolishing them, just as capital itself is created by the proletariat but turned to the suppression and domination of living labor.

The Communist Parties, like the Social Democracies before them, were gains of the working class that were later turned against it. And just as the reformists' capacity to be the decisive betrayers of the proletariat had withered by the 1940's, leaving room for the Stalinists to take up their posts, so the subsequent decay of the CPs has undermined their ability to stifle the working class as a new revolutionary period opens up. In this article we will use the Marxist analysis of the Soviet Union to examine the post-World War II CPs, as well as to probe further the roots of Trotsky's mistakes on the nature of the CPs and the Soviet Union. This is a necessary component of our task of reconstructing the theoretical underpinnings of the Fourth International. Failure to understand the nature of the Stalinist parties leads to either a capitulation to them or a substitution for them. It is no accident that the strategy most dominant among both Shachtmanites and Pabloites today is popular frontism in essence.

The theories that the Communist Parties have been reformist or centrist for decades helped to disarm and defeat the working class in the past. Today these theories hinder revolutionary workers from understanding the decay rife among the CPs, their delayed devolution into reformism (and in the future quite possibly, the development of centrism within them). Those who insist that the CPs are undergoing no qualitative changes — whether that they have always been



Hitler's SS troopers surround Communist Party headquarters in Berlin on January 22, 1933. The Stalinists' utter collapse in the face of the Nazi putsch was even more ignominious than Trotsky predicted.

reformist, or that they represent new class forces which are immutable under the class struggle — are spreading false and dangerous illusions among the proletariat.

The Nature of Centrism

The phenomenon of centrism has a long history. Lenin and other Marxists used the concept to describe the actions of various tendencies in their day. The "center" was used synonymously with "swamp" and "marsh" to characterize the

vacillating and unstable elements between two more solid poles of political direction, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Compared to classical reformism, centrism tends to be less firmly rooted in the labor bureaucracy or even in the aristocracy. Commonly, it is a stage of development over time, that is, it is subject to the swings of history and the class struggle. Sections of the reformist bureaucracy can move to the left in times of crisis (as during the 1930's) in order to keep their hold on the working class. Some of these elements become left reformists and some go further and become very "revolutionary" — centrists.

Centrism for the masses of workers is different from what it is for the leaders who are still welded to capitalism. For the ranks, centrism is a transition, but unfortunately that which is in transit does not necessarily arrive at revolution. The transition can be in the other direction, towards reformism — and that direction is certain if the workers are not won to communism and if centrism is not defeated.

Although centrism today is a widespread phenomenon, in the past it derived mainly from the shift to the left within reformist ranks. Precisely such a movement of centrist workers laid the basis for the Third International. Lenin's International succeeded in splitting off sizeable sections of centrist workers from the rotten Second International and converting many of them into Communists.

A "revolutionary" or at least very left banner is necessary for centrism. This stems from what Trotsky called its essence: its vacillation. It must capture the most advanced workers and drag them, at least for a time, into the quivering marsh of indecisiveness. Despite its revolutionary banner, centrism cannot lead a revolution, and it flees from the prospect of power. In Trotsky's words, "Revolution abhors centrism; revolution exposes and annihilates centrism." When pushed into office centrism turns power over to the reformists, but it is generally too frightened of the proletariat even to take office in the state.

The centrists do not have stable or viable mass organizations. They maneuver and vacillate too much for stability. They are prone to fractures and splits in constant series. The revolutionary banner is therefore not an empty formal characteristic of centrism; it must have the particular quality of attracting the most advanced workers. These workers in turn, when recruited, are a major source of the volatility and instability of the centrist tendencies. The contradiction between a leadership intent upon reformist acts (and therefore the preservation of capitalism) and the ranks seeking a path to revolution is the source of the zigzagging — and of the inherently unstable character of centrism.

The question of centrism is important in discussing the nature of the Stalinist parties. One reason for its importance is that Trotsky once correctly considered the CPs in the earlier stages of their degeneration to be centrist. It is important to examine why this was so and what led Trotsky to change his view as the reality itself changed.

Stalinism as Centrism

At the end of the 1920's in Russia, the struggle within the Bolshevik Party appeared to be a three cornered one. Trotsky analyzed the situation in varying ways, but his basic characterization was that the Bukharinites represented the right wing, the Stalinists were the centrists, while the Left Opposition spoke for the proletarian interests.

Trotsky's immediate predictions varied as the developments unfolded, but his basic conceptions as to the social nature of

the groupings remained constant: Bukharin represented the kulaks, the trade union aristocracy and the NEPmen, the Left Opposition represented the Marxist consciousness of the proletariat, and the Stalinist center represented the faceless men of the new apparatus whose seeming strength was more apparent than real. The growing bureaucracy was not a class and therefore held no fundamental power. The Bukharinites had real strength in so far as they represented a *bourgeois* current within the workers movement. The Left Opposition derived its strength and steadfastness from its representation of the only other fundamental class in society with its own independent alternative, the proletariat. The Stalinist center was doomed to vacillate and zigzag through politics without an independent course.

In 1928, Trotsky wrote in "On the Situation in Russia" that: "We thus come to the conclusion that a 'victory' of the Right would lead directly along the Thermidorian-Bonapartist road, a 'victory' of the Centrists would lead zigzag along the same road. Is there any real difference? In the final historic consequence, there is no difference."

This prediction was to change. However the basic analysis of the centrist nature of the Stalin group was not altered until events transcended the characterization in the late 1930's. Trotsky analyzed the swings of the Stalinist bureaucracy from the conservative bloc with Bukharin against the Left in the middle twenties to the left adventurist swing in the late twenties. The movement from a pro-kulak, slow industrialization policy to forced collectivization and rapid industrialization was not evidence to Trotsky of a real shift to a proletarian line. He predicted a right wing zigzag after the "third period" adventurism proved itself to be futile. By analyzing the shifts, Trotsky saw the Stalinists performing a specific type of centrist role.

Trotsky saw the Stalinists heading in the direction of Bonapartism: Bonapartist rule of a workers state. This direction could set the basis for capitalist restoration, but it itself was not the restoration. The bureaucracy made serious mistakes, committed betrayals and perpetrated serious harm to the proletariat. As a current, the bureaucratic centrists were not reformable. However the party itself was reformable but would have to decapitate the Stalinists in order to regenerate itself.

Trotsky's views on the pace and nature of the Bonapartist degeneration changed as the situation clarified. Notably he changed his view on the possibility of regenerating the Party through reform. After 1933 he called for political revolution in the USSR as the only method by which the revolution could be saved.

His characterization of the Stalinists in Russia and therefore internationally remained "bureaucratic centrism," but the content was affected by events. With the defeat of the revolutions in the West and the isolation of the USSR the process of degeneration advanced within the Comintern. Under Zinoviev, the Russian leadership which once dominated by virtue of its proven capability, began to rule bureaucratically. National leaderships "played the ropes" in Moscow and an intricate web of relationships of power developed. With the advent of Stalin the power game became a way of life on a new basis.

The national leaderships were successively eliminated and replaced with elements totally dependent upon Stalin. The national "baronial" type of bureaucracy-through-deals was replaced by monolithic control from Moscow. The process took place over time but was relentless. The Trotskyists were expelled and subjected to violence. The Bukharinites were

thrown out. Any and all independent types were removed from leadership throughout the international and national structures.

The Moscow-directed capitulation of the German CP to Hitler in 1933 was the final proof to Trotsky that the Third International was irredeemable and that the Fourth International must be launched. That is, when virtually no rebellion or rethinking occurred within the parties of the Comintern in the wake of the German events, its doom was obviously sealed from a revolutionary point of view. The *solidity* of the Third International was obviously even greater than Trotsky had estimated, since he had really thought the German events might shake things up.

However, Trotsky did not quite see it that way. He saw the solid front of the Third International under Stalinism as a proof of its *weakness* and *disintegration*. In "Centrism and the



Rally of the Stalinist-dominated International Brigade, which fought for the bourgeois loyalist government during the Spanish Civil War. The Stalinists in the mid-late thirties had become a counterrevolutionary force throughout the world.

Fourth International" (*Writings 1933-4*, pp. 234-5) he stated:

"The defining of the policy of the Comintern as that of *bureaucratic centrism* retains its full force now too. As a matter of fact, only *centrism* is capable of constant leaps from opportunist betrayals to ultraleft adventurism; only the powerful *Soviet bureaucracy* could for ten years assure a stable base for the ruinous policy of zigzags.

"Bureaucratic centrism, in distinction from centrist groupings that crystallized out of the Social Democracy, is the product of the degeneration of Bolshevism; it retains — in caricature form — some of its traits, still leads a considerable number of revolutionary workers and has extraordinary material and technical means, but by its political influence is now the crassest, most disorganizing and harmful variety of centrism. *The political breakdown of the Comintern, clear to the whole world, signifies of necessity the further decomposition of bureaucratic centrism.*" (Italics in original except last sentence, where italics are added.)

The decomposition of the CPs that Trotsky saw was not just a political question but a numerical one as well. "The Stalinist organizations diminish more and more. The working class casts the Comintern from its bosom." (*Writings 1933-34*, p. 27) The CPs' physical decay was further proof to Trotsky of the breakdown of the hard character of Stalinist centrism.

The apparent solidity and unusual (for centrism) stability during the zigzags was due to the strength of the Russian bureaucracy. However, from Trotsky's point of view, the Russian state bureaucracy was strong relative to a union bureaucracy in the West (or certainly in relation to a normal centrist bureaucracy) but was quite weak and growing weaker inside Russia. The threat of workers' revolution was an everyday reality, as was the potential of a bourgeois restoration.

Trotsky's position on this was evident in his view of the purges during the late thirties. Rather than seeing them as proving the growing strength of Stalin — given his ability to wipe out the last vestiges of October within the leadership — Trotsky viewed the purges as sharp indicators of Stalin's weakness and harbingers of imminent collapse.

Trotsky mis-estimated the strength of Stalinism both in Russia and internationally. To him, the Stalinist bureaucracy represented a system of capitulation to world capitalism. Nevertheless, the bureaucracy's privileges and spoils rested upon the fact that it was rooted in the property forms created by the proletarian revolution. At heart, it was a petty-bourgeois force built upon privileges exacted from the workers' state. While it vacillated and betrayed the proletariat to capitalism, it nevertheless defended the source of its own privilege, the vestiges of workers' property. Caught between two stools, the weakening bureaucracy behaved in a centrist manner, zigzagging right and left.

In reality, the rapid industrialization of the early 1930's could have gone in either of two directions: it could have maintained, badly, the workers' state or else laid the basis for state capitalism. (See the article "Capitalism in the Soviet Union," *Socialist Voice* No. 2.) Although the industrialization drive took place only after the defeat of the proletarian Left Opposition, the issue was not yet fatalistically determined. Working class consciousness was still a potent factor in Russia. Internationally, the forces of revolution still had the potential to overcome the isolation of the USSR (witness the events in Spain).

Trotsky, optimistically, saw only the first possibility: he expected the bureaucracy to become ever weaker as

proletarian industrial power grew, so long as the bureaucracy was able to utilize the gains produced by the workers against them, the growth of Russian industry meant the strengthening of the state capitalist alternative. Rather than weakening, the Stalinist bureaucracy transformed itself from the ruling caste of a degenerating workers' state into a far more solid ruling class. The purges, rather than being evidence of Stalin's weakness, were the new ruling class' act of consolidation. Russia's role in World War II makes this conclusion obvious and Trotsky's judgment faulty, as we shall show.

Internationally, the CPs did grow weaker, as Trotsky recognized. However, this did not signify the end of the Stalinists as an international force, but rather their consolidation. Trotsky had pointed out that there were still revolutionary workers in the Comintern. More and more, many of the advanced elements still lodged within the Comintern had to be stripped away in order for the organization to be hardened along the emerging class lines. Revolutionary workers still joined the Comintern but in fewer numbers. Greater numbers of petty bourgeois joined during the Popular Front than before it. In fact, the Trotskyists recognized that by the middle thirties advanced workers were tending to join the Socialist Parties, which were developing centrist wings as a result of the crisis.

Trotsky's Last Appraisal

Trotsky kept registering the degeneration of the Comintern, according to his theory and perspective. In 1935 he noted that the degeneration and disintegration was proceeding by leaps and bounds. He stated: "Nothing now distinguishes the Communists from the Social Democrats except the traditional phraseology which is not difficult to unlearn." He believed that merger of the two tendencies was quite possible. If it didn't occur, it would be for secondary reasons. "There remains the question of the traditions of the two closed bureaucratic apparatuses and of the material interests of a considerable number of people, which were bound up with the apparatuses." ("The Comintern's Liquidation Congress," *Writings 1935-36*).

With the betrayal of the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky in 1937 abandoned his previous characterization of the Stalinist parties. They were no longer bureaucratic centrists or centrists of any variety. He wrote (in *The Spanish Revolution*, p. 311):

"The left Socialists and Anarchists, the captives of the Popular Front, tried, it is true, to save whatever could be saved of democracy. But inasmuch as they did not dare to mobilize the masses against the gendarmes of the Popular Front, their efforts at the end were reduced to plaints and wails. The Stalinists were thus in alliance with the extreme right, avowedly bourgeois wing of the Socialist Party. They directed their repressions against the left — the POUM, the Anarchists, the 'left' Socialists — in other words, against the centrist groupings who reflected, even in a most remote degree, the pressure of the revolutionary masses.

"This political fact, very significant in itself, provides at the same time a measure of the degeneration of the Comintern in the last few years. I once defined Stalinism as *bureaucratic centrism*, and events brought a series of corroborations of the correctness of this definition. *But it is obviously obsolete today. The interests of the Bonapartist bureaucracy can no longer be reconciled with centrist hesitation and vacillation.* In search of reconciliation with the bourgeoisie, the Stalinist clique is capable of entering into alliance only with the most conservative

groupings among the international labor aristocracy. *This has acted to fix definitively the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism on the international arena.*" (Emphasis added.)

In 1938 Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program of "the definite passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order, its cynically *counterrevolutionary* role throughout the world, particularly in Spain, France, the United States..." (emphasis added.)

While describing the "passing over" as definitive and abandoning the notion of bureaucratic centrism, Trotsky did not precisely delineate the nature of the Communist Parties. The Transitional Program states: "The Third International has taken to the road of reformism at a time when the crisis of capitalism definitely places the proletarian revolution on the order of the day. The Comintern's policy in Spain and China today — the policy of cringing before the 'democratic' and 'national' bourgeoisie — demonstrates that the Comintern is likewise incapable of learning anything further or of changing. The bureaucracy which became a reactionary force in the USSR cannot play a revolutionary role in the world arena."

Trotsky refers to the Stalinists as having "taken to the road of reformism." He believed the CPs to be reformists to all intents and purposes, but he was reluctant to describe them as such in any full and rounded way. Hesitancy on exact theoretical and analytical questions was no hallmark of Trotsky's. There was a perfectly reasonable explanation for him to mark time on the question. For Trotsky, a new stage in the process of degeneration of both Russia and the CPs was occurring. Spain and the Moscow Trials were important signposts.

In "A Fresh Lesson" (*Writings, 1938-39*, p. 66) Trotsky lays bare his central point: "Having crushed the Soviet masses and broken with the policy of international revolution, the Kremlin clique has become a toy of imperialism." This is the meaning of the "definite passing over." The caste in Moscow had changed from a force essentially vacillating between world capitalism and its roots in "proletarian production relations." While still resting upon this foundation, it had become an active reactionary agency of state monopoly imperialism. Its duty now was not simply to capitulate or politically to disarm the workers but to be an active agency of Western imperialism — an agency to crush the workers. Spain had decisively proven this to Trotsky. Stalinism was now counterrevolutionary.

Trotsky concluded that "...Stalin gradually became a lackey and hired assassin in the service of the countries of sated imperialism." And he went on (*ibid.*, p. 71):

"Ten years ago it was predicted that the theory of socialism in one country must inevitably lead to the growth of nationalist tendencies in the sections of the Comintern. This prediction has become an obvious fact. But until recently, the chauvinism of the French, British, Belgian, Czechoslovak, American and other Communist parties seemed to be, and to a certain extent was, a refracted image of the interests of Soviet diplomacy ('the defense of the USSR'). Today, we can predict with assurance the inception of a new stage. The growth of imperialist antagonisms, the obvious proximity of the war danger, and the equally obvious isolation of the USSR must unavoidably strengthen the *centrifugal nationalist tendencies* within the Comintern. Each one of its sections will begin to evolve a patriotic policy on its own account. Stalin has reconciled the Communist Parties of imperialist democracies with their national bourgeoisies. This stage has now been passed. The Bonapartist procurer has played his role. Henceforth the Communo-chauvinists will have to worry about their own hides,

whose interests by no means always coincide with the 'defense of the USSR'."

"This stage (CP reconciliation with its national bourgeoisie) has now been passed," according to Trotsky. Theoretically Trotsky was sure, but as always in his method, the proof would be in practice. The point of practical certainty would be the open break with "defense of the USSR." Trotsky indeed predicted that the CPs would not carry out this task during a war. The parties would become definitively "reformist" when they broke openly with Moscow in favor of their own material national interests, in practice.

For Trotsky, the disintegration of the Comintern was related to the weakness of the now vastly degenerated workers' state in Russia. Russia would soon go either to capitalism or to proletarian revolution. Stalinism was a temporary, contradictory and "transitory" phenomenon: a caste ruling a workers' state. Ominously, the signs pointed for Trotsky more and more to the right. The Transitional Program of 1938 states,

"The political prognosis has an alternative character. Either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism. . . .

"The extermination of the generation of Old Bolsheviks and of the revolutionary representatives of the middle and young generations has acted to disrupt the political equilibrium still more in favor of the right, bourgeois wing of the bureaucracy, and of its allies throughout the land. From them, i.e., from the right, we can expect ever more determined attempts in the next period to revise the socialist character of the USSR and bring it closer in pattern to 'Western civilization' in its fascist form."

Stalinism and Classical Reformism

Trotsky was only partially correct in his predictions and analysis. The source of his errors was his wrong appraisal of the direction of the Stalinist bureaucracy, as we have already pointed out. Capitalist restoration had already occurred in Russia, but in a new form which Trotsky had mistakenly ruled out. It did not take a fascist wing to restore capitalism; the central bureaucracy under Stalin had already accomplished that task. It did not necessitate the breaking up of nationalized property. Instead, state capitalism was built upon the fused state and production system. Capitalism negated the proletarian content of the property forms created by the October Revolution and established them under bourgeois relationships of production.

Trotsky noted correctly that the Stalinists had definitively gone over to support for state monopoly capitalism in the face of proletarian revolution. The conclusion that Stalinism no longer played a centrist role was completely accurate. However, what was proven in *precise* terms was simply that Stalinism would defend state monopoly capitalism from proletarian revolution. It was *not* proven that this was the *only* form of capitalism that Stalinism would defend against the proletariat.

In fact, Stalinism proved that it would defend world capitalism precisely in order to defend its own national state capitalist interests, which for it were now primary. It was now definitively counterrevolutionary, but in the interests of a world capitalist system, imperialism.

Internationally, Stalinism arose as the chief bulwark of capitalism within the proletariat at a time when reformism

could no longer serve this purpose. Born during the triumph of imperialism and fueled by imperialism's sops to the labor aristocracy, reformism was not adequately equipped to cope with imperialism's decay. It could not attract, contain and defeat the advanced revolutionary masses. It was so tied to imperialism and the state monopoly capitalist system that it could not even pretend to appear as the vanguard of the proletariat in the imperialist countries, nor could it risk organizing independent masses in the colonial countries. Reformism could be "hard" only as the representative of the imperialist status quo; therefore its organization of the masses had to be of the most unthreatening character. Thus it could not win over the most advanced, and consequently most dangerous, proletarians. A tighter force was needed to control the struggles of the proletariat and the colonial peoples.

A major tendency at work among the reformists during the epoch of imperialist decay has been Americanism. The reformist adaptation to state monopoly capitalism was not only to the system in general but to its specific national capitalism. This was to remain true throughout the epoch but with an important modification. As early as 1924, Trotsky pointed out the growing interrelationship between the Social Democrats and the leading imperialist power, the United States of America.

"What are the Socialists throughout Europe doing? Let us study this closely and ponder over it.

"They are now educating themselves and they are trying to instil in the working masses the religion of Americanism. This does not mean that they have all turned Presbyterians or Quakers. But it does mean that they are making a new political religion out of Americanism and out of the role of American capitalism in Europe. They are teaching or trying to teach the toiling masses that Europe cannot maintain herself without the pacifying role of American capitalism and its loans. They are leading the opposition to their own bourgeoisie, as, for example do the German social patriots — an opposition not from the standpoint of the proletarian revolution, nor even from the standpoint of some sort of reforms, but from the standpoint of exposing the German bourgeoisie as intemperate, greedy, chauvinistic and incapable of reaching an agreement with the humane, democratic, pacifist capitalism of America. This is now the central question of the political life of Europe, and especially of Germany. In other words, the European Social Democracy is becoming, before our very eyes, the political agency of American capitalism." (*Europe and America*, pp. 26-7)

The European Social Democrats maintain their pro-American loyalty for the most part up to today. They pay fealty to the major imperialist and state monopoly capitalist nation. They are nonetheless nationalist, in that in the last analysis they wish the benefits of "Americanism" (and American aid) to buttress their own positions in their own nations. The tie to the United States is not direct and far from binding on every question. The tie is one of general direction and agreement on fundamental policies. (It can be *most* direct and binding where Social Democratic groups are literally on the C.I.A. payroll; eg. Saragat's party in Italy after World War II.)

With the emergence of state capitalism as a challenging (and sustaining) system within imperialism there arose pressures on sections of the reformist leadership to look in the direction of Russia; this affected even right-wing reformists. In general, given its role in bargaining, the labor bureaucracy supports state monopoly capitalism. However, sections of the bureaucracy are motivated in the direction of state capitalism as the satiating tendencies within capitalism mature.

Although state capitalism couples the unions into the state apparatus and does away with the bureaucrats' role of bargainer, it transforms rather than destroys the bureaucracy. The more statist elements see a role for themselves as part of the ruling class. Under state capitalism the "unions" function to force more productivity out of the workers, a role already partially played under state monopoly capitalism. The bureaucrats can see a more stable and in a sense more secure role for themselves in the new system.

Nevertheless, the major attraction for the dominant forces of Social Democracy is the "citadel of democracy," the United States. The "pluralism" of bourgeois democracy is also the dominant method of organization within the Social Democratic parties, reflecting the "buying and selling" methods of the market economies. The reformist parties are highly bureaucratic but not monolithic. They tend to be loose organizations rather than hard cadre groups. The party has working class followers and it has workers who hold membership cards. However, it is incapable of welding its membership into a hard instrument.

The reformists know well that they do not have the power over the rank and file to form such an organization. Passive acceptance, cynical adherence and fleeting popularity do not constitute the basis for a hard rank-and-file organization. The reformists no longer have a banner, a promise of revolution or a better world that can command the voluntary allegiance of the ranks to a sizeable commitment. They can promise bureaucratic positions, which does ensure the loyalty of a small group of career aspirants, but not too much more. They may command votes in elections, but not the hard, fighting legions of loyal proletarians.

Typically the bureaucracy maintains no overt discipline. Elements in the party may agree or disagree publicly with the party position. This pluralist attitude holds good until a real challenge is made to the "old guard's" control of the party. Then, typically, the screws begin to be tightened. This, of course, is the nature of bourgeois democracy.

The entrenched bureaucratic leadership of the reformist parties usually stems from the craft and some of the white collar unions. Their close ties to capitalism of a material and caste nature give these sections of the bureaucracy a relatively hard political direction. All political tendencies vacillate to a degree. However those forces most closely linked to the bourgeoisie on the one hand, and to the conscious proletariat in the other, do not have vacillation as an endemic quality. The entrenched bureaucracy is a hard pole without having an organized, tight, disciplined base in the class.

Over the years, support for reformism among the industrial workers has varied. In the throes of crisis, the industrial sectors of the bureaucracy and its aristocratic base tend to shift to the left far more than do the craft sectors. As well, to a lesser extent and in a different way, this is true in certain white collar unions. The bureaucracy of these industrial and white collar unions are more susceptible to the leftward movement of their bases; in addition, their place in the structure of production makes them more prone to statist and planning tendencies.

Stalinism and Left Reformism

The left reformists, produced under the impact of a less aristocratically firm and more volatile base in the class, vacillate far more than do the entrenched reformist old guard types. Trotsky described the left reformists as being a phenomenon closely akin to centrists. In "Problems of the

British Revolution," he explained:

"The left muddleheads are incapable of power, but if through the turn of events it fell into their hands they would hasten to pass it over to their elder brothers on the right. They would do the same with the state as they are doing now with the party. . . .

"The extreme rights continue to control the (Labour) party. This can be explained by the fact that a party cannot confine itself to isolated left campaigns but is compelled to have an overall system of policy.

"The lefts have no such system. Nor by their very essence can they. But the rights do; with them stands tradition, experience and routine and most important, with them stands bourgeois society. . . ."

In "Forecast of the Future" (*Leon Trotsky on Britain*, p. 144), Trotsky summarized the "lefts":

"The left wing of the Labour Party represents an effort to re-create centrism within the social-imperialist party of MacDonald. It thus reveals the nervousness of a portion of the labor bureaucracy as to their relations with the masses moving to the left."

The lefts represent a tendency toward centrism. Like the centrists they are essentially vacillators with no independent hard alternative of their own. While they lean in the direction of more statified monopoly capitalism or even sympathize with state capitalism, they cannot on their own escape their pluralistic conceptions nor weld hard bases in the class capable of restraining or defeating the workers, and this is the source of their vacillation. Like the right reformists, they have an essential fear of the anger of the ranks. A left bureaucrat may attain popularity and support among the workers, but he is always fearful of organizing his support. For example, one of Arnold Miller's first acts in his presidency of the United Mineworkers was to demobilize the Miners for Democracy the organization that had elected him to office.

If the lefts fear that organizing a hard base out of their followers would trap them, they still need a base organization in order to capture, quell and misdirect the ranks. Therefore the left reformists, not simply for ideological reasons, are drawn to combinations with the Communist Parties. The CPs do not vacillate and are able to form hard cadres with roots in the class.

The relatively more outspoken quality of left reformists in countries where the CP has an apparatus is clear. Where there is common agreement, the right reformists will even move into blocks with the CP for similar reasons. They will, if necessary, even talk more left when they are sure the CP will keep the workers in line. The relationship between Stalinism and reformism is one of symbiosis as well as rivalry. In this it mirrors the modern interrelationship of state monopoly capitalism and its societal prop, state capitalism.

Stalinism after World War II

Trotsky's prognosis of Russia's imminent collapse (the overthrow of the property forms by traditional capitalism or the overthrow of the bureaucracy by the proletariat) proved erroneous. Russia emerged from the Second World War under the leadership of Stalin stronger than ever. The Communist Parties did not disintegrate nor become reformist. They became stronger than in the 1930's in the aftermath of the war. They did not break from defense of the USSR during the war; they unwaveringly defended both Russia and the "democratic" imperialisms.

The Russian armies suppressed workers' uprisings and dual power institutions in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, etc. The counterrevolutionary role

of Russia was reprovon on an even grander scale than in the thirties. In this respect, Trotsky was correct. However, the Russian Empire by no means collapsed; class rule emerged from the war intact and decisively in control throughout the world. The CPs generally followed Moscow's line during and after the war.

In Europe, Communist Parties had become the backbone of the underground anti-axis movements during the war. This was in sharp contrast to the reformist currents whose underground organizations, where they existed, were much more flaccid. The Stalinists recruited and built their tendencies in alliance with the national bourgeois elements. This was true both in Europe and in the colonial lands, where the CPs supported Western imperialist interests and formed hard-cadres out of people recruited by their pro-imperialist line and their vision of a statified, "socialist" society.

If the CPs did not act like reformist groups during the war, they certainly did not act like centrists either. They maintained a tight alliance with the imperialist bourgeoisie, deliberately crushing strikes, stressing productivity and serving as a spy force within the popular movements.

The disintegration of the 1930's was turned around. The statistics on CP membership in France, for example, were:

Membership by Areas

	<i>Industrial</i>	<i>Semi-industrial</i>	<i>Agricultural</i>
1937	144,383	93,926	54,392
1944	153,000	120,634	97,843
1945	222,323	202,018	192,014

Number of Party Cells

	<i>Workplace</i>	<i>Locality</i>
1937	4,041	8,951
1944	3,917	14,888
1945	6,927	21,226
1946	8,363	27,980

(Source: M. Duverger, *Political Parties*, pp. 32-34, as quoted in Birchall, *Workers Against the Monolith*, pp. 21-22.)

As Birchall points out (p.22), "though France was one of the most successful areas of CP growth, a similar pattern was to be found throughout the German occupied areas of Europe. Before June 1941, The CPs were everywhere weak and compromised. After June 1941 they took every opportunity to win command in the Resistance movements."

The Austrian CP went from 16,000 members in 1935 to 150,000 by 1948; the Czechoslovakian party went from 60,000 in 1935 to over one million in 1946; in Italy, the Party grew to 402,000 members by 1944 and then to two million by 1946. In Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Britain, the story was similar.

The Indian CP claimed a fourfold increase in membership in the first part of 1943. Its main activities were production stimulation campaigns to help the British war effort and sponsoring a "grow more food" campaign among the peasantry. Undoubtedly, membership growth also reflected the fact that the CP was the only organized force capable of helping the British since the bourgeois Congress Party had been banned for its Indian nationalism. Needless to say, the Communist Party was not guilty of such an anti-imperialist "error" during the war. It steadfastly maintained its complete capitulation.

After the war, the CPs played a major role in the betrayal

and crushing of worker and peasant revolts throughout the world. They participated in the DeGaulle and Badoglio governments in France and Italy. They welcomed the British and French troops back into Vietnam. They murdered the Trotskyists and smashed the proletariat in Saigon.

In France, for example, the CP literally delivered the power over to DeGaulle and the imperialist allies. It deliberately dissolved the militia and liberation committees and took cabinet posts. It proclaimed increased productivity as the goal. It took over the leadership of the bureaucratic union confederation, the CGT, for the first time. The CP slogan, "One State, One Army, One Police Force," summed up the Stalinist role. Even in China, the Stalinists proclaimed in 1944 that "The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has never wavered from its policy of supporting Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the policy of continuing the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party and the entire people, and the policy of defeating Japanese imperialism and struggle for the building of a free democratic China." The CCP which "never wavered" didn't waver in supporting even Chiang's policy of putting strikers to death during the anti-Japanese struggle.

In Greece, France, Italy, Vietnam, etc. the possibilities for proletarian revolution at the end of the war were great. The decisive misleadership of the counterrevolutionary CPs ended that chance for humanity. 1946 was a year of strikes throughout Europe. Europe was still on its knees before the massive infusion of American capital. The CPs were instrumental in weakening and syphoning off the enormous potential of the strike movement.

The hard cadre that emerged out of the Stalinization of the Comintern in the thirties merged with even greater numbers who joined during and after the war. The CPs cemented themselves in the trade union bureaucracies in the Western and certain "underdeveloped" countries. Elements from this period were to play a decisive role in the hard core cadre of the CPs throughout the period of the Cold War and up to today. The parties in East Europe and to a lesser extent in the West were purged and hardened for the tasks ahead. No longer resembling reformism or centrism, they had become mature Stalinist parties in the workers' movement.

The CPs Adapt to Imperialism

The case-hardened Stalinist parties, toughened in the era of working class defeat after World War II, adapted during the fifties and sixties to the changes in world capitalism. In the West, the imperialist stabilization during the post-war boom led to a deepening and expansion of the labor aristocracy — and the Communist Parties, their radical tasks of capturing and defeating the workers accomplished, adjusted to the more passive and prosperous scene. In the colonial and ex-colonial world, on the other hand, the CPs became the instruments for a more radical readjustment to the post-war world.

In 1947, the "Grand Alliance" collapsed and the Cold War period developed rapidly. The CPs in the West diminished to some extent. In the U.S. the CP was decimated but in Britain the CP still held critical power among the shop stewards. In France and Italy the CPs were still dominant in the unions and among the workers. The main trade union federations in France and Italy remained CP bastions. During the fifties and sixties the CPs in West Europe became, in the eyes of the workers as well as all other observers, one of the two "traditional parties" of the working class.

In the aftermath of defeat, working class consciousness

became more conservative and reform-minded as prosperity grew. The CPs, with the interrelated bureaucracies of both the unions and the parties, stimulated the "social mobility" aspirations of many workers. Working one's way up in the hierarchy of the CP and the CP-dominated unions was as much a feature of social economic life as it was in the SP and SP-dominated unions.

In East Europe, with the advent of the Cold War, decisive changes occurred in the Russian-occupied and Russian-oriented areas. The states and the economies moved from coalition governments with "mixed" economic features to CP control and state capitalist societies *overtly*. While some traditional bourgeois allies were retained, no really independent or even semi-independent bourgeois groups or individuals could exist politically. Russian control dominated and purged the parties frequently. In 1948, Tito's Yugoslavia broke away in the first major split in the state capitalist orbit.

During the fifties, the cracks in the Stalinist monolith widened. The proletariat began to reassert itself under Stalinism. As Marx pointed out, the collapse of a system is frequently manifested first in the outposts, before the crisis breaks out at the center. The Berlin rising of 1953, the Polish uprising and the Hungarian revolution of 1956 sent impulses everywhere. Within the satellite states, the ruling classes projected a nationalist ideology in an effort to capture the workers and loosen the Russian stranglehold as well.

In China, where the CCP had tried to conciliate Chiang Kai-shek, a new path was taken. The Communist Party seized state power from the collapsing Chiang regime and created a new state capitalism independent of the immediate interests of the USSR. Although the CPs in China and North Vietnam (and later in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) continually tried to defer to the pro-Western bourgeoisie, they did prove capable of taking power when the traditional order foundered.

By the early 1960's, the schism in Stalinism that had begun in Eastern Europe was widespread. China's break with the USSR was open, and the other ruling CPs in Asia tried to maintain a balance between Moscow and Peking. The links among the state capitalist nations loosened and tightened in complex political and economic patterns.

The CPs in countries where state capitalism was not dominant also tended to polarize. Polycentrism (Moscow's loss of absolute authority) became a growing tendency. Prior to the fifties, no CP could overtly indicate a line different from Moscow's. Most parties did not have sizeable differences, not even covertly. A few parties not susceptible to immediate control had some differences, but these were kept within bounds and not publicly acknowledged.

With the development of polycentrism, different "roads to socialism" were recognized. In so far as "many roads" was the Moscow party line, this was an attempt to allow necessary leverage while still trying to maintain a high degree of control. Polycentrism was not simply a conspiratorial facade made up in Moscow to cover monolithism. It was a grudging and limited acceptance of the fact that Moscow could not prevent the local CPs from national adaptations not necessarily consistent with Russian foreign policy.

A number of the parties seemed to be heading for reformism. (One CP definitely made it all the way, the Australian.) At first blush this degeneration into reformism seems to confirm Trotsky's prognosis about the CPs. After all, even though he saw the tendency as more imminent than it was in fact, that has always been a "failing" of the best

Marxists. However, it was not really an accurate assessment. Trotsky was prophetic, but the "delay" was a result of a serious error on state capitalism.

The CPs In the Light of State Capitalism

Trotsky, in analyzing the imminent reformism of the CPs ("A Fresh Lesson," *Writings, 1938-39*, pp. 70-71), stated:

"As regards the ex-Comintern, its social basis, properly speaking is of a twofold nature. On the one hand, it lives on the subsidies of the Kremlin, submits to the latter's commands, and, in this respect is the younger brother and subordinate of the Soviet bureaucrat. On the other hand, the various machines of the ex-Comintern feed from the same sources as the Social Democracy, that is, the super profits of imperialism. The growth of the Communist parties in recent years, their infiltration into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, their installation in the state machinery, the trade unions, parliaments, municipalities, etc., have strengthened in the extreme their dependence on national imperialism at the expense of their traditional dependence on the Kremlin."

In this Trotsky was largely correct (but the error he did make was to prove very serious). The CPs were dependent upon the power of the Russian bureaucracy and had a base in "the same sources as the Social Democracy," in the sops furnished by imperialism. The functional national material base for the CPs was the trade union and party institutional bureaucracies. This two-pronged base was interlocked increasingly with state posts, as both union and (sometimes and in some places) the party overlapped with the growing state machinery. Both the CPs and the SPs shared these positions to one degree or another.

However, while Trotsky was right in that the CP and the SP were cohabiting the same strata, they tended to come from *different* sections of the strata. The labor aristocracy and its bureaucracy are multi-layered. The CP strength lay in sectors which were impelled, more than were the reformists, toward greater state control of capital. As well, the middle class elements the CPs recruited among for years are from the more statist, technologically modernizing elements. The reformists, in short, represent the sections of the aristocracy which are prone to support the status quo of state monopoly capitalism, while the CPs represent sections of the aristocracy which tend to support the increased statification of capital: that is, state capitalism.

The question of state capitalism embraces not only the character of the USSR. There is also the tendency of capitalism on a world basis to move in more statified direction. For Trotsky, the division within the material interests of the CPs was simply two-fold: Russia on the one hand, and the national state monopoly capitalism on the other. Reality has proven different. The CPs can have material roots in the nation and favor the extant tendencies toward its material state capitalization. They defend their own nation from a state capitalist vantage point.

It will *generally* take a political revolution for state capitalism to emerge out of state monopoly capitalism. However, the tendencies toward state capitalism exist on an objective and subjective level prior to such a political revolution within state monopoly capitalist society. Fundamentally, this is why the nationalist CPs could maintain their indigenous chauvinist line and not split from Moscow, as Trotsky thought necessary. The CPs recognized their dependence on Moscow as the ideal form and power center for

the same type of society they wished to create at home. They are far less of a conflict between their national chauvinism and their pro-Russianism than Trotsky did.

The other side of the same error was the increased strength of both the CPs and the Stalin regime in Russia. Rather than weakening and disintegrating, they grew stronger and expanded as the vanguard of a growing world state capitalist tendency.

Trotsky was correct in pointing to the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism. It does, as he described, capitulate to



The headquarters of the French Communist Party in 1936. The banners hail the Popular Front and appeal to French nationalism.

state monopoly capitalism. At the same time, it seeks to maximize the strength — and the defense — of state capitalism. The process stems from the tendencies outlined in the theory of the permanent revolution. No bourgeois force can fail to take the proletariat into account in its actions. In the face of an aggressive, organized, Marxist-led proletariat, all the bourgeois forces try to lock together. Those forces that strive for alteration of the system reduce their leverage in the face of a proletarian challenge to property, any property held private from the proletariat. The radical bourgeois forces curtailed their “radicalism” in the face of proletarian revolution in Russia and tried to prop up Czarism. So too,

“radical” bourgeois forces today act to prop up or coalesce with the status quo bourgeois forces when faced with a challenging working class alternative.

Therefore, it is no mystery that state capitalist forces, despite their hostility to traditional capitalism, will support the system in the face of the proletariat. This proposition is also proven by its corollary. All bourgeois forces tend toward conservatism in the imperialist epoch for very understandable reasons. The Stalinists, however, will take power in certain situations even if it upsets the traditional capitalists. They do so very, very cautiously, however.

Where the proletariat is smashed or where its revolutionary potential and leadership is “eliminated” for a time, the Stalinists will risk the seizure of power. Generally, their push to actual power is accelerated where the traditional bourgeoisie collapses internally, for the social purpose of the Stalinists is to prop up traditional capitalism. If the structure is about to fall of its own weight, then the Stalinists are compelled to move. For them to do so, however, it is crucial that the proletariat has been sidelined for an historical interval. The Stalinists can then lead the “bourgeois democratic” revolution and can take steps to consolidate the national economy and try to build a modern nation.

Trotsky's projection of reformism as the destiny of the CPs was proved wrong in major respects. He saw reformism as the immediate potential in the late thirties and early forties, because he failed to allow for a possible system of state capitalism and also overlooked the centralizing drive within capitalism to transcend the levels of statification already achieved. Trotsky's conception of capitalist restoration ignored the fact that the economic gains of October (like the political gains such as the Comintern) could be turned to the service of the counterrevolution — once the power and revolutionary leadership of the working class was decisively eliminated. Stalinist state capitalism, given its ability to turn the gains of the workers against themselves, was just the weapon needed by the world bourgeoisie to defend capitalism. In the East, where the Stalinists took state power themselves, the bourgeois economies were centralized to a degree that no traditional bourgeoisie could accomplish. In the West as well, the defeat of the workers that Stalinism engineered enabled the bourgeoisie to reap profits at levels that created the post-war boom. And thereby it nourished the aristocratic base for bourgeois tendencies within the working class.

In the economically backward countries where imperialism's sway has been undermined, the condition of the proletariat's defeat both requires and is required by the Stalinist conquest of power. Without a defeat of the workers, the statification of the economy and the centralization of the state would make state power, in Trotsky's terms, too tempting an object for a militant and explosive working class. On the other hand, even where the workers have been beaten, the backward economies still face the danger of a renewed proletarian upsurge emerging out of the continuing struggle of the oppressed masses against imperialism and the bandit regimes that do its bidding. The revolutionary process would inevitably reveal the class differentiations among the masses once again and sooner or later reintroduce the communist working class struggle. The role of Stalinism was to step in and try to congeal and modernize effective nation states as a barrier to capitalist collapse and anarchy, and thereby to ward off the danger of proletarian revolution.

However, the steps fall far short of the goal. The Stalinists are unable to complete the task. None of the anti-imperialist

political revolutions (replacing the old bourgeoisie by the Stalinist bourgeoisie) can actually solve the bourgeois democratic tasks; inevitably they fall back into the webs of imperialism. Thus Stalinism confirms rather than negates the perspective of permanent revolution. Trotsky was correct to believe that Stalinism — now developed as state capitalism — was inherently weak. State capitalism attempts to maintain world capitalism by plugging gaping holes that appear as the system tears itself apart. It fails because it itself degenerates, unable to escape the death agony of capitalism. The only real solution is for the proletariat to intervene and carry out the bourgeois tasks in the course of the socialist revolution.

Although Stalinism was able to spread internationally during the period of working class defeats after World War II, today the dominant tendency is not for the CPs to seize power. They tend instead to support the old bourgeoisies. This is because the proletariat is on the move internationally at a time when Stalinism has lost much of its attractive power. As a consequence, the CPs have pushed their ever-present popular front position into the foreground. Similarly, all of the Stalinist nations, despite their rivalries, have a line of alliance or compromise with Western imperialism. This conservatizing pressure manifests itself not merely upon the external political line of the CPs; it also has set internal changes in motion which are transforming the essential natures of the Stalinist parties and states. To investigate the degeneration of Stalinism and its condition today, we will separate out the CPs according to their different strategies: those adopted in the advanced countries, on the one hand, and those in the less developed countries, on the other.

The Guerrilla Communist Parties

The first CP to conquer power in the colonial world was the Chinese. The CCP was based upon a cadre forged in Yenan utilizing a largely peasant army and having no workers to speak of in its membership. As they approached the cities, the Stalinists took good care not to let any possibility of working class action occur.

In power, the Maoists received support from many big Chinese bourgeois elements and Kuomintang generals who were incorporated into the new regime. As well, the CCP had long maintained a series of dependent bourgeois political fronts in its orbit. Complete with Madame Sun Yat-Sen, they ornamented the new regime when Mao assumed power.

Not all of the CPs in the underdeveloped world base themselves on the peasantry rather than on layers of the working class. The question is one of specific political history; even geography and certainly the nature of the economy play key roles in determining the base of the Stalinists. One major factor is the working class and whether or not it has been defeated. The Stalinists can only move out of the urban scene if they are relatively sure that the proletariat cannot erupt under a revolutionary leadership.

In China and Vietnam, the working class had suffered smashing defeats. In 1927-8, the Chinese CP under Stalin's direction capitulated to the Kuomintang and the workers were slaughtered by the thousands. In Vietnam, the Stalinists directly smashed the Saigon proletariat in the mid-forties. In China again, as the old Trotskyist Peng Shu-tse pointed out, the CCP allowed the Kuomintang to crush workers' uprisings in the years before the Stalinists took power. By way of contrast, the Indonesian CP continued to be the leading party within the working class until it was wiped out in the mass pogrom of the 1960's. The CP in Indonesia remained in the

working class, keeping it in check and capitulating, although the country was physically suited to guerrillaism. One central factor was that the Indonesian working class had never (until the sixties) suffered a massive, outright defeat on the order of China and Vietnam.

In the "guerrilla" nations — those countries where the CP has chosen the guerrilla path and built its base outside the working class — the tendency toward reformism has not been manifested. These countries have not accomplished the essential tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Given the weak labor aristocracy base and the specific history of the countries, the CPs have chosen roads modeled in whole or in part on the Chinese, which does not mean that they are Maoist. They have no use for reformism, for the same reason that the traditional reformists do not build independent working class parties in these countries. The pervasive poverty and the marginality of the labor aristocracy in these "underdeveloped" countries means that barriers against a volatile proletariat are too weak for the reformists to risk "independence."

Typically the labor bureaucrats and allied strata belong to "all class socialist" parties. The unions as well are thoroughly integrated into the state apparatus and have precious little social leverage. The reformist types are basically and thoroughly identified with the neo-colonialist regimes. Representing narrow urban strata of the petty bourgeoisie and minute elements of privilege in the working class, they are deeply entwined with the status quo and the overtly bourgeois parties.

The CP in colonial and ex-colonial countries had a different heritage. As Trotsky stated in 1940:

"In contrast to the Second International, the Comintern, thanks to its great tradition, exercises unquestionable influence in the colonies. But its social base has altered in accordance with its political evolution. At the present time, in countries of a colonial nature, the Comintern rests on the stratum which is the traditional base of the Second International in the metropolitan centers. . . .

"The labor bureaucracy and aristocracy of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, together with the state functionaries, provide especially servile recruits for the 'friends' of the Kremlin." (*Manifesto of the Fourth International.*)

The CPs were able to switch their base in a number of countries entirely away from the tiny labor aristocracy. However, the class nature of their essential core remained the same; the new middle class. The "state functionaries" Trotsky described were frequently civil servants with Western university training. This type proliferated enormously in the ex-colonial world during the late forties, fifties and early sixties. Metropolitan universities as well as new indigenous schools turned out liberal arts majors, lawyers, planners, teachers, etc., many of whom found it difficult to get employment. Jobs were not the only source of alienation for students and graduates who were both Westernized and intensely nationalist. The propertyless middle class naturally gravitated toward the state and enhanced state power as the major source for its potential well-being and the social change it demanded. The guerrilla CPs found ready material for cadre in these elements.

Rather than tending toward reformism, the guerrilla CPs have dutifully tried to forge alliances with the national bourgeois parties, along the lines of the popular fronts of the advanced nations. Generally, the national bourgeoisies have broken such attempts. The typical CP strategy, therefore, tends to be one where shadow bourgeois figures are allied with

the dominant Stalinists. If the assemblage takes power, the state capitalist regime under CP hegemony promotes a first stage in which the traditional bourgeois elements remain as necessary symbols for the state, while some of them actually blend into the state capitalist apparatus.

In the first stage the regime allows leeway for a market economy, within limits. It tries to allow certain industries and small businesses to remain in private hands. It tacks and veers among the layers of the peasantry, between private property in the individuated sense and "collectivized" property on the land. In short, it tries to permit a heavily state controlled and regimented form of traditional capitalism to exist within the confines of its essentially state capitalist dominance.

The second stage is the fuller triumph of state capitalism and the attempt to eliminate the "private" sectors. The CP, of course, remains in power, but it goes through some major changes itself during the transformation. The evolution of the Chinese CP was the model for the later guerrilla-oriented CPs.

After 1929, there were no Communist-led unions in China. Working class cells were abandoned by the Party in the course of the thirties. There was no Party organization at all in Kuomintang areas by 1937 (which included all of the urban areas of China). By the time of the revolution, there were practically no workers in the CCP. However, *after* the revolution the Chinese CP steadily increased its workers membership. By 1951 it was 6.3 per cent of the total; by 1956



Nanking, China, April 1949. Crowds gather to await the Communist troops. The CP's proclamation had been issued: "The people are asked to maintain order and continue in their present occupations. Kuomintang officials or police personnel of provincial, city, county or other level of government institution; district, town, village or pao chia personnel . . . are asked to remain at their posts . . ." [Cited in Gluckstein, Mao's China, p. 212.]

However, it does away with "pluralism" in the unions. It creates a controlled "pluralist" capitalism which functions "better" because the workers are contained. It regiments the working class quite drastically. The unions are transformed into state agencies for productivity stimulation rather than workers' defense. This tendency, present in a constantly graduating form under state monopoly capitalism, is qualitatively transformed under state capitalism. The "unions" become agencies of the state.

it was 14 per cent, and it continued to hover around that figure.

The New Labor Aristocracy

Slowly but surely the state capitalist regime during the first stage, the "New Democracy" period, was congealing a more substantial labor aristocracy in China. Wage and status differentials grew. The CP itself used membership as a

mechanism for encouraging mobility among certain strata. The mechanisms used for the building of a labor aristocracy in Russia during the thirties were crucial elements for the Chinese. By systematic use of "material" and "moral" rewards — money, working conditions, social mobility — they spawned a privileged layer, greater than in the past, within the Chinese working class.

Related to this is the Stalinist states' drive to become directly imperialist or to participate in the imperialist network. Imperialism creates, and is in turn bolstered by, an expanding labor aristocracy. Only by developing such an agency within the working class can the CPs hope to control the proletariat and force expanded accumulation. The CPs, like the reformists, have learned the lesson that the labor aristocracy is the main guard of capitalist defense in this epoch.

Reformism can exist only where a labor aristocracy already exists. It can make only limited systemic adaptations in the face of a surging proletariat. Stalinism, representing newer elements within the aristocracy and the middle groupings, can expand labor aristocracies where they are too small. So long as sufficient middle class intelligentsia elements exist in a society to allow the forging of an initial CP cadre, the labor bureaucracy can be expanded after the seizure of power.

The petty-bourgeois elements that constitute the key to reformism are not capable of even such limited "creative" adjustments of the capitalist social stratification. That is, reformism in its defense of capitalism cannot make even political revolutions. It can only make minor adjustments within the specific capitalism in which it originates. It is the role of the Communist Parties to push the statist and centralizing tendencies inherent in capitalism to the limits that capitalist relations permit. Today these limits are narrowing for the state capitalists as well as the traditional. The attempts to build stable labor aristocracies founder in the world crisis.

State capitalism cannot develop the underdeveloped nations in any stable way. No bourgeois force can accomplish this in the present epoch. The decay of capitalism in general has already become evident in the internal problems of the most powerful and stable Stalinist nation, Russia. It is even more graphic in the crises besetting the other Stalinist societies. For example, the economy of China has never been nationally integrated. Like the other Stalinist countries, China has been able to apply mass labor shock techniques for a period in order to start development more rapidly than, say, traditional bourgeois India. In the long run neither of these states can develop as modern nations as long as they remain capitalist. An "atomic power," China is in reality devolving into an arena for the rival imperialist forces of greater strength. Its crisis-racked economy is reflected in the deeply factionalized ruling class which is coming apart under the surge of workers' strikes and demonstrations of recent years.

The Reformist Tendency

The breakup of the Stalinist monolith has given rise to both reformist tendencies and guerrillaist parties. The guerrilla CPs are able to take power in the last resort and establish state capitalism. Because they have made the necessary adjustment, they have been the most dynamic of the Communist Parties in the decades since World War II. Aside from direct Russian imperialism, guerrillaism has proven the only successful method so far for the Stalinists to take power. Accordingly, the transformation of the CPs in the guerrilla-line nations is a *regenerative* adjustment from the vantage point of Stalinism.

The CPs, on the other hand, which do accomplish the break to reformism will never take state power. (They may, like the other reformists, take "office" for the traditional bourgeoisie.) Therefore, in relation to the essence of Stalinism — state capitalism — the reformist ex-CP is a *degenerated* Stalinist party. Those parties like the Western European CPs which exhibit strong tendencies toward reformism may be characterized as degenerating Stalinist parties. It is these that we now turn our attention to.

The tendency towards reformism is prominent in all the CPs of the advanced countries. It is also evident in the semi-developed nations which have enough of a labor aristocracy to support both the Stalinists and the traditional reformists.

As we have mentioned, the Australian CP is now a "pluralist" party little different from the Social Democrats. It has broken from Moscow and Moscow has broken from it. Internally, its pluralist structure is much closer to reformism than to Stalinism. Other, more important CPs are degenerating from state capitalism to reformism and to "pluralistic" state monopoly capitalism. Furthest along this line is the Spanish CP, which has *publicly* identified with Socialist Prime Minister Soares in Portugal and castigated the pro-Moscow Portuguese CP leader Cunhal. Its rift with Moscow was quite open, although it has now been papered over. The Italian CP, which proclaims its "historic compromise" with the bourgeoisie, is not far behind. The Italians stress that their break is "strategic," not just "tactical," and it is constantly reinforced by open attacks on Russia over the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the internal discipline of the Italian CP is far from monolithic.

The Spanish and Italian CPs are not alone; in recent years, the French have been scurrying to catch up. These "Eurocommunists" are not yet reformist, but the tendency is unmistakable and a reversal of the trend is highly unlikely.

The CPs in Western nations expanded themselves in the prosperity of the boom. The drives toward state capitalism still exist within these nations; however, the CPs and their bureaucratic apparatuses have fashioned deep roots in the material status quo. The leader of the Stalinist-led union federation in Italy, examining the FIAT plant in Russia, said that the Russians have exactly transplanted not only the industrial features of FIAT in Italy but the employer-employee relationships. But, he moaned, at least in Italy there were real unions. Thus spoke a budding "pluralistic" reformist.

The union jobs, the parliamentary jobs, the hundreds of mayoral and regional governmental jobs won by the PCI have had a material effect. The CPs exist in areas of the aristocracy which "sense" the underlying drive toward state capitalism more than the reformists. However, they have expanded their bases outside of these traditional areas, especially in countries where they are the most powerful or hegemonic workers organization. As well, within the specific industries most affected by the need to nationalize and plan, the CPs tend to represent the older generation and the more entrenched elements who feel the deepest stake in the status quo.

This type is not confined to the nations where the CP is powerful. In Britain only a few years ago, militants were startled to see two well known CP officials in the postal and engineering unions, who lost their posts in union elections, take appointive positions in industry rather than return to the ranks. Clearly, the safety of bureaucratic jobs for CPers is greater in Italy and France than in Britain, but the outlook is pervasive. Careerism has had a chance to jell over decades within the material fabric of state monopoly capitalist societies

during the years of imperialist affluence.

Trotsky's prediction of reformism, therefore, is proving partially correct albeit in a delayed fashion. The weakness of state capitalism and the Stalinist parties shows up in a period where the post-war boom is over and the workers' upsurge is mounting. By controlling the proletariat, Stalinism had enabled the uneven but systemic drives of capitalism towards centralization and nationalization to work themselves out further than would otherwise have been possible without the socialist revolution. However, the stability that Stalinism made

monopoly capitalist forms — but that is the subject of another article.

Nature of the Communist Parties

What then is the Marxist characterization of the CPs? It is necessary that it develop what was excellent in Trotsky's projections and also account for what was wrong. As well, it must explain the phenomena pointed to by the new class theorists and refute their anti-revolutionary conclusions.



Paris workers vote to take over Renault plant during tumultuous 1968 events. The French CP was instrumental in suppressing the workers' struggle and treacherously betraying a revolutionary opportunity.

possible has now undermined Stalinism itself.

The degeneration of Stalinism is visible in several ways. In addition to the reformist trend within the Western Communist Parties and their break from the Soviet alliance, there is also the tendency of the Eastern bloc countries to move towards the orbit of world state monopoly capitalism led by the United States. Hence we see the shifting pattern of alliances undertaken by ruling class Communist Parties in countries like Yugoslavia and Rumania, not only by the Western "Eurocommunists."

The devolution of the Eurocommunists has been occurring for many years. The recent elimination of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" from the programs of several important CPs cannot hide the fact that many CPs contemplating their own national "roads to socialism" dropped this embarrassing plank years before. As far back as the mid-fifties, the USSR and the Russian CP "transcended" the proletarian self-description, becoming the state and party "of the whole people." Such gestures were made to ensure ties with the dominant bourgeois forces of the world. This is not only an international tendency; internally, the Stalinist economies are devolving toward state

Our state capitalist analysis based on the theory of permanent revolution explains the entire question in a manner consistent with proletarian politics. The different strands of Pabloism, on the other hand, have given rise to a number of different assessments. For some, the CPs are reformist. For some the nature of the CPs varies from country to country. Some characterize the CPs as centrists, or specifically as bureaucratic centrists, allegedly using Trotsky's concept of earlier vintage.

These Pabloites sought to account for the spread of the Russian system to East Europe, the Yugoslav revolution, the Chinese revolution, et al. On the one hand, in the post war period, these Pabloites assert, the Stalinists capitulated to Western imperialism. On the other, they made social transformations — they created workers' states, albeit "deformed." Thus they vacillated between reform and revolution, between capitalism and socialism. Normally they capitulate to capitalism. However, because of their vacillating character under the pressures of the masses, they can, "under exceptional circumstances," make social revolutions.

From a revolutionary Marxist point of view this

understanding of Stalinist "centrism" is faulty in a number of ways. First: Russian society is capitalist and the state capitalist bourgeoisie, a class, rules. Neither the proletariat nor any section of the proletariat is in power. The social system and the property forms are related and are no source of "ambivalent contradiction" in the Pabloite sense.

Second: While centrism has vacillation as its defining characteristic and typifies a zigzag course between reform of capitalism and socialist revolution, that has never meant to Marxists that centrists could ever make the socialist revolution. If a centrist group zigzags in the direction of socialist revolution that is a sign of its half-heartedness, its vacillation and indeed a sign of the pressure of the workers. However, no centrist group — from its very nature — can go all the way.

Moreover, the Stalinist centrists, when they were centrists from the mid-twenties to the middle-late thirties, were the leaders of a rapidly degenerating workers' state. It is not by accident that Trotsky acknowledged the end of Stalinism as a centrist phenomenon at that very point when we know that the Stalinists had become a ruling class in Russia. The turn away from vacillation that Trotsky observed, the "definite passing over of the Comintern to the side of the bourgeois order," was simultaneous with the final destruction of the workers' state in the Great Purges — the counterrevolution.

Trotsky insisted that the Russian rulers were a caste, not a class, because their power was transitory. Russia, he thought, would have to become either a revitalized, de-Stalinized workers' state or else a traditional private property capitalist

society (albeit under fascist control). If indeed the Russian ruling group had been unstable and transitory, Trotsky would have been right. It would have been indeed foolish to describe a temporary historical abortion — Stalinism — as a class and not a caste. But the Stalinists proved to be anything but transitory. The class spanned generations, property was passed on, and Stalinism in Russia withstood the invasion of Nazi Germany and the unfriendly might of the United States.

The ruling Russian CP was not a vacillating "marsh," the characteristic of centrism. Its zigzag from the Third Period to the Popular Front has never been repeated. Since 1935, the CPs have held to the Popular Front line. The particular bourgeois force to be conciliated has changed, but the line and the *practice* of collaboration with bourgeois forces outside the working class has not changed in forty years. This phenomenon has nothing whatever to do with centrism.

The matter of correct definitions is of importance to Marxists. But formal criteria, taken out of their historical context and direction, are tools of bourgeois sociology, not Marxist science. Criteria and definitions within the historical context are vitally important if pure pragmatism and abandonment of principle are to be avoided. For example, the dictatorship of the proletariat is defined by the working class being in control of its state and actually dictating its course. However, during the 1930's in the Soviet Union, the proletariat did not have control over state power, yet the Soviet Union remained a workers' state — in degeneration. The failure of the Russian workers' state to live up to its

— Was Trotsky a Pabloite? —

The Pabloites have a problem. How can the Stalinists, characterized by Trotsky as not only petty-bourgeois but as a counterrevolutionary force, make the socialist revolution and create the dictatorship of the proletariat? The mentality that believes this possible, and not only in one but in many countries after World War II, can also accept the notion that Zeus turned into a swan in order to commit rape. The Pabloites, in order to justify their mythification of reality, take hold of the words of Trotsky and worship rather than understand them.

Pabloism's claim to orthodoxy often rests upon a tortured interpretation of one passage from Trotsky's Transitional Program. In discussing the slogan "For a Workers' and Farmers' Government," Trotsky used the example of the Russian revolution. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, "the petty-bourgeois representatives of the workers and peasants," were part of the bourgeois Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks, as Trotsky pointed out, demanded that they "break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands." Had the Mensheviks and SRs done so, they would have created "a government of workers and peasants, that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie" — but they did not dare to do so because such a course would have further weakened capitalism and "hastened and facilitated the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The Pabloites, nevertheless, insist that petty-bourgeois Stalinism could accomplish the proletarian task in a way that petty-bourgeois Menshevism could not. Here is the passage they cite:

"Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organizations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.) the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the 'workers' and farmers' government' in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat."

Trotsky does say that the Stalinists, unlike the Mensheviks in 1917, might be forced to take governmental office "independent of the bourgeoisie" — that is, without the bourgeoisie in the government — and he further suggests that such a step would facilitate the socialist revolution under the leadership of the Fourth Internationalists. But he makes perfectly clear that Stalinism in office is *not* the proletarian dictatorship, for what is "merely a short episode on the road" is not the thing itself.

Moreover, "workers' and farmers' government" is usable as a slogan to win over the less advanced workers who believe at the outset of the struggle that reformist methods (change in *government*) can answer their needs. Bolshevik workers know that the only answer is revolution (necessitating the shattering of the bourgeois state and all its governments through the creation of a workers' state). The Bolsheviks identify with the

"definition" meant that it was degenerating. Such a process must culminate; it is unstable by nature. The degeneration was terminated by the "stability" of state capitalism.

So too, the centrism of the Stalinists became increasingly rigid. Throughout the thirties, it behaved less and less like any previous centrism. Yet it remained centrist until a new stable pattern occurred, dictated by the new relationships in Russia. Reciprocally, the CPs' transformation away from centrism confirms the analysis that the USSR was no longer a degenerating workers' state but had been transformed into a capitalist state.

The CPs, then, are not centrist. Nor have they been reformist over the past decades, as has already been shown. They represent the ultimate statifying tendencies within capitalism (and in certain cases, where the old bourgeoisie is collapsing, carry out the political revolution necessary to create state capitalism). They are agents of the objective tendencies within capitalism — concentration, statification, centralization — which make up a necessary but not sufficient basis for the economy of the workers' state. It is the role of the CPs to maintain these tendencies within capitalist bounds and therefore to prolong the system's decay and prop up its fleeting existence.

We therefore label the Communist Parties as *Stalinist*, in contradistinction to both reformism and centrism. This enables us to mark the point at which the CPs change from Stalinist parties to reformist parties and, in the past, when they changed from centrist to Stalinist. It also enables us to

distinguish the centrist developments that can arise within the CPs (such as a number of the Maoist tendencies of the 1960's) under the impact of an expanding workers' movement. Similar currents in the 1930's found their expression in the growth of the left wings of the Social Democratic reformist parties. A new wave of centrism is possible as the Stalinist parties degenerate and loosen up.

The Future of Stalinism and Centrism

The same upsurge will also accelerate the drive of the capitalist system toward further statification and concentration. Bourgeois forces will be spawned that are violently hostile to the CPs and to any party which seems to represent the working class. In order to defend capitalism in their own way under such circumstances, it is likely that state capitalist parties will flourish — under the rubric of "socialism," of course. The CPs themselves will be under pressure to reverse direction and reharden. They will have great difficulties and face serious splits in doing so, but as long as a realistic possibility exists the drive of the Eurocommunists towards reformism cannot be said to be concluded. What can be said is that the process is enormously advanced and that the CPs' direction is still, and increasingly, that of reformism.

We have noted that the CPs, especially in Europe, have taken steps away from the defense of the USSR towards overt support of NATO, the Western imperialist army. As we pointed out earlier in this article, a key characteristic of the

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aspirations that the masses place into their vision of a "workers' government," not with the bourgeois content that the reformist leaders have in mind. By using the slogan, in the course of struggle the Bolsheviks can demonstrate the inability of the petty-bourgeois leadership to fulfill the masses' needs, whether it dares to take over the government or not.

The confusion between the need for an alternative state and just another capitalist government is a way in which the reformists, during revolutionary times, seek to delude the working class. The Bolsheviks participate in struggle in order to clarify its class content in practice. It is the obligation of revolutionaries to explain exactly what is meant so that the masses are not left with the idea that the change of one government for another is equivalent to the socialist revolution. It is precisely this distinction that Trotsky elaborates at length in this section of the Transitional Program. And it is precisely this distinction which the Pabloites blur in order to account for the Stalinist takeovers as "workers' states."

Another defense cited by the Pabloites for their Trotskyist credentials concerns the events of 1939, when the Russian Army seized portions of Poland in conjunction with the Germans and incorporated the territory into the Soviet Union. Since Trotsky (erroneously) still considered Russia a workers' state, he saw the incorporation as part of the socialist revolution. Despite his error, Trotsky specifically — and indignantly — rejected the view attributed to him that the Stalinist bureaucracy was a revolutionary agency.

"My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in

Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a 'bureaucratic revolution' of the proletariat is presumably possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of 'bureaucratic revolution' but only a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations. A revolutionary party which failed to notice this impulse in time and refused to utilize it would be fit for nothing but the ash can." (*In Defense of Marxism*, p. 130.)

Trotsky credited the "socialist revolution" before the war to the masses, not the Stalinists. No Pabloite today claims that the masses made the revolutions in Eastern Europe after the war. In fact, the "drastic overturns" in property relations were made by the Stalinists only after they had suppressed the workers councils and mass struggles that sprung up after the Nazi defeat. Russia's victory gave an "impulse" to the masses, but the Stalinist seizure of power was based on the *crushing* of the masses, not that impulse. Thus Trotsky's indignation holds doubly for the period after World War II: to attribute to him the view that Stalinism made the socialist revolution is *not only incorrect but disloyal*."

It is no accident that both Shachtman in 1939 and the Pabloites later attribute this monstrous idea to Trotsky. Shachtman was *disloyally* painting Trotsky in what was to become the coloring of Pabloism, and it follows as well that Pabloism is a *disloyal* interpretation of Trotsky's views on the expansion of Stalinism. ■

What Are the Communist Parties ?

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reformists is their allegiance to the Mecca of state monopoly capitalism, the U.S. The opening up of a break with Moscow and adherence to Washington will be a decisive marker in the turn from Stalinism to reformism.

To label the Communist Parties now as universally reformist or centrist is especially nonsensical if the guerrilla CPs or the ruling class parties in the Stalinist states are included. Such a label loses all content and is therefore dangerous because no behavior patterns can be predicted. Underneath such loose categorization lurks pragmatism. If a CP takes power, then it is showing the revolutionary aspect of its politics; if it capitulates, it shows the reactionary aspect. Such a pragmatic analysis amounts to nothing but centrist "dialectics." It reflects the vacillation of the group which is analyzing, not the complexity of the phenomenon being analyzed.

The source of the Pabloite errors on the question of the CPs is their more fundamental error on the question of the class nature of the Stalinist states. Those who label the CPs centrist are those, like the majority tendency of the United Secretariat, who consider that the CPs have consciously, albeit brutally, carried out the proletarian revolution in Eastern Europe and in the "guerrilla" countries. For them, "centrist" is an epithet designed to cover the fact that, in their analysis, the CPs are actually revolutionary parties which need only the pressure of the masses to make the revolution. On the other hand, those Pabloites who call the CPs reformist are generally those who believe that the Stalinist revolutions were made by force of circumstance in reaction to imperialist pressure, against the wishes and efforts of the CPs. Both theories are based on the supra-historical conception that a bourgeois revolution can "grow over" into the proletarian, socialist revolution without the participation of a conscious working class.

Such a notion was entirely foreign to Trotsky, who understood that a conscious proletarian vanguard was decisive. In "The Chinese Question After the Sixth Congress" (*Leon Trotsky on China*, p. 349), he stated:

"The Chinese revolution contains within itself tendencies to become permanent insofar as it contains the possibility of the conquest of power by the proletariat. To speak of the permanent revolution without this and outside of it, is like trying to fill the cask of the Danaides. Only the proletariat, after having seized the state power and having transformed itself into an instrument of struggle against all the forms of oppression and exploitation . . . gains therewith the possibility of assuring a continuous character to the revolution, in other words, of leading it to the construction of a complete socialist society. A necessary condition for this is to carry out consistently a policy that prepares the proletariat in good time for the conquest of power . . . The permanent character of the revolution . . . (otherwise) becomes a law placing itself above history, independent of the policy of the leadership and of the material development of revolutionary events."

The very meaning of permanent revolution is the conception that only the international proletariat, followed by the poor peasantry, can carry out the revolution which would accomplish the democratic and socialist tasks. There is a necessary corollary which must follow from this proposition. If the proletariat is *not* conscious, that is, if it does not follow a decisive, conscious vanguard party, then the proletariat will not make the revolution. The absence of such a powerful vanguard organization would allow the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois tendencies more leverage to struggle for their own particular adaptations of capitalism. Such an "absence" is not merely a vacuum in history but the result of a defeat of the proletariat and its revolutionary leadership, as after World War II.

The Pabloite theories are objectivist. The supra-historical quality is a cover for accepting that the very laws of capitalist motion will produce socialism without a conscious proletarian seizure of power. The Pabloites accept the historically progressive mission of the "left" pro-bourgeois forces without understanding that the victory of these forces represents precisely the *defeat* of the proletariat.

The treachery of the Pabloite position is that it sees the defeat of the proletariat as the generator of enormous victories, the expansion of the socialist revolution to a huge portion of the earth. This position reflected the material impact of the state capitalist victory which destroyed the revolutionary character of the Fourth International.

Trotsky's errors of misperceiving the totality of the degeneration of the Russian revolution stemmed from his own dedication to the proletariat. He knew that to surrender the gains of October was to give up on the revolutionary mission of the proletariat itself. What his "orthodox" epigones have done, however, is precisely the opposite: they proclaim the socialist revolution in country after country under the auspices of the petty-bourgeois Stalinists and nationalists. The proletariat and its revolutionary mission are denied in practice if not always in theory. Their maintenance of vestiges of the theory of the proletarian revolution, while in practice supporting the petty-bourgeois course, indicates that although the Stalinists are not centrists — the Pabloites are.

Revolutionary rhetoric cloaking reformist practice is a virulent disease that attacks the advanced layers of the working class. The return of revolutionary consciousness in many sectors of the international proletariat is what makes pseudo-Trotskyism flourish. In the past, centrism has been decisive in defeating the workers, although first classical reformism and then Stalinism played the leading roles. Centrism looms in the future as the chief candidate to replace these weakening forces as chief betrayer, but it is a far more contradictory and far less stable social phenomenon than either of the others. It will be wiped out all the more readily by the coming upsurge of the proletariat as it proceeds to reconstruct the revolutionary party, the Fourth International.