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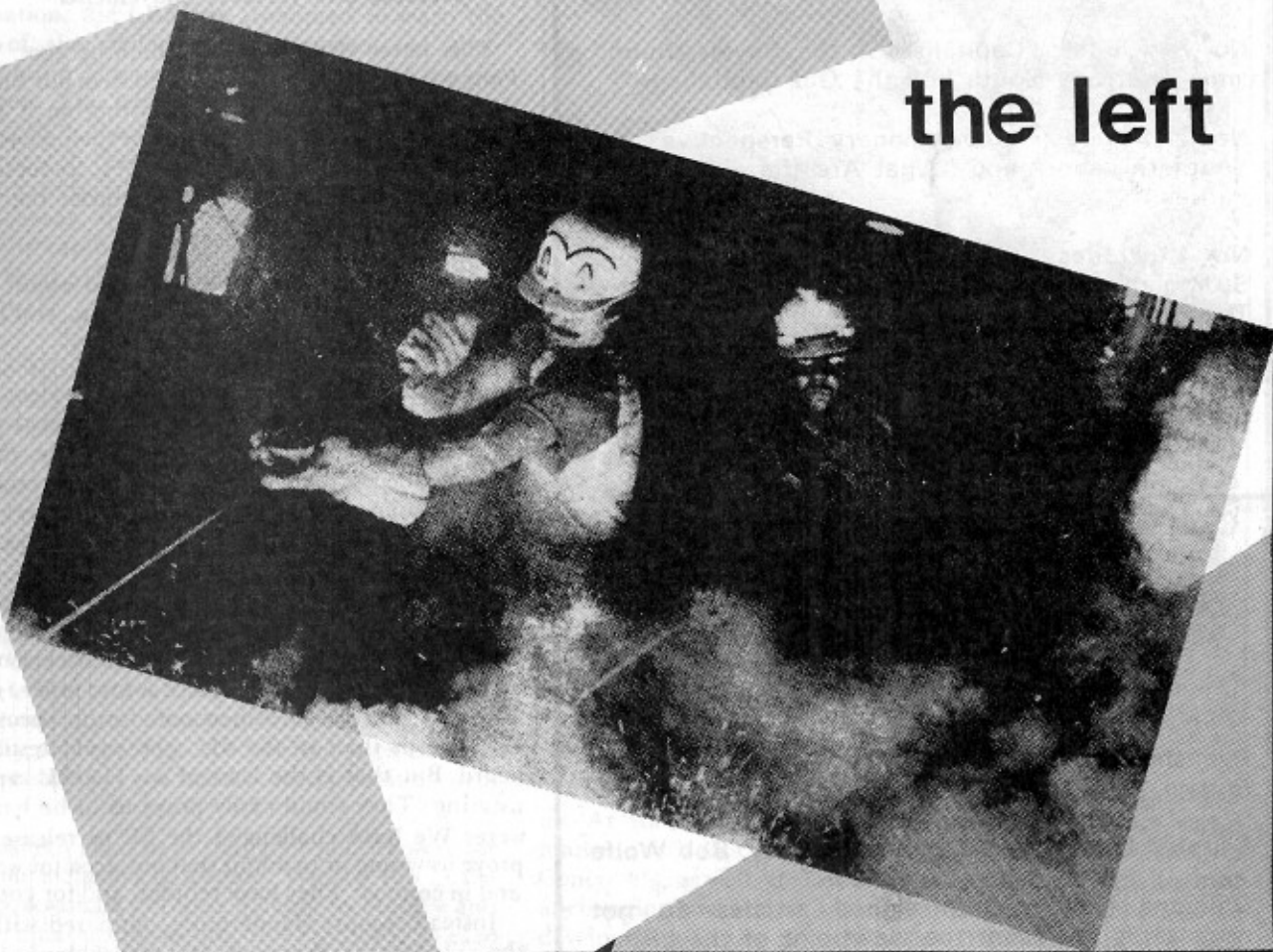
Reconstruct
the Fourth International!

Published by the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

THE SADLOWSKI CAMPAIGN:

u.s. labor and

the left



Spain After the Elections
Letter to Jamaican Comrades
A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism

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To Our Readers

The Spartacist League has finally seen fit to respond to our report of a forum given in January by James Robertson, the SL's national leader (see "The Spartacist League's Scandalous Chauvinism" in *Socialist Voice* No.3). Our article quoted Robertson's insulting remarks about Greeks, Albanians, Canadians, American blacks, etc., and his assertion of the "right of the Boers to self-determination" in the face of a black revolt in South Africa.

The Spartacist reply came in the September 16 issue of *Workers Vanguard*, in answer to a letter written by Stephen S. of the Bay Area Group for the Defense of Paranagua and Pilla. In this letter he wrote:

"... I feel very strongly that whether or not the facts as stated in *Socialist Voice* are true, the Spartacist League owes the whole left of the U.S. a full, satisfactory accounting of the comments of Robertson at the January 29th meeting. Furthermore, I must say that if the account published in *Socialist Voice* is true, Robertson should immediately retire himself or be retired from any further leadership activity in the socialist and workers' movements."

This letter was written six months ago. When *Workers Vanguard* failed to print it, we did so in our summer issue with the author's permission. After sitting on it for so long, the Spartacists have finally published it themselves. But instead of answering Comrade Stephen S.'s request for "a full, satisfactory accounting," they produced the following reply, reprinted in its entirety:

"If you believe what you read about the Spartacist League in *Socialist Voice*, you'll love the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."

To assert that our article was the equivalent of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is to claim that it was a total fabrication from beginning to end. The *Protocols* were a complete lie attributing to Jewish leaders a satanic plot against the Christian world. This monstrous forgery was written to promote murderous assaults and pogroms against the Jewish people.

If the SL had indeed been so miserably defamed, one would think that it would have been quick to respond. And if our article were really such a thorough fabrication, that would be easy enough to prove. There were other groups and individuals present at Robertson's forum, people certainly no closer to us than to the SL, who could testify to what they heard. But that is the least of it. The SL tape recorded the meeting. They could easily prove us to be lying if in fact we were. We have challenged the SL to release the tapes and prove us wrong or to admit that our account was both accurate and in context. They have refused, and for good reason.

Instead, we are slanderously compared with the forgers of the anti-Semitic *Protocols*. We rather doubt that the authors of that notorious document ever offered to correct, amend or retract it in the light of evidence offered by their victims!

In its cowardly refusal to deal with our charges, the Spartacist League now combines slander with Robertson's chauvinism. It has provided no more evidence for its accusation than the perpetrators of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* did for theirs. Robertson's statements were hideous. Those who cover up for them by means of a gratuitous slander are only compounding the outrage. ■

Letter to Jamaican Comrades

The letter below was written in July 1977 by the League for the Revolutionary Party to the Revolutionary Marxist League (RML) of Jamaica. The RML had a close relationship to the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) of the U.S. when the members of the LRP were expelled from the RSL in the winter of 1975-76. Since then, RML members have explored ties with other left organizations internationally, including the International Socialists of Great Britain (IS-GB) led by Tony Cliff, now called the Socialist Workers Party (SWP-GB), and the International Marxist Group (IMG), the British affiliate of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" led by Ernest Mandel. We have learned subsequently that supporters of these two organizations have been expelled from the RML.

The letter concentrates on the RML's policy of electoral support to the People's National Party (PNP) of Prime Minister Michael Manley, in December 1976. For several months before the election, the PNP regime, bourgeois though it was, was threatened by a military coup involving members of the right-wing opposition Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) led by Edward Seaga, and the American CIA.

Since our formation, the LRP has attempted to warn the RML comrades of the dangerous consequences of their escalating opportunism through private letters and public criticism in our press. This letter was written in response to a possible leftward shift in the line of the RML. However, the RML, in an interview in the RSL's newspaper, the *Torch* of August 15, did not retract its previous political support to Manley. Needless to say, the RSL in no way challenges the RML evasion on its capitulation to the bourgeoisie.

The letter has been abridged and edited for publication.

Dear Comrades,

In the past we have received several letters from you promising to discuss the political differences between our organizations. For example, in January of this year you wrote us that you were "...considering as a matter of some urgency some of the issues involved in your split from the RSL. We feel this is necessary to put our relationship on a principled basis, especially in view of our relationship in the past with all the comrades involved." You indicated that you would soon correspond with us on this matter. We hoped that this would prove true, although we entertained few illusions on that score since your former correspondent, Paul, had written us many times to the same effect and without consequence. We had sent you files of material on what you refer to as a "split," which was in reality an expulsion. We received promises of a response and statements that you hadn't taken a position as of yet.

It became increasingly clear to us that your politics were far closer to the RSL on the issues in dispute. We saw this in the growing political concessions you were making to Manley and Manleyism in the months preceding the elections. We so informed your group, and finally Cde. Paul replied with the first definite statement. He indicated that indeed your group was closer to the RSL and stated that a representative of yours would be in the U.S. and that he would be anxious to discuss with us. Such a person did indeed come to the U.S. but made no attempt to contact us. Your promise in January to put the relationship between our organizations "on a principled basis..." occurred within this context. Frankly, we attributed

your conduct to what we considered to be a degeneration of your politics into maneuverism.

In addition to promises of a reply on questions raised during the RSL faction fight, you also wrote us in January stating that you would reply to the criticisms of your politics which we put forward first in letters and then in *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Voice*. We then received an additional note indicating that "a reply to your publication of *Socialist Voice* is on the way." We never heard from you again.



Jamaicans demonstrate at People's National Party rally in Kingston. Left capitulates to Manley.

The whole question of the lack of interchange was galling to us. At stake was a question of principled conduct versus maneuverism and opportunism in political relationships. Concretely, as well, it prevented us from at least an attempt at changing your course of action at a serious crossroads in the development of the revolutionary consciousness of a critical sector of the world working class, the Caribbean proletariat. It was even more upsetting when our fears materialized and proved quite justified. As you are aware, in *Socialist Action*, February 1977, we attacked the RML for crossing the class line in the elections by its endorsement of a bourgeois candidacy. Under the cover of a policy of military truce with the Manley regime in the face of a CIA-inspired coup, you had made serious *political* concessions which inexorably led to the en-

dorsement. While we agreed with a temporary military support policy under the immediate circumstances, we insisted that this had to be accompanied by an exposure of Manley and a clear cut line against the State of Emergency actions perpetrated by his regime.

In your May issue we were happy to note what seemed to us to be a change in line and a more hostile tone with respect to Manley and the PNP than shown at the time of the elections. As well, you wrote:

"As the State of Emergency draws to a close the balance sheet shows that workers and oppressed were its main victims. Their skulls, bodies and their freedom were the main targets of the State of Emergency. The terrorists, gangsters, CIA spies and the reactionary journalists were able to do their dirty work in the teeth of the emergency without fear."

This statement seems to us to bring your present position more into accord with our political understanding as stated in the fall 1976 issue of *Socialist Voice*. We write you again in the hope that you have begun a serious re-evaluation of your whole line toward Manley, the PNP and the tasks of the revolution in Jamaica. In our opinion your new balance sheet cannot be completed without an explicit rejection of your past position. As well, we have heard about your discussions with other groups internationally, and we would like to present our views on the relation between their positions and your own.

We have several criticisms of your lead article, although we found it to be far superior to your pre-election and electoral material. The article begins, correctly, by placing Jamaica's economic crisis within the context of the world crisis. However, the answer the article poses falls short of the solution it claims to present. A workers' and peasants' state complete with nationalization of major industries under proletarian control is certainly part of the revolutionary solution. However, by not putting forward the need for an international solution to the Jamaican crisis you fail to respond to the true scope of the problem. The international character of the solution can only be crystallized by the call for a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean. As well, this proposal should be accompanied by arguments showing the tremendous impact a workers' revolution in the Caribbean would have upon the workers and oppressed strata in the advanced economic bastions of imperialism. Full control over the Jamaican economy by a workers' state is not by itself the answer to Jamaica's problems. If socialism was impossible in one country (Russia), it is inconceivable in Jamaica where the economy is far less developed and far more tortured into the shape necessary to fit the requirements of world imperialism.

We do not regard the absence of such a formulation on your part to be accidental. Your consistent avoidance of the issue reflects the materially-based parochialism which has been an endemic problem in the West Indies, as you have graphically informed us in the past. Internationalism represents the only solution. We cannot believe that the workers in Jamaica, as far as they are from Marxist consciousness at the moment, could take an isolated national solution seriously. The first, or second, question that any practical-minded worker would have to your proposals would be: where is the food and manufactures necessary for survival to come from? That is why, in our opinion so many workers in the past bought the frank pro-imperialism of Seaga, and now as things worsen, accept the ambiguous but pro-imperialist line of Manley. They have no love for the imperialists but they see no way

Jamaica could survive without international economic interpenetration. The only "realistic" form of international arrangement which they see at this time is imperialism. So they vote for it while gritting their teeth. They vent their anger and hostility to it in varied ways, but they bear it, lacking any alternative.

In the absence of an internationalist solution your program can be characterized as "state capitalist." State capitalism has as its program, sometimes openly and sometimes covertly, state control over the means of production and the economy on a "socialism in one country" nationalist basis. It is *always*, out of necessity, wrapped in the flag of the proletariat, as we have argued in *Socialist Voice*. It is in this sense that we regard the position you have put forward to be "state capitalist." The fact that you, subjectively, are sincere proponents of workers' rule is not decisive; many Stalinists are just as sincere in the belief that they stand for a proletarian society as you are or as we are.

It is also critical to note that the national stratified economy solution just won't work. The Cuban example should prove that. There the defeat of American imperialism, progressive in itself, resulted in a state capitalist regime which not only did not achieve socialism but did not and could not succeed in breaking the chains of the imperialist world economy. The huge debt to the West, backed up by the Russian signature, is growing rapidly and not receding. The compulsion of Cuba, like Vietnam, to find a niche inside the imperialist world economy testifies once again to the inability of nationalist revolutions to succeed in our epoch. And this after so much blood has been spilled by the masses.

It is a fundamental task for internationalists in our time to align with the masses in struggle against imperialism and for independence. While so engaged, revolutionaries must constantly point out the trap of nationalism. We favor the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, and we frequently favor the actual act of independence in addition to the right. However, we always oppose bourgeois nationalism — its ideology, its programs, its parties, its leadership. These nationalist elements will betray the masses in the last analysis if not the first because nationalism is a sham solution to imperialist oppression. We support the act of independence as a blow against imperialism, but we oppose nationalism and national solutions which are always bourgeois by nature. Independence must be conjoined to internationalism.

If Cuban nationalism, like all the other nationalisms, has been incapable of breaking with imperialism in a fundamental way, the upcoming nationalist-led revolts will be even less capable. The economic situation is far tighter today than when the Cubans won their revolution. The proletariat, once involved, could not as easily be shunted aside, since on a world level, it has been far more active than in the late fifties. The workers will far more quickly demand to see their aspirations satisfied in any upheaval, and the stratified nationalisms will have far less of a honeymoon with the masses than in the past.

All this has led to a considerably more conservative approach by the Stalinists, state capitalist nationalists, etc. in both the developed and the underdeveloped countries. There has generally been a rise in popular frontism and overt class collaborationism. It has been featured by friendlier relations with the USA and an unwillingness to engage in actions which would seriously disrupt the possibilities of a deal with American imperialism, especially among the "third world" countries. It means that there is a high probability that those

who believe in a stratified nationalist state capitalist solution will "temporarily" let this be postponed in favor of what looks more "realistic": state monopoly capitalist solutions — "democratic," pluralist and reformist — within the framework of accepting imperialism as here to stay. Thus they are moved into political combinations with the older and more conservative advocates of "pluralistic" capitalism, or as it is popularly known, "democratic socialism."

The "reasonable" approach of putting forward a believable and less far-out program based upon a national stratified economy as opposed to an internationalist approach is therefore tied to the "reasonable" approach of class collaborationism in elections, etc. Thus, you see, we think there is a logic connecting an essentially national outlook and support of Manleyism. When we raise the question of state capitalist implications of your line it is not that we fear that your group, as it develops and becomes more powerful, will institute a state capitalist society. More likely, under the cover of a state capitalist oriented program, you will pragmatically collude with less radical reformers of capitalism. This danger will grow until a basic reorientation is made; for despite the conservatizing possibilities we described above, the leftist forces committed to maintain and reform capitalism carry out their collaborative work under increasingly radical covers.

This is a lawful development, socially speaking. As the workers grow more desperate, more left rhetoric will be adopted. (Even Manley spouts a more socialistic cover than in the past.) Forces grow within the left wing of the PNP in response to the crisis and the increased anger of the workers and the unemployed. Their various pragmatic quasi-left programs are designed to entrap the leftward pushing advanced workers. It is this milieu that we regard as the chief danger for your tendency to get caught up with. Therefore it follows that in our opinion your task is not only to reject your past line toward Manley but to open an attack upon the leaders of the PNP left as misleaders of the more advanced workers. There can be no accommodation with these elements. It means placing a revolutionary program before the masses and *counterposing* it to the hodgepodge programs of the general run of leftists. We believe the tragic support you gave Manley was not so much an attempt to align yourselves with this mild reformist petty bourgeois but with the more left elements who are still fundamentally tied to the same forces that spawn Manley.

The task of winning the workers, of course, does not end with simply counterposing the Marxist program to the various pro-bourgeois programs, although this is fundamental. Workers will not choose an alternative which is separated from the strength of the class. The task for revolutionists is to present their program in such a way as to emphasize the power of the working class. If workers associate the revolutionary program with only tiny organizations of well-meaning students and advanced workers, they will assume that the program is irrelevant. Concretely, what is required at this time is one or another variation of the united front tactic. The recent period in Jamaica was tailor-made for such a tactical approach; you however, ignored the opportunity.

Trotsky pointed out that the united front is in essence a front of the entire class or large sections thereof. Joint blocs and fronts between small groups are desirable and necessary provided they, like united fronts in general, are based upon concrete actions and not on the smudging of political differences. They are useful only if they are not seen as substitutes for what is essential, the united front of the class *en masse*. For

example, in the early thirties Trotskyists campaigned day and night for a united front of the German working class against the rise of Hitler. They did not pose this as a united front between the small German Trotskyist group and other left forces but rather as a demand upon the powerful platoons of the German working class, the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party. The power of such a combination could have stopped Hitler in his tracks and won the desperate masses of petty-bourgeois and unemployed away from Hitler and to the side of the proletariat.

Achieving such a confident proletariat would have been a major step toward revolution and toward the revolutionary program. It would have been impossible to dismiss the program as unreal, since the workers' belief that genuine communism is unreal is based upon their belief that there is no real power to achieve it rather than a belief that the program is undesirable.

In Jamaica today, the situation embodies the danger of a reactionary seizure of power to ensure the maintenance of imperialist super-profits and stability. The working class, the small farmers, and the unemployed must be alerted. So long as "strength" and "reality" are seen as attributes of the right wing, the danger of the workers being smashed remains. How can revolutionaries maximize the power of the class under the situation? The PNP, in contrast to both the SPD or the KPD in Germany of the thirties, is not a working class party with a petty-bourgeois misleadership; it is a bourgeois instrumentality through and through although it has attracted working class support. To solidarize with it is impossible. The unions, however, even though they have PNP and JLP leaderships, are workers' institutions and could be the basis for a united front. As in Germany, the small revolutionary forces could not propose united fronts between themselves and the major working class institutions — that would be a joke. The misleaderships of the mass bodies could reject such offers with impunity, because the revolutionary groups do not have noticeable strength to add.

A corollary of the united front tactic is that revolutionaries wield it not by cajoling the leaderships but by attacking them politically. That is, we attempt to show the workers why the misleaders resist the united front. We try to force the leaders to unite the struggle by building a mass pressure on them to do so because they never will unite the workers of their own free will. The exposure of the leaders is best accomplished if the united front is actually forged. Their betrayals will be shown in practice to workers who have gained confidence and consciousness from the united struggle. Therefore, in the Jamaican situation, the call for a united front should have been made upon the unions. The unions should have been called upon to unite in the face of the imperialist-Seaga menace. A call for unity, accompanied by a blistering attack against the leaders who refused to unite and arm the class in the face of right-wing attack, was absolutely necessary.

A united front to stop reaction was on the order of the day, and in another way, it still is. The call for armed defense groups by the workers is abstract and could lead to posturing unless it is crystallized. A worker reading your literature about armed defense would have said: fine, but how? The answers given were twofold. You sowed a few illusions about the possibility of arms from Manley, although you could not with a straight face claim this was likely. The only other possibility that you saw was community organization. This certainly is necessary, but historically it has always been fleeting and unstable and unable to engage the masses systematically.

Industry organizes the working class, and organizations built upon production are the source of proletarian strength, especially at times when consciousness is not at its highest. Therefore, the only concrete way to crystallize demands for armed workers militias was to place the demand on the unions. It could be initiated locally but the demand must be placed upon a united labor front to make it into a serious and potentially offensive force.

In *Socialist Voice* No. 2 we pointed out prior to the elections that:

"The RML avoids trade union interventions that make demands on the union leadership, and they therefore forego the opportunity to both challenge the PNP and JLP bureaucrats for the support of the ranks and to demonstrate the actual strength in organization of the working class. The effect of not placing demands on the unions is to ask workers to act in small groups, in isolation rather than strength. The RML points instead to a rank and file movement as the way to fight the present crisis, a slogan unfortunately reminiscent of both the NBM's independent mass organizations without leadership by the revolutionary party and of the RSL-U.S.'s latest maneuver, a turn toward militant rank-and-file-ism in order to conceal the need for the revolutionary party. The RML also suggests that the workers should form new trade unions rather than fight for the leadership of the existing ones. And given the upsurge against the Industrial Relations Act last year, when the workers looked to their unions to wage a struggle against the attack on their standard of living, to disdain such a fight in the unions is to stand outside the class struggle."

Your position is much better now but in the May issue of *Forward* you still call for rank and file control of the unions. This is in sad contradiction to your new emphasis on the need for the revolutionary party — that is, the need for the revolutionary leadership. How does a rank and file control anything? Rather the ranks of the working class must control their unions, the state and society by putting forward a leadership which represents their interests and has been tested and trusted by them. The notion of a revolutionary leadership of the unions as part of the overall revolutionary party means a leadership based upon the proletarian program, a program reflecting the actual material interests of the workers. Trotskyists say: we are the nucleus of the revolutionary party which the working class is now forging; we call upon the ranks to join in the struggle to build this party. We call upon the masses to create in struggle its own advanced layer, its own leadership, of which we are a part, to take over the unions and the society. We call upon the most advanced — those who best understand so far the objective needs of the class and how to achieve them, the program and the strategy — to join the party nucleus and build it. This method, which recognizes that leadership is the central question of our epoch in the way Lenin and Trotsky did, is the opposite of the imprecise "rank and file to power" approach which means all things to all men.

The vanguardist approach we advocate had its most defined opposition in the Caribbean in the person of C.L.R. James. His rank and file approach, in common with all such spontaneity ideas, was generalized into Rousseau type notions of popular rule through "general will" or "mass consciousness." Since these blurred ideas sound very democratic, they have a

certain appeal, but there is no way to carry them out except, as James discovered, through Bonapartist-type leaders like Fidel Castro and Julius Nyerere who claim to embody the "general will" of the people. This is the "democracy" that typifies Bonapartism. This is what Marx referred to as the "plebiscitary" aspect inherent in Bonapartism. Appeals to rank-and-file-ism to fight the good fight leave the workers feeling the necessity for struggle but also the need to find somebody else to do the job. The quest for the "The Man on the White Horse" begins (and the Man's "party" as well). All the Bonapartist group wants is the plebiscitary backing of the masses and not their creativity. The group wants a popular battering ram to put it into power. Spontaneity and rank-and-file-ism lead inexorably to faith in the benevolent leaders rather than leaders who are fashioned by a working class conscious of its real material interest.

C.L.R. James finally gave up on the labor unions altogether. While this step was taken in the name of mass consciousness, it really reflected the opposite. You seem now to have turned away from a course which could have travelled the same road. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand why the union position you projected occurred in the first place. Unless you take this task to heart you will duplicate the error in a different form on a different level.

It is easy for cynics, "Marxist skeptics" and historical pessimists to give up on the unions. But when crises occurred, the workers themselves could afford no such luxury since they needed the unions for survival. The despondent ex-revolutionaries who favored "pure" unions frequently ended up in the union bureaucracies or allied to various savior figures. Since the workers have failed and proven to be incompetent actors on the world scene, they have to be led step by step with careful partial truths in order to find out what ignites them so that their actions propel the bureaucrats to power to "do good for the workers."

The basis for the cynical ideology of much of the left movement lies not simply in wrong ideas but more fundamentally in the objective material situation. The degeneration of the Russian revolution is a historical reality which led not only to the smashing of workers' power in the USSR but to the massive defeat of the workers after the Second World War. These defeats influenced many leftists who were unaware of their own cynicism.

It was not only the earlier (and most of the later) state capitalists who fell into the trap of giving up on the proletarian revolution. Most of Trotsky's followers sought to maintain a faith in the gains of the October Revolution by supporting Russia after it became apparent that all vestiges of political control by a conscious working class had been eradicated, but they soon abandoned Trotsky's notion that Stalinism had definitively passed over to the side of bourgeois counter-revolution and the preservation of international imperialism. Increasingly in the post-war period, seeing the proletariat as the *lever* rather than as the *agency* for the socialist revolution, they identified with Russia's exported revolution in Eastern Europe. That the expansion occurred at the cost of physically smashing the workers' rebellion in those countries was something to be noted and deplored, but the results were characterized as defensible and revolutionary. Their newly evolving theory — "Pabloism" — accepted the idea that the Stalinists were able to make the social revolution by substituting the Russian army for the power of the proletariat which they had helped to crush. Since the

proletariat was merely a lever rather than the source of change the question of the proletariat's vanguard leadership was no longer decisive.

From this stance it was only a short hop to the notion of a peasant army in China propelling the "red" intelligentsia into power. It was another short jump to accepting the Cuban revolution as a social revolution. This was a guerrilla revolution made by a leadership which didn't dream of calling itself a workers party. By program and political stance it was a bourgeois radical party, pure and simple. (By the way, if the Cuban revolution had indeed resulted in a workers' state, it would be criminal *not* to support Manley in Jamaica who at least claims to lead a workers' party.) Furthermore, many, if not most, of the advocates of the Chinese and Cuban workers' state positions among the so-called Trotskyists do not advocate even a "political" revolution against these regimes, as they at least claim to do in Russia and Eastern Europe. These regimes evidently can reform themselves into socialism! In short, the "degenerated and deformed workers' states" have the same underlying cynicism toward the workers as do the state capitalists we previously discussed.

Like the IS-GB, you call for an abstract International based upon an unspecified program. It is good that you have finally stressed the need for an International, but at this point it seems to be only a more advanced version of your rank and file union approach, except that you characterize it as revolutionary. What does it stand for? Do you mean the Fourth International and the Transitional Program? If not, what are your objections to these gains of the world proletariat, and what changes would you make in the program if you do in fact consider Trotskyism to have been a historically progressive accomplishment?

We have indicated that we do not think that the program you have developed is an internationalist one. The mere advocacy of an International is no proof of internationalism. The reformists and Stalinists for years proclaimed themselves internationalists and indeed belonged to Internationals, but in reality they were strident nationalists, and their Internationals served varied national interests.

A specific approach to the question of the Fourth International would also mean dealing with the various claimants to that banner which exist at the moment. The largest claimant to the mantle of the Fourth International is the United Secretariat. Far from being internationalist this grouping has given political support to a whole variety of bourgeois nationalists around the world. The SWP-USA section gives its support to the labor aristocracy in the advanced imperialist nations, while the majority (Mandel) wing supports not only bourgeois nationalist elements in these countries but especially favors those in the "third world." Incredibly enough Mandel and Co. had as members of their international the anti-Trotskyist nationalist guerrillas in Argentina and threw them out only when the group openly sneered at the International it belonged to. The United Secretariat view is a product of the notion that consistent nationalism is the route to socialism. Castro, for example, was able to make the social revolution because he was a "consistent nationalist." Mandel would do well to remember that the consistent nationalist in Soviet Russia was Stalin. Trotskyism was born as the continuation of Leninism in the struggle against nationalism and all its disasters.

As we have indicated, the cynical anti-working class views that parade as Marxism today have their material basis in the decay of capitalism and the degeneration of the Russian

revolution. The defeat of the working class internationally and the spread of Stalinism have literally meant the spread of state capitalist national "solutions" to the crisis of capitalism. The regimes in each of these countries openly claim that their nationalism is a step toward communism; Pabloism, including that of Mandel and Co., is merely a left version of this view.

The material victory of nationalism and the past defeats of the international proletariat have served to prop up capitalism the world around. Trotsky was empirically correct in saying that Stalinism was increasingly becoming the servant of Western imperialism. Stalinism has expanded, but by defeating the proletariat at the end of the war, it has also served to prop up capitalism internationally. The prolonged survival of capitalism has fed the fires of bourgeois chauvinism in the labor aristocracy of the advanced countries and has served to make the old ideas of genuine internationalism seem like a joke. The nationalism of the centrist groups is also due to the destruction of workers' power in the USSR and the strengthening of Stalinism at the expense of the proletariat internationally. The groups with a state capitalist analysis in the West put forward programs which are as nationalist and reformist as those of the pro-Stalinist tendencies. In terms of national programs there is little to choose between them. The IS-GB, for example, has no good answer to why they do not coalesce with the IMG and the other centrists in Britain. They are all of a piece. Even in terms of the "Russian question," where are the differences functionally? Their political prognosis for the development of revolution under Stalinism is just about the same: add "consistent democracy."

In choosing to raise questions about your politics we have deliberately framed them in terms of the Cliff group on the one hand and the Mandelites on the other because these seem to be the actual choices before you. Recent history has demonstrated that the RSL, the group you had previously been connected with, is little more than the IS with a veneer of Trotskyism added in the form of ritual attestations to the Trotskyist program and academic rather than fundamental differences on state capitalism. Therefore, even if you choose to identify with the RSL, over time you would still have to make the same choice again. The calls for rank-and-file-ism one month in the *Torch* alternate with the next month's articles calling for nothing but revolution. It is a tendency which jumps from one gimmick to another so often that it doesn't know which side of the bed it is going to fall out of when it wakes up each morning.

The particular left cast it places upon its political capitulations is what distinguishes it from the IS. Therefore its rejection of placing demands on the union bureaucracy and its call for rank and file control of the unions are closer to yours, but the political content is similar to that of the IS. The RSL agreed by and large with your approach prior to the Jamaican elections and therefore never criticized you. In the U.S., they have not been forced to take their politics to their conclusions, and therefore they reacted hostilely to your doing so in Jamaica by supporting Manley. Even then, their normal opportunism and slipperiness kept them from voicing what criticisms they did have.

One criticism, however, which did emerge from their post-election article about you was interesting in that it reflected their stance at the moment in the U.S. At the time of the Jamaican elections they were laying heavy stress upon their trade union work and therefore tended not to bring up broader political questions. Having no party here in terms of

the elections, they failed to pose political demands. Trotsky taught us all that union work must become ever more political in character as the unions are being drawn irresistibly into the embrace of the state. You were right in trying to intervene in some way in the elections, even though your endorsement of Manley was wrong. At minimum, a heavy propaganda attack on both the PNP and the JLP would have been correct, stressing what a genuine workers' party would do if it were in the running. The RSL position was to *counterpose* mass struggles to any electoral intervention. It must be clear to workers in Jamaica that simple "economic" struggles aren't enough, that decisive events in their lives are determined by those who exercise state power. To refrain from intervening in mass struggles would be disaster, but to fail to use the fact that workers' attention was riveted to political questions during the elections in order to point out a revolutionary answer to the problems posed would have meant holding back the course of the struggle. The RSL's was a syndicalist answer to reformism; these are the flip sides of the same anti-revolutionary coin.

It should be more than obvious that we hope to press you into a serious discussion of our differences. This must mean that you read and criticize our press as we have done with yours. In our view, the state capitalist implications of your positions are tendencies which can still be avoided; the leftward shift that we pointed to indicates that your views are not yet fully finished. Nevertheless, the fact that your group was led to support a bourgeois candidacy is a serious danger sign. Drawing back from the overt capitulation would be only a step forward, but failing to make the re-evaluation public, failing to show the Jamaican workers the pitfalls that their allegiance to Manley entails, and failing to analyze the political roots of your previous capitulation will waste the opportunity for mastering the lesson of your re-examination. Revolutionaries have no political secrets from the working class. A failure to produce a correct balance sheet of your electoral policy will indicate that your current left turn is just one more maneuver behind the backs of the workers. We hope that the revolutionary potential which your group once embodied will lead you back onto the revolutionary path. ■

Spain After the Elections

Two years ago, teams of doctors and priests worked for weeks to keep alive the decaying carcass of Generalissimo Francisco Franco by means of futile blood transfusions, surgery, amputations and kissing of holy relics. Today the Spanish bourgeoisie is striving to preserve the rotting corpse of Francoist capitalism through a desperate but equally worthless combination of stepped-up repression, adoration of the monarchy and semi-democratic concessions to the masses like the June 15 parliamentary elections.

The severe crisis facing the bourgeoisie has two dimensions: the collapse of the economy and the militant response of the workers. Spain's "economic miracle" based upon foreign investment and the tourist trade, which until 1974 had produced one of the world's fastest growth rates (for a time second only to Japan's), is now a thing of the past. Spanish economic development has been almost totally dependent upon the international economy; the end of the international post-war boom hit Spain doubly hard. The drying-up of foreign investment, in addition to the return home of many of the 10 percent of Spanish workers who were employed abroad, sent economic growth down and unemployment up. In 1976, inflation was at 18 percent and 1 million workers were unemployed.

At the same time, Spanish workers have defied Franco's anti-strike laws with a tremendous demonstration of anger against the crisis and the Francoist regime. There has been a wave of general strikes involving hundreds of thousands of workers, starting even before the dictator's death, including a strike of two and a half million last November and the strike of 600,000 workers in Euzkadi (the Basque area in northern Spain) just before the election, touched off by the regime's anti-Basque repression. Spain has been thrown into a pre-revolutionary situation.

Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez, his government reinforced by his narrow electoral victory in June, is struggling to keep the economy afloat. He has devalued the peseta by 25 percent, placed a ceiling on wage increases while maintaining the price control mechanism (which *Business Week* magazine likens to

swiss cheese), and applied for Spanish membership in the European Common Market. The devaluation, however, will only worsen Spain's dependence on imports, of raw materials especially, and thereby make inflation skyrocket; and it will raise the cost of servicing its \$12-14 billion foreign debt; Suarez's hope of making Spanish exports cheaper has already run into resistance from Common Market rivals to Spanish goods produced by a low-paid labor force. Like every other country since the decline of the post-war boom, Spain hopes to sell more goods and buy fewer; the goal is an inherently impossible one.

While Suarez dreams of engendering prosperity by "entering Europe," the right-wing forces around King Juan Carlos and the Alianza Popular regret every loosening of Franco's reins, such as the legalization of the conservative working class parties. The AP's poor showing in the elections (8 percent of the vote) means that their only hope for power is that Suarez and his Center coalition will lose control; meanwhile they continue their support for the repressive activities of fascist and parapolice organs, which still exist despite the reformist pretensions of the Suarez government.

For the working class, only socialism offers a way out. Socialism has a long and revolutionary tradition among the Spanish proletariat. The workers' achievements during the 1930's revolution were the highest on the European continent since Russia in 1917. The revolution was betrayed then by the treacherous subservience of the Communists, Social-Democrats and anarchists, who championed democratic and reform demands while waging war against more far-reaching politics. Through the Popular Front, these parties stood for the bourgeois-democratic republic against the monarchy. But no bourgeois-democratic solution was possible. The reformist and Stalinist-inspired betrayal of the socialist revolution paved the way for the real bourgeois solution — fascism.

Today the Communist Party (PCE) and the official Socialist Party (PSOE) are again doing their best, in an even more capitulatory fashion, to see that the workers' struggle

stays within bourgeois bounds. As in the thirties, the PCE and PSOE have spent their time maneuvering to weld together Popular Front alliances (separately and together), this time containing not only bourgeois republican parties but bourgeois monarchist elements as well. In the end, the two main workers parties ran for the Cortes independently but on popular frontist bourgeois programs. They avoided a bloc in order not to further mobilize and polarize the rebellious proletariat and to avoid scaring the bourgeoisie. Instead, Felipe Gonzales of the PSOE and Santiago Carrillo of the PCE promulgated a "constitutional pact," which bound their parties to defend the monarchy, the Francoist flag (as opposed to the flag of the Spanish Republic that the workers defended and Franco extinguished in 1939), the principle of "unity of the fatherland" (which excluded self-determination for the oppressed Basque and Catalan nationalities) and an economic "solution" consisting, in the face of the extreme crisis, "of a policy of national responsibility which distributes the burden throughout all society," in Carrillo's words. Under capitalism this invariably means placing the burden on the workers and peasants.

What is necessary, however, is to remove the already crippling burden from the backs of the masses. This means a workers' state, nationalization of industry and the banks under workers' control, a vast program of public works to create jobs and social services, and expropriation of the latifundistas. It means state control of foreign trade, cancellation of the international debt created by the bourgeoisie

Party of Marxist Unification) from the same period. As Trotsky wrote ("The Class, the Party, and the Leadership: Why Was the Spanish Proletariat Defeated?" in *The Spanish Revolution*, p. 363):

"To the left of all the other parties in Spain stood the POUM, which undoubtedly embraced revolutionary proletarian elements not previously firmly tied to anarchism. But it was precisely this party that played a fatal role in the development of the Spanish revolution. It could not become a mass party because in order to do so it was first necessary to overthrow the old parties and it was possible to overthrow them only by an irreconcilable struggle, by a merciless exposure of their bourgeois character.

"Yet the POUM, while criticizing the old parties, subordinated itself to them on all fundamental questions."



Fascists wait in the wings with real bourgeois solution (left). Working class might (above) is still restrained by pro-bourgeois leaderships.



and campaigning for a Socialist United States of Europe as opposed to the imperialist Common Market. In sum, it means nothing less than the socialist revolution. A victory by the Spanish working class would revive the Portuguese revolutionary struggle and ignite mass revolutionary movements in such economically more advanced countries as Italy, France and Britain, where the mass working class movement is ready to burst into flame. A victory for the Spanish workers would be a giant step towards the only possible, and international, solution to the Spanish crisis, international socialism.

Just as the PSOE and the PCE have resumed their role of betrayal from the thirties, so too do the extreme left groups reflect the ignominious tradition of the POUM (Workers

Today the "far left" centrist groups are far more fragmented and some even call themselves Trotskyists, but in sum they behave in an even more capitulatory fashion than the POUM. They have moved to pick up the slack left by the PCE and the PSOE's moves to the right. In response to the elections, the centrists divided into three camps: those that advocated boycotting the elections because of their undemocratic character, those that engaged in mini-Popular Fronts with separatist bourgeois parties, and the electoral bloc put together by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), one of the two organizations affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (the other was in the boycottist camp).

From the limited information available to us, none of the three camps offered a program that came close to meeting the demands of the pre-revolutionary situation. One example is the program of the Fourth International Organization of Spain (OCI), affiliated to the French OCI led by Lambert. It called for an electoral boycott on the grounds that the elections were undemocratic and that "the working class, the youth and the oppressed people can do away with that entire (Francoist) heritage" and that "they have the will to do so."

While this last statement is belied by the workers' mass support for the PCE and PSOE with their reformist programs, the OCI's program for "doing away with that heritage" is entirely bourgeois-democratic, not at all socialist. Its demands: "Total amnesty! Dissolution of all repressive bodies! Down with Suarez! Down with Juan Carlos! Down with the Francoist monarchy! For all freedoms, a republic! So that the working class, the youth and the exploited masses can finally express themselves freely, a constituent assembly! That the Basque, Catalan and Galician peoples decide their own future immediately! Immediate exercise of the right of self-determination of the oppressed nationalities, of their right to separation if they want it!" (Montreal *Tribune Ouvriere*, June-July 1977.)

Thus the OCI's radical abstentionism, like most abstentionism, masks a conservative content. Lenin in his time opposed those who would abstain from the far more undemocratic *duma* in Czarist Russia. The OCI calls in reality for a republic on a purely democratic basis and refrains from posing the socialist revolution. This is a delusion for the masses, for no bourgeois republic could or would carry out even a bourgeois-democratic program.

A similar concentration on bourgeois-democratic demands characterized the LCR's campaign. It originally called for a bloc of all workers' parties around a four-point minimal program: "For total amnesty and unrestricted rights and freedoms; for the right of self-determination for the oppressed nationalities; against any form of social pact and for free and united negotiations over the demands of the workers and people; for free elections to a constituent assembly which would proclaim a republic." (*Inprecor*, June 9, 1977.)

While it is perfectly correct to raise these and other democratic demands, the demand for "united negotiations" with the Juan Carlos-Suarez government accepted the strategy of the PCE and PSOE. Originally, the popular frontist demand had been a "negotiated break" with Francoism; later it was softened to "negotiated reform." The LCR's formulation, a pathetic attempt to draw the PCE and the PSOE into an electoral bloc, had nothing in common with a revolutionary party's intransigence towards the bourgeoisie. The "people," which the LCR links with the working class, is a non-class and popular frontist term designed to include the "progressive" sections of the ruling class.

The bloc finally put together by the LCR contained a few other centrist organizations (including remnants of the old POUM) which apparently did not take the campaign seriously. This bloc (the Front for Workers' Unity — FUT) ran on an essentially bourgeois-democratic program. Its call for socialism was even tamer than the "socialism" mentioned in various reformist party programs. (Everybody is a "socialist" in Spain; even Suarez calls himself a socialist of sorts!) Despite this program, the FUT was a propaganda bloc in which every group meant something different by each demand.

Nevertheless, the FUT attracted 40,000 votes. It was the only electoral slate which seriously posed the question of the organizational independence of the proletariat to the advanced workers. For this reason revolutionaries should have given critical support to this slate in the election. We do so in order to place a wedge between the workers seeking class independence and the fulfillment of proletarian interests, and their pro-bourgeois leadership whose program we attack. The fact that thousands of workers chose the FUT in spite of its

antics shows the revolutionary potential developing within the Spanish proletariat. A vote for the miserable FUT was the only tactic available to the Spanish workers who wished to express their opposition to every section of the bourgeoisie.

The centrists of today represent the real independence of the proletariat no more than did the POUM of yesteryear, despite the misconceptions of the advanced workers who lacked a serious alternative. It is necessary for revolutionaries to lead other advanced workers in practice, not just by attacking their misguided choices. The tactic of critical support, which implies no programmatic agreement, was the only way to accomplish this.

The fact that those centrist groups which did not openly capitulate to popular frontism advanced programs based on democratic reforms and not the socialist needs of the working class is significant. It shows that the centrist organizations, particularly the United Secretariat which is the largest organization that sees itself as Trotskyist on a world scale, have drawn the lessons of the workers' defeat in Chile and the setback in Portugal and have drawn back in fear of unleashing the revolutionary potential of the working class.

They have learned exactly the wrong lessons. Confined to democratic demands, many workers will be led to support that which they believe can best carry them out, a bourgeois-democratic republic. (Others will lapse into indifference and even turn to reactionary alternatives when they learn that democratic and reform programs will solve nothing for them.) Such a republic represents no more of an answer to the crisis in Spain than it did in the thirties. It is an open invitation to the only other "solution," fascism — just as the Republic was then.

The CPE and the PSOE have also learned from the thirties and from Chile. Having seen the bourgeoisie go over to Francoism and militarist repression out of fear of the strength of the working class developing beneath the surface of the Popular Front governments (which in fact could not suppress the masses enough to achieve bourgeois stability), they now vainly seek to propitiate even more reactionary layers of the bourgeoisie, including the military and the monarchists. This "national front" line, which the Stalinists first dusted off in the late thirties, offers less to the working class than even the false promises of the Popular Front.

The Spanish bourgeoisie had intended the elections as a vehicle to consolidate a modified Francoist regime under the guise of "democracy." It is a betrayal for the left to accept utopian bourgeois democracy as the central focus of struggle when the crisis that the Spanish workers are undergoing is extreme and the dangers of renewed repression by the strong-state regime is great. The need to reconstruct the Fourth International needs no sharper demonstration than this. The several international pretenders to the mantle of Trotskyism have proven by their role in Spain that the Fourth International will be rebuilt only through the most resolute combat against them.

The large vote for the working class parties, the huge strikes, even the very proliferation of left parties, show that the Spanish proletariat is on the move. It is now in the process of picking and choosing among the alternatives for the creation of its own party. The cadres joining the left groups are learning lessons different from those the leaderships teach, for they joined to make the socialist revolution and not a bourgeois republic. That is why the attention of the world's working classes must be focused on the rapidly developing situation in Spain. ■

The Sadlowski Campaign:

U.S. Labor and the Left

The far left in the United States can be so routinely dismissed as a serious political factor today that few commentators even bother to take the trouble. Even socialists underestimate their own significance. History should teach those whose task it is to understand and change the world that the "obvious" is frequently far from the reality. George Bernard Shaw remarked that youth was unfortunately wasted upon the young. Be that as it may; it is certain that history is wasted upon historians and Marxists who make no fruitful use of it.

The fact that far leftists are frequently unconscious of their own role reflects the backward consciousness of the working class in general. Rarely has the gap between subjective understanding and the objective situation been as wide as it is today. This situation is far from static. The terrific pressures stemming from the objective crisis of capitalism are inexorably pushing the working class into greater struggles which are undermining its conservative world view. When consciousness approaches reality, because of the very hugeness of the gap in the past it will produce a more titanic and sudden explosion than seems possible now. Given the historic combativity of workers in the U.S., there is every reason to believe that the consequences may well surpass the totally unpredicted but most massive general strike in history, the French events of 1968. They too were a product of a social terrain featuring a huge chasm between objective reality and subjective understanding.

When such events occur the far left will be thrust toward the center of the stage. Its role will be as decisive as it will be unexpected. That left will not emerge as a virginal force but as a historically conditioned product of its own past which includes our present. What the left will do in the decisive times ahead is being substantially affected by the activities and ideas of the small but feverishly alive far left groups today. It is critical to investigate what these groups are doing, thinking, learning — and teaching — today in order to understand and effect what the left will do tomorrow. Far left policies in the trade unions must be central to our examination, since the unions are the most powerfully organized section of the working class and are therefore a key to the unfolding class struggle.

The foremost fact of life which has faced the far left for many a year has been its isolation from the working class.

Marxists are isolated from the masses when the level of the class struggle is low. This in turn generates a correspondingly low state of political consciousness, wherein the mass of workers rejects the possibility of socialist revolution and seeks solutions, benefits and reforms only within the confines of capitalism. Backward consciousness is not some relative locational point on a line continuum from backward through neutral to progressive. There are two fundamental and irreconcilable choices in modern society, capitalism and socialism. Backward consciousness means bourgeois consciousness, the acceptance of capitalism. (Within the working

class this generally finds its most palatable expression or version in some form of petty-bourgeois reformism or Stalinism.) The working class learns consciousness of its real position in society through actual struggle and not through static education. It learns which ideological solution is correct through testing the clashing views and finding the proofs in practice. Working class consciousness involves an understanding of objective realities of capitalism as a system: the severity of its crisis and its consequent weaknesses, and the huge potential strength and capability of the proletariat to overcome the bourgeoisie and establish its own state.

We have noted the wide gap at present between the working class' subjective appraisal of the world and the objective reality of a crisis-ridden capitalism. The isolation of the left reflects this gap; the working class is still prisoner to bourgeois ideology. Bolsheviks offer their leadership, their program, their party as the advanced consciousness forged over the years by the working class itself. It is their task to lead and participate in the process which brings increasing sections of the class to Marxist consciousness, so that preponderant enough strength is achieved for the revolution. Thus they must tell the truth to the working class and illuminate each struggle so that backward consciousness is destroyed.

Trotsky posed the task as follows:

"What can a revolutionary party do in this situation? In the first line give a clear and honest picture of the objective situation, of the historic tasks which flow from this situation irrespective as to whether or not the workers are today ripe for this. Our tasks don't depend on the mentality of the workers. The task is to develop the mentality of the workers. That is what the program should formulate and present before the advanced workers. Some will say: good, the program is a scientific program; it corresponds to the objective situation, but if the workers won't accept this program it will be sterile. Possibly. But this signifies only that the workers will be crushed since the crisis can't be solved any other way but by the socialist revolution. ... We must tell the workers the truth, then we will win the best elements." (Discussion on the Transitional Program, May 19, 1938.)

The most prominent far left groups define the question of their relationship to the working class far differently from the way we have sketched. To many of the leftists, isolation means not the gap between the present consciousness of the working class and Marxist consciousness but the chasm between the present views of the proletariat and the vagaries of their own group. When they see the slightest motion within the class, they scurry to meet the ideas which seem to shape it at least halfway. In the course of tailing the current levels of consciousness they quickly jettison various aspects of the Marxist world view which they had previously maintained. The views of the workers at large (or for some, the militant workers at

large) are the "real world" and Marxist overviews become "hollow abstractions." Theory becomes not an understanding of reality and methods of struggle but a rationalization for adapting to the current level of workers' consciousness.

While the strand of subjectively revolutionary workers and the left organizations is quite small and does not have a decisive impact upon events, it does have significance even in the present circumstances. In a variety of strikes, oppositional struggles and demonstrations, various far left groups play a real role. Frequently, when a "broad" or "grass-roots" group or event emerges it becomes a source of pride to the initiates to identify the particular leftist group moving under the facade. Not every such occurrence is manipulated by a left group, but it is quite common. Not every oppositional and "rank and file" group in the unions has such elements, but it can be said that a thin pinkish line does run through quite a number of them. It is not accidental, nor is it due to security questions, that these groups parade under political banners far more "minimal" than their own formal programs. It is because the politics of most of the left groups have moved so far to the right that they are tailing, or have already become a part of, the left wing of the very union bureaucracy that bears much of the responsibility for the present backward consciousness of the working class.

The sporadic upheavals of the past decade are only the tip of the iceberg. Occurring under the pressure of the accelerating crisis, they reveal the fundamental dissatisfaction and hostility felt by the workers toward the traditional leadership of organized labor in the U.S. Under this pressure, a wing of the bureaucracy has been slowly pushed to the left in order to maintain its position. To this purpose they attempt to pre-empt and deflect the workers when the motion is slow, or to capture and tame them when the movement has begun to jell.

The labor bureaucracy in the U.S. plays a role similar (but not identical) to that of the reformist socialists in Europe. It is no accident that a vacillating, capitulatory, but noticeable left wing of the social democracy has begun to crystallize in the Old World under the impact of the rising workers struggle. It is a pale reflection of the centrist wings which developed to ensnare the workers' upsurges during the thirties. The left bureaucrats in the U.S. represent an even more squalid version of this same phenomenon. Its lower level of left pretension is due to the more pro-bourgeois consciousness and the lower level of struggle in this country.

The prominent far left groups in the U.S. are not equivalent to the vaguely left liberal and closet socialist types who decorate the present scene of big-time labor statesmanship. They are the genuine variety of centrists. That is, they conceal their solidly reformist practice beneath revolutionary rhetoric and traditions.

The left bureaucrats and the centrists, however, are moving rapidly toward each other on a convergence course. Both are dedicated to attracting the layers of militant workers who are beginning to go into motion. At this point the far leftists generally appeal to the small number of workers who already seek far-reaching and even communist solutions in order to catch them up in the same old reformist promises. The left bureaucrats seek out the less political militants. But the two currents, the left bureaucrats and the far leftists, are by their nature quite open to interpenetration, for they represent in the last analysis differing wings of the petty-bourgeois incubus within the proletariat. Therefore our analysis of the centrists begins with an assessment of the bureaucracy.

The present bureaucracy, including all of its wings, is extremely conservative; it has succeeded in presiding over the turning of the most strongly organized and powerful union movement in the world into a force which has capitulated at every turn. This bureaucracy entrenched itself through the Cold War defeat of both the Communist Party forces and the more genuinely left forces in the working class in the late 1940's. The post-World War II prosperity of the imperialist nations, the U.S. above all, enabled the union bureaucrats to consolidate and deepen their power, positions and perquisites. There was enough fat on the system to enable the union leaders to "produce" on the bread and butter issues and use this to contain the workers. This was no act of nobility: the militancy of the workers was responsible for the gains, for massive strikes took place frequently during the period of prosperity. Too frequently for the labor bureaucracy; behind the gains, they were busy giving up the unions' independence from management and the state which had been won by the workers in the past. Government agencies and the courts now regulate every function of the unions, and in this new web the bureaucracy feels far more secure.

Trotsky wrote about the increasing incorporation of the unions into the state apparatus during the depression of the 1930's. This world-wide trend, characteristic of the centralization drive of this epoch of state monopoly capitalism, continued during and after World War II. The AFL-CIO in the United States has certainly been no exception to this rule.

The post-war boom is now well over, having given way to a deepening crisis which maintains itself through both recessions and short-lived upturns. The labor bureaucracy, which depends for its very existence on the selling and disciplining of labor power, is faced with the need to protect capitalist profits in order to defend the system itself. It has accepted the bosses' dictum that the workers must pay for the crisis, although it seeks to hold on to some of the eroding gains for its immediate base in the aristocracy of labor: craftsmen, semi-professionals, high seniority workers, and members of relatively privileged racial, ethnic and sexual groups. In order to defend these crumbs the bureaucracy permits mass layoffs, speed-up and other attacks on the working class as a whole.

The labor bureaucrats today place their hopes in a vain attempt to jockey the bourgeois state into supporting their small requests at the expense of the corporations. The political arena is something the working class cannot avoid, since the immediate demands of the workers can no longer be answered without recourse to politics, and industrial struggles are almost immediately brought into the realm of government agencies. The bureaucracy is happy to keep politics central — and thereby to downplay industrial action — as long as "politics" means only the reform proposals and the reformist politicians of the Democratic Party. As well, it has attempted to divert the anger, militancy and frustration of the ranks into safe electoral campaigns for the likes of Jimmy Carter.

The massive labor effort behind Carter's candidacy has hardly led to pro-labor policies: witness Carter's pitiful minimum wage bill and his scarcely concealed contempt for other programs favored by the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO recently identified itself with Carter's proposed changes in labor law to speed up union recognition efforts. If adopted, these provisions will have the most minimal impact, but it is for this that the union bureaucrats surrendered their already feeble struggle against "right-to-work" laws. Such victories are hardly distinguishable from defeats. They are the result of the

bureaucracy's unwillingness to mount any challenge to the bourgeoisie that might renew the confidence of the working class.

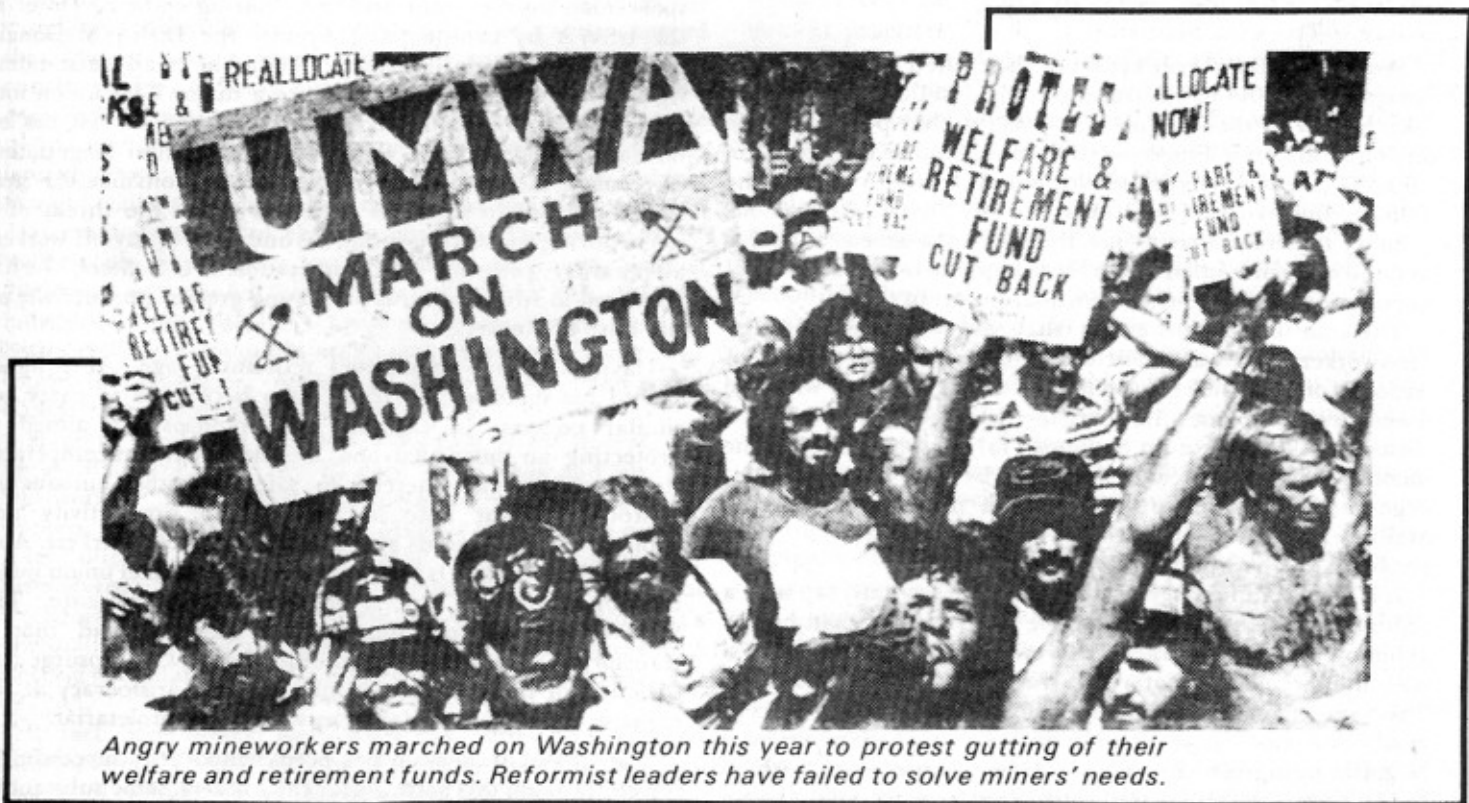
Workers have been bitter and angry over unemployment, inflation, bad contracts, evaporation of pension funds, collapse of the cities and all of the effects of the continuing crisis. They think very little of the labor bureaucracy, but in practice they follow it in the most profound sense; that is, they have not put forward any serious alternative leadership and policies. Consequently the working class has been mired in cynicism and has been relatively quiescent and fearful in the face of the crisis.

This has been a *general* pattern to which important exceptions exist, and there are signs of a real change. The past year saw a strike wave: the Teamsters experienced their first nationwide strike; the Rubber Workers had a three-month long strike; the UAW strike at Ford upset earlier predictions of strike-free bargaining in auto. The misleaders of these unions felt compelled to call strikes in order to contain the ranks. In addition, in the United Mine Workers, after nearly two million man-days of wildcat strikes in 1976, over 120,000 miners wildcatted earlier this year in a political strike against the pro-boss role of the courts in mining cases and against the sellouts of the union leadership. Wildcat strikes, political demonstrations and even battle conditions have prevailed in large areas of the mining states.

the aristocracy of workers. They don't want to kill "the goose that lays the golden eggs" by contract demands inconsistent with a high profit level.

The bureaucracy is well aware of the strength of the working class. The Teamsters' leadership, for example, knows that it can with one blow cut off the transportation of goods throughout the United States. All the major industries are unionized and can be brought to a standstill. It is precisely when the ranks' anger rises and conditions get worse that the bureaucracy has tried harder to limit strikes, localize the workers' response and divide the class in order to communicate feelings of weakness. They fear "anarchy" in the plants. It is not by accident that the UAW in recent years mobilized huge goon squads to deal with handfulls of radicals, well knowing the potential for an explosion, should a large section of workers see through the cynicism imposed upon them and sense the possibility of victories.

In the past few years, a left wing of the bureaucracy has been forced to distinguish itself under two interrelated pressures. One is the mounting anger of the ranks, which cannot be prevented from getting out of hand by the traditional methods of the more compromised labor statesmen. Secondly, the bureaucrats' very existence depends upon the workers defending at least some of their past gains. The lengths that the conservatives have gone to in surrendering every weapon and tying the unions into the web of the



Angry mineworkers marched on Washington this year to protest gutting of their welfare and retirement funds. Reformist leaders have failed to solve miners' needs.

The volatile potential of the working class in the face of the capitalist crisis is recognized in a different way by the bureaucracy as well. The bureaucracy sees (and desires) no alternative to capitalism. It represents the outlook of the upper stratum of aristocratic workers we have mentioned who consider that they have a real material stake in the system, and it is supported as well by those who expect to fulfill their hopes of rising into that layer. Accordingly, these layers have a vested interest in defending industry's profits, which they see as the only way decent wages can be maintained, at least for

state cuts down on the bureaucrats' own maneuvering room. Why should management need them and why should the workers fight for them if they simply become agencies for disciplining the workers, unmitigated by any face-saving sops? The most conservative bureaucrat will find an occasion to blame the ranks for their unwillingness to fight, which is in reality a reluctance to be betrayed again.

However, the difference between right and left wings exists more in potential than in present reality. Its victory over the ranks in the past allows the bureaucracy as a whole to remain

so conservative. For example, the well-publicized AFL-CIO campaign to organize the Southern textile industry is touted as an indication of labor officialdom's new progressiveness, but it amounts only to a wretched plea for liberals to boycott J.P. Stevens products while it does nothing to encourage militant activity on the part of the textile workers themselves. Organizing the South, like every significant union program, demands a political strategy as well as an industrial action. Neither left nor right bureaucrats are willing to stand for even a minimally militant industrial course, much less for a political program that would do the job, for it requires a break with Carter and the Democratic Party and would have revolutionary consequences (see the article "Revolutionary Perspectives for Southern Labor" in *Socialist Voice* No.3).

Some of the left bureaucrats like to indicate off the record that they are far less enamored of the Democratic Party than is the Meany wing. But every significant union action that they might put forward, like the organizing of the South, requires a political solution, and this is why left bureaucrats draw back. They may continue to vacillate, but they must inevitably cave in to the right wing. In the last analysis, there is no middle ground between surrendering to the bourgeois state and constructing the revolutionary party. Faced with these choices, the left bureaucrats return to nest upon their golden eggs, which in this epoch are inevitably rotten.

The Steel Campaign

We will use the recent events in the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) to illustrate both the situation in the unions and the role of the left (or more exactly, that portion of the left which claims a Trotskyist tradition). Similar questions are raised by the more recent re-election of Arnold Miller in the United Mine Workers; our choice of the Steelworkers as our primary illustration stems not from any assessment that this union is of greater importance, but simply because it attracted greater work and attention from a large part of the left.

The two important events that have occurred in the Steelworkers this year were the election of a new slate of national officers and the signing of a new contract with the major steel companies. In February, Lloyd McBride defeated "insurgent" candidate Ed Sadlowski for the presidency of the union. This election was followed by the new contract, negotiated in early April. The union negotiators included McBride and were headed by I.W. Abel, at that time president of the union.

It is a sad commentary on our times that we must say with a sigh of relief that the rank and file were not smashed by the adoption of the contract. However, it would only be a pollyanna who could claim that the contract wasn't a sellout. The wage increase provided is hardly more than the 3 percent yearly increase now guaranteed by the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA), Abel's "achievement" which bans national strikes in steel until 1980 (and according to his pledge, even through the 1980 contract negotiations). In addition, the "job security" ballyhoo which the union leadership raised prior to the contract revealed itself to be merely an increase of Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) payments from 52 weeks to 104 weeks — and that only for workers with 20 years or more of continuous service. (Autoworkers can tell the steelworkers all about SUB benefits and similar promises that run dry long before many workers get to use them during periods of mounting layoffs.) Finally, the contract committed the USWA to extend the productivity agreements which benefit only the bosses.

The contract was initially rejected by the local union presidents of the basic steel locals by a vote of 148 to 143. The Abel-McBride forces regrouped, and with the second vote the contract was accepted, 193 to 99. The rank and file did not vote at all, having no right to ratify contracts in the USWA.

Sadlowski and his supporters were credited as the force behind the initial rejection. In a sense this was true. The first ballot rejection reflected the fact that basic steel is the heart of the opposition in the union. (Non-steel units which don't directly figure in the big contracts compose the majority of the USWA locals.) Sadlowski, like every oppositionist in the past, had his strength in basic steel, and he carried a majority of basic steel locals in the election while losing elsewhere. Local steel presidents who were pro-Sadlowski did form the base for the first ballot rejection.

But the rejection was for the record only. Sadlowski and his lieutenants had to pose as militants because they had no other option. But they led no charge and didn't sound even a tinny bugle; they folded their tents right after that one little display. They got away as cheaply as they could in the face of a membership which was obviously bitterly angry over the ENA, the "normal" leadership betrayals and their beautiful new contract hatchet job.

Sadlowski's action was perfectly in keeping with his campaign and his record in the union. Even this was not unique in the USWA. Abel himself was once an "insurgent" and a spokesman for the "rank and file," having come to power in the USWA by campaigning against the David McDonald leadership's "tuxedo unionism." Today he is an outstanding right winger. He led what was once a major CIO union into Meany's craft-dominated section of the movement. He has led no national strikes; he "won" the Experimental Negotiating Agreement mentioned above (designed to convince the steel companies not to stockpile materials under the threat of a strike during contract negotiations and thereby lay off workers afterwards); recently, "at the invitation of U.S. Steel," he has appeared in advertisements promoting greater productivity on the part of workers.

Having reached mandatory retirement age, Abel hand-picked his successor, McBride, who is pledged to carry out similar policies. In essence, these policies are aimed at protecting an outmoded and internationally uncompetitive steel industry and thereby to safeguard the bureaucrats aristocratic labor base by tying it to productivity and capitalism's profit needs at the expense of other workers. Abel and McBride seek to transform the industrial steel union into a craft-like, shielded union, protectionist to the core. The Steelworkers example illustrates a general trend that is transforming the mass unions formed by the CIO upsurge into societies for the preservation of the labor aristocracy at the expense of the more exploited sections of the proletariat.

The USWA leadership has been temporarily successful in travelling along this path. As for the workers, some substantive wage gains were won in the past but were always disproportionately dispensed to the skilled workers in the union. And massive layoffs, the highest since World War II, have occurred despite Abel's "concern" for job security. It is in this situation that Sadlowski rose to prominence. He did not appear overnight, but worked his way up over a period of time in the Chicago-Gary area. He rose to be a shop steward, a griever, a local president, and then a union staffer (appointed by Abel), while becoming identified as an anti-war liberal in the late 1960's. It was his victory for the directorship of District 31, the USWA's largest, that put him into the spotlight in the union.

Sadlowski actually lost the first rigged election, but he was able to get the National Labor Relations Board to intervene and oversee a re-run, which he won easily.

Sadlowski used his highly placed connections to get the new election. Most prominent was Joseph Rauh, former chief of Americans for Democratic Action. This Washington lawyer has considerable influence in the labor department and liberal establishment. A long time anti-communist, Rauh has also always been a strong advocate of intervention by the bourgeois state in the unions.

Sadlowski's campaign against McBride was an attempt to revive a union with both clout and some safety valves to allow the ranks to blow off steam. Sadlowski led no organized movement among steelworkers; despite the considerable anger, there was no organization or uprising of any size. In response to the pressure of the crisis, Sadlowski was attempting to forestall a movement of potentially dangerous proportions rather than riding the back of an existing one. This determined the nature of the entire campaign.

Thus the "outside" character of the campaign was significant. A nest of liberal politicians, industrialists, professors and professional do-gooders jumped onto the bandwagon. People like Ralph Nader, economist John Kenneth Galbraith and Victor Reuther of liberal-labor UAW fame raised money, organized meetings and arranged cocktail parties in behalf of Sadlowski's candidacy.

In fact, Sadlowski's support became a major issue in the campaign. McBride & Co., posturing as militants, charged that liberals were pulling Sadlowski's strings. This charge struck paydirt. Liberal pundits may deprecate their class consciousness, yet workers on the production line are quite well aware that the cocktail party set has interests different from their own. (The administration team, of course, was just as class collaborationist; their orientation has been to more conservative sections of the bourgeoisie.) The anti-outsider rhetoric also included a heavy dose of red-baiting against Sadlowski and the left groups who supported him. But the insincerity of the "outsider" charge was proved by the fact that both sides sought to outdo each other in going to the bosses' courts for assistance; each side, for example, demanded NLRB supervision of the election.

Hand in hand with Sadlowski's reliance on the liberals was his avoidance of a real mobilization of the rank and file. His Steelworkers Fight Back campaign structure organized workers enough to make his candidacy known and get the votes. But not much more. As one campaign coordinator commented: "There is some misconception among leftists that Steelworkers Fight Back is a rank and file organization...It's essentially a network of contacts assembled for the purpose of electing candidates to union office." (*Guardian*, February 23, 1977).

In fact, Steelworkers Fight Back was merely an update of Steelworkers for Sadlowski, his organizing tool for the 1974 District 31 election. Some rank and filers have gone through its mill, but it is essentially composed of local union officials, out-bureaucrats and members of various left groups. What apparatus exists is furnished by the leftists, while effective control lies with Sadlowski and his closest associates.

As director of District 31, Sadlowski did have the potential leverage to at least attempt to organize a militant movement. (The fact that he had inherited a staff largely made up of Abelites put limitations on his power, but it really doesn't explain his poor record.) He steered clear of involvement with potentially explosive situations, and consistently avoided any mobilization of the ranks which could have triggered an

explosion — something Sadlowski was actively seeking to prevent. Sadlowski's politics were to pose himself as the great benefactor and deliverer, not to encourage the involvement, consciousness and activity of the workers.

Sadlowski of course appealed to the ranks for votes. But the section of the union whose interests he was attempting to promote was a segment of the staff and the local leadership in basic steel. In fact, most of the professional staff apparatus supported McBride. But, as we noted earlier, a developing layer of the bureaucracy is beginning to see that its positions and privileges depend upon the union retaining some measure of independence from the companies, as well as the need to deflect a rank and file upsurge. Sadlowski thus made a fervent appeal during the campaign to the staff and related strata of local officials, despite the hatred for the apparatus on the part of militant rank and filers. Three of the four members of Sadlowski's slate were staff members, including treasurer candidate Andrew Kmec, the president of the staff union and a notorious one-time McDonald hack.

Sadlowski's election program was of a piece with the rest of his campaign. His campaign pitch was a vague revival of militant industrial unionism. While in itself this represents no fundamental solution for workers, Sadlowski's more specific perspectives did not even approach the limits of reformist militancy. Union democracy was the linchpin of his platform, including a membership referendum on the ENA and the right to vote on contracts. These are improvements over current practices, no doubt, especially in a union that has been bureaucratic since its inception. But Sadlowski in fact counterposed "democracy" to militancy. Rather than leading a forthright opposition to the crippling ENA and fighting for the elementary right to strike, Sadlowski backed off and suggested that "the ranks should decide" — in 1980. Sadlowski's espousal of "democracy" counterposed to militancy reflects his desire to create a safety valve to allow the pressure to ease and to prevent the top being blown off by mass action. Sadlowski's conception of "union democracy" is actually something known in labor reformist circles as "institutionalization." It means channeling and disciplining mass action and sentiment into highly structured forms in order to stifle it. "Institutionalization" is simple bureaucratization "with a human face."

Sadlowski's performance did not prevent leftists from supporting his candidacy and singing his praises even afterwards. The Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party, Revolutionary Communist Party, and International Socialists were among his admirers. We will deal in detail later with the left's approach to the campaign. What is noteworthy here is that Sadlowski needed the left to provide the organization and rank and file outreach and left cover that he and his liberal friends did not have. He could get away with this tactic because he was fairly certain that these groups had neither the strength nor the desire to buck him and attempt to organize a mass movement. Sadlowski deftly maneuvered with the left while declaring himself an opponent of red-baiting, he stressed its damage to his campaign and thereby restricted the maneuvering room of his left supporters. He whispered to the leftists that he was really a socialist but couldn't dwell on it in public. His ability to talk out of both sides of his mouth rivaled Jimmy Carter's: in one arena he came out as a "socialist in the sense of Eugene Debs"; in another he was a "god-fearing capitalist."

In many respects, Sadlowski's campaign was similar to Arnold Miller's in the United Mine Workers in 1972. Both were "insurgent" campaigns backed by the Joseph Rauh type

of liberal do-gooders. But there were important differences. Miller's campaign was a response to a genuine movement of workers threatening to explode. The Miners for Democracy (MFD) was the loose organization formed by several powerful movements which grew up in the mine fields. It was definitely not a revolutionary grouping but a heterogeneous formation which Miller and Rauh tried to tie to the liberal establishment and to the perspective of further state intervention in the union. But the MFD had a volatile grass roots base of active miners, black lung victims and rank and file leaders, which in the context of the hot fight against the murderous right-wing Boyle regime posed the threat of getting out of hand. It was for this reason that one of Miller's first acts upon assuming the UMW presidency was to disband the MFD. Thus Miller's struggle for power in the UMW represented an attempt by liberal-reform bureaucrats to corral and mislead a mass workers' upsurge. Sadlowski's campaign aimed to prevent an MFD-type movement (or what the bureaucrats fear the most, a revolutionary alternative) from occurring.

There are even closer similarities between the Sadlowski campaign and the recent three-way contest in the Mine Workers between Miller, Harry Patrick and Leroy Patterson. Patrick, once Miller's running mate in the Miners For Democracy campaign, attempted to repeat Miller's "rank and file" victory now that Miller had lost his image as a reformer. But there was no longer a movement for either Patrick or Miller to ride, since the Miller team had succeeded in destroying it in the absence of an alternative leadership that the ranks could have confidence in. Far from reflecting the extensive wildcat movement that occurred during the election campaign, Patrick attempted to undercut it; the Miller and Patrick of 1972 would have attempted to ride the crest of the wildcat movement in order to bring it down. Thus Patrick's effort had more in common with Sadlowski's than it did with the 1972 upsurge.

Strategy for Revolutionaries

Revolutionaries do not stand aloof from even the limited struggles of our class; we seek to intervene where we can, in order to fight alongside our fellow workers and help prove in the course of struggle the material necessity for socialism as the only way they can achieve their interests. Our central task is to build the instrument necessary to accomplish the goal, the revolutionary party, which must be forged by the working class in the course of its struggle and which represents its most advanced consciousness. This vanguard party is based upon the program reflecting the real interests of the proletariat, which are fundamentally the same for all workers in all industries and in all countries. Because the interests of the proletariat and those of the capitalists are fundamentally opposite, the revolutionary party and its program are the polar opposites of any bourgeois program. This is true for bourgeois reformist programs as well as overtly hostile ones, since reformist programs are based on the material interests of the bureaucratic and aristocratic layers, not the mass of workers. Like Trotsky, we pursue "a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy."

Thus when Leninists intervene in struggles, we do not view the world as a series of poor, better, and best reformist leaders who are coming closer and closer to socialism. Even when reformists back political demands that seem to be the same as those of revolutionaries, we point out that the reformist

leaderships' content is exactly the opposite of what revolutionaries mean and what the masses need. For example, to "build the union" to the bureaucracy means to build an instrument for strengthening the power of the bureaucracy, against the workers as well as the capitalists. It means to cement ties with the bourgeois state in order to appeal for its favors. For Marxists, the only way to build the union is to break these ties, and this can be done only by a revolutionary party.

The most important example is the demand for "unity." Reformists understand its importance for workers and therefore always try to proclaim the unity of the class, but for bourgeois-limited goals, and frequently with "unity" extended to a section of the bourgeoisie itself. The warning to the militants is inevitably, "Don't go too far or you'll make us lose our best friends" — the bourgeois liberals. This lowest common denominator approach does not often build the widest unity possible, because it leaves out the bulk of dispossessed workers whose needs are not met by minimal demands. In the steel election, for example, the vote turnout was lower than expected, given the intensity of the campaign. Thousands of steelworkers who might have supported an insurgent struggle remained cynical and did not vote for Sadlowski: if there wasn't much difference in what the two candidates promised, what was the point in risking jobs and income on what seemed to be the more militant actions Sadlowski would get them involved in?

One central device used by Leninists when they are not the decisive force in the proletariat, but still seek to win large sectors away from liberal reformist leaderships, is the united front. (We have discussed the united front in detail in *Socialist Voice* No. 4.) Its task is to create unity in struggle. If the reformists refuse to accept it they stand exposed before the workers as unwilling to unify in the fight. If they do enter the united front because of the pressure of their base, the revolutionaries, retaining always the right to criticize, are able to expose their attempts to curtail the workers' fight in the interests of maintaining capitalism.

The variant of the united front which is necessary when the revolutionary forces are miniscule in comparison to the mass organizations of the class is what is called "critical support." This means voting for a given misleadership in a tactical struggle, while exposing its vacillations and hesitations and warning of its ultimate betrayals because of its fundamental loyalty to capitalism. It is one of the many tools designed to "split the base from the top," to win the workers from their misleaderships to the revolutionary leadership. Leadership is the most critical question of our epoch, as Trotsky never failed to point out. Like the united front, its use depends upon the direction and struggle of at least sections of the masses and not the political program of the leadership.

For example, revolutionaries gave critical support to Arnold Miller during the 1972 campaign against Tony Boyle. This was not because Miller really represented the interests of the workers (he did not), but because the victory over Boyle was a step forward that opened up the struggle in the miners' union. Miller represented a reformist leadership which reflected a live, fighting movement of miners insofar as was necessary to derail it. Revolutionaries were obliged to side with the ranks against the Boyle machine, identifying with their aspirations and their struggle and gaining their ear in order to expose Miller for what he was, a labor lieutenant in the service of capitalism. Only through the tactic of critical support could revolutionaries prove to the most advanced miners that Miller's reformist program was incapable of fulfilling the

miners' needs and that he would inevitably betray even that program because of his primary commitment to capitalism.

As this example shows, critical support means support of the independent struggles of the workers and an attack on the non-revolutionary leaderships of those struggles. Trotsky also made this clear in his discussions with the SWP leaders on June 12-15, 1940, when he advocated critical support to the Presidential candidacy of Communist Party candidate Earl Browder. "They (the CPers), of course, would say, we don't want your support. We should answer, we don't support you, but the workers who support you. We warn them but go through the experience with them. These leaders will betray you." In Lenin's pungent phrase (from *Left-Wing Communism*), critical support is like the support that a rope gives a hanged man. It holds him up for exposure before the masses and destroys him.

Critical support is a selective tactic, however, used under particular circumstances. Support to Sadlowski, no matter how "critical," served an opposite role from support to Miller in 1972. It taught that the lesser evil Sadlowski, rather than the increasingly conscious class struggle by the masses of workers, was responsible for progressive change in the union. Nor was it possible to use the Sadlowski movement to open the union up to rank and file initiative and revolutionary influence — since no such movement existed. In essence, the "critical support" tactic promoted cynicism, the notion that

is, no matter what additions or criticisms are raised) must become support for the pro-bourgeois program and direction of the bureaucrat in question. Such a subordination of the revolutionary program to the reformist programs of the labor bureaucrats, however left, is impermissible for revolutionaries. But that is just what the bulk of the left has been doing or is preparing to do.

The SWP and the Sadlowski Campaign

One of the most prominent groups supporting Sadlowski was the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), possibly the largest organization the in the U.S. to the left of the Communist Party. It is the most obvious example of a petty-bourgeois transplant into the working class. Even at the ebb of the New Left, the SWP avoided entering the workers' movement, always citing a second coming of the middle class radicalization as its perspective (and rarely has a perspective proved so totally wrong). The SWP has recently made its "turn to the working class," away from its submersion in the non-working class petty-bourgeois milieu and into the kindred petty-bourgeois layers of the proletariat. It is now attempting to peddle in the unions the same type of right-wing politics it brought to the student movement in the 1960's — and here the disaster can be many times greater.

The flavor of the SWP's turn may be tasted in an article by



USWA iron miners in the Mesabi range dig in for grueling strike. ENA, union bureaucrats have kept the strike isolated.

the workers can't act for themselves but must rely on "the man on the white horse." This ended up reinforcing Sadlowski's strategy and message rather than serving as a basis for defeating what influence he did have over militant workers.

Thus the support that leftists gave to Sadlowski was not "critical support" at all. The tactic can be used to win the masses from their leaders only when they are in a struggle, when there is an actual movement of a section of the working class. In the absence of such movement, any kind of support to a non-revolutionary leadership (no matter how "critical," that

Frank Lovell, director of SWP union activities, who gave some elementary school lessons to his newly "industrialized" comrades in a 1972 internal bulletin: "Whenever workers get into a fight with the boss, when the union calls a strike, we should help out in every way possible. Join the fight." This to the membership of a purportedly proletarian party! Lovell also made it a point that "Usually the best job is the one you can qualify for that pays the most money." Exactly the same idea as that of the local union officials aspiring to get out of the factory and onto the paid staff. The two world views mesh

neatly, and the Sadlowski campaign confirms this.

In a recent article in the *Militant* (April 22, 1977), the SWP laid out its current strategy for labor work, asserting that only reformist politics and struggles are possible now: "Large numbers of workers can be brought, in stages, toward adoption of a class-struggle program required to defend their interests if the left-wing forces in their midst proceed with the necessary patience and astuteness." More explicitly, the *Militant* set out the following guidelines:

"It would be unwise, for instance, to begin with efforts to vote incumbent officials out of office so that correct policies might be instituted forthwith by a new leadership ... Since arguments in favor of new policies would seem rather remote to many workers upon first hearing them, the reactionaries could easily fog the issues.

"If the rebel forces proceed, instead, by pressing at the outset for official adoption, or at least tolerance, of policies that will enable the workers to fight off the capitalist assault on their living standards, better results can be obtained.

"As things get worse under the present officers, broadening layers of the membership will become more open-minded toward new ideas and methods of action. Awareness will grow that organized labor is on the wrong track programmatically. Pressures will mount for a major shift in line. When the incumbents fail to respond adequately, more and more workers will come to recognize that the leadership personnel must be changed, and they will be ready to act accordingly."

At this point, a shake-up in the leadership will have become possible. Does this mean a revolutionary leadership based in the rank and file? Hardly. Rather, the ranks become a left pressure on the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. As the SWP sees it: "Instead of the bureaucracy splitting the workers to maintain its sway, the workers will be able to split the bureaucracy in their fight for rank and file control over the unions." Eventually, they claim, the revolutionary stage will come to pass. Right now it is a question of support to left reformists as opposed to right reformists.

The SWP believes that revolutionaries must not provide revolutionary guidance in the working class. Instead they advocate clever tactical maneuvers to help goose the workers along a series of reformist stages. The workers will automatically come to revolutionary conclusions merely by fighting for reform and democratic demands. This approach is consistent with the politics of the SWP in general. The anti-war marches led by the SWP and its liberal allies were "objectively anti-imperialist" even though anti-imperialism was not part of their program; according to the SWP, bourgeois spokesman like Mayor John Lindsay and Senator Vance Hartke who were featured attractions at the anti-war demonstrations could not possibly have been representing what they considered to be the best interests of their class in urging that imperialism cut its losses in Vietnam. Similarly, the SWP calls for a black political party but rejects specifying that it be a workers' party. The reasoning is that since blacks are working class in their majority, such a party will be "objectively" a workers' party.

In the trade unions, the SWP advocates a stage of "class struggle unionism." This rubric is deliberately meant to blur the content of the program the SWP raises. It enables the SWP to tie itself to the left bureaucrats under the conviction that the movement will "objectively" become socialist. In

reality, by not fighting the bourgeois ideology and program of the bureaucrats, the SWP manages to place its faith not in the workers but in leaders like Sadlowski.

The SWP's own "class struggle program" includes a series of democratic and reform demands which the SWP undoubtedly believes are "transitional" and very socialistic — but it doesn't trouble to inform the workers of this fact. It is of a piece with Sadlowski's whispered statements that he is a socialist. Both seek to put one over on the workers. Behind the leaders' publicized "socialism" is the "objective process" which transforms class struggle into revolutionary struggle and reformism into Marxism. But all the revolutionary justifications and promised future stages are only a cover for support to reformism in practice. That is centrism in a nutshell.

Unlike revolutionaries, whose critical support to a campaign must point out what's wrong with the reformist candidate whom the workers are following, the SWP orients toward the leaders and seeks to bolster their status and deepen their influence. As one SWPer put it, "It's not like the other places around the country where it's our comrades who are doing most of the work and shouldering most of the responsibility. In Cleveland the prominent leaders of the Sadlowski campaign are seen to have a lot of authority in the district, and that's what is needed. That's what we want them to have." (Edited official transcript of the Steelworkers workshop at the SWP Convention August 1976, page 5.)

Because the SWP saw the campaign as a necessary step, it did everything to avoid rocking the boat. It published a pamphlet, "The Fight for Union Democracy in Steel," which discussed the campaign without a single critical word on Sadlowski. The *Militant* from time to time carried a few wrist-slapping "criticisms" which weren't meant to be taken seriously. The minutes of the Steelworkers panel at the SWP convention contain no criticisms except such allusions as "... he's still kind of vague on a number of programmatic points." But the SWP is even vaguer. There is not a word, when it comes to any serious internal evaluation, on differences such as Sadlowski's support for the Democratic Party. The tone tends toward rapture: "There's no objective reason that we can tell, that anybody's come up with, why the revolt first took place in the Chicago-Gary region. ... The big difference was a man named Ed Sadlowski."

Or: "... what he's brought into the union is the radical tradition. He prides himself as a labor historian and he tried to educate the people who work with him on labor history. First and foremost he's a good trade unionist. He believes in things like solidarity, don't cross picket lines, strike if you have to, you try to be militant, and you rely on the rank and file." With ideas like that he could even qualify for Lovell's job in the SWP.

The SWP had one problem with its approach, however: it was not the only pawn on the board. In the thirties, the CP was able to provide John L. Lewis with both an organized base and an apparatus strong enough to keep the workers in line if they started to move too far or too militantly. In the seventies, the many splintered character of the centrists is harmful to the left bureaucrats in that it hampers their campaigns for votes but helpful in that it reduces the danger of a firm radical presence. Unable to wield hegemonic power over the left, the SWP made up in grovelling what it lacked in clout. Here is another contribution from the Steelworkers workshop: "I have one opponent in my local — an ISer. He's so infamous that a Fight Back team that was touring around the country spoke about how bad this guy is. And they've never met him. This

Steelworkers Fight Back team had four local presidents on it, young local presidents. They said this is an example of how not to work in the union."

The local union officials paternalistically explain how "revolutionaries" should conduct their work with proper decorum, and the SWP laps it up. SWPers are proud to be so much more reasonable, loyal and likeable than the less housebroken leftists.

Such an open orientation to the local bureaucracy compels the SWP to make a significant strategic differentiation from the other centrist groups. The others hide behind "rank and file caucuses," an approach that deliberately conceals the politics they seek to counter the bureaucracy with, but nevertheless makes it difficult to appeal to lower echelon bureaucrats. Therefore the SWP polemicizes against rank-and-file-ism, as at the convention:

"These groups that call themselves the rank and file — I don't care whether they're IS, or CP, or whatever — are dangerous. I'll tell you why. Unionists do not call themselves the rank and file. They usually call themselves the local. The local's going to do this. Or the union's going to do this. They don't see this distinction between themselves and the union."

But which "unionists" are those who call themselves "the local" and do not distinguish between themselves and the union? Not the most militant workers, who frequently go too far in their frustration with the bureaucracy and view the union itself with hostility. The SWP's "unionists" are in fact the union officials, especially the younger generation of local presidents and executive board members to whom the SWP is directing its attentions. They are the clue to Sadlowski's base and the SWP's uncritical support. While individuals among them are undoubtedly loyal to the working class, as a social layer their aspiration is to rise in the union structure and frequently to get onto the union staff. Sadlowski's campaign was oriented to such staff members and aspirants, who sought a militant cover because of the ranks' attitude in the basic steel mills, and who were worried about the weakening of the union structure as it surrenders more and more to industry and the state. The SWP, as a petty bourgeois-based force coming in from outside the working class, has latched onto a slice of this layer and identified its interests with it. It provides this layer with a left cover. It is no wonder that the SWPers see their politics as the objective or automatic left extension of left bureaucratic reformism. They are right.

The Parochial International Socialists

The International Socialists (IS), one of the groups pilloried by the SWP for its rank-and-file-ism, had become notorious on the left for its "shop floor" approach to politics. It reasoned that socialism was a long way off and that therefore a reasonable left group had to relate to the current level of working class consciousness. But there are many levels of consciousness within the variegated working class. The IS, reflecting its origins in the layer of militant activists in the campus struggles of yore, identified with (and in many cases joined) the layer of shop floor militants and shop stewards in the factories.

In a conservative and slow-moving labor movement, shop floor militants are frequently in an ambivalent position between the pressures of the ranks and their aspirations to reach more powerful positions. The most militant elements, with whom the IS identified, were hostile to the Internationals

and the entrenched bureaucracies. Nevertheless, despite its implantation in the production sections of the unions generally, the IS also maintained ties with local officials of an oppositional bent among the skilled workers, as with the United National Caucus of the UAW.

The level of consciousness of the IS's friends among the shop floor militants and lower-level out-bureaucrats is extremely parochial. In tailing and reinforcing this consciousness, the IS stuck closely to local plant issues over which militancy might be galvanized. Like the SWP, the IS also had its "objective process," not arising from the dynamic of the left bureaucrats but rather from the dynamic of militancy itself. If the workers could be cajoled into militancy, then the role of the IS was to bring the various plant groups together and provide organizational vehicles for them, rank and file caucuses and ultimately a vanguard party. These organizations were to be characterized by "democracy" and, above all, the absence of offending programs beyond the first stage of militancy.

The IS's politics — its program — therefore became a constantly shifting maze of short-term democratic and reform demands designed to reflect and connect with the current consciousness of the militant workers. In 1975 the IS adopted a "mass work" line which its leading body, the EC, explained this way: "We aim to limit and focus our demands as much as we can while still remaining effective." For a time in 1975 and 1976, the IS was able to ride with a number of rank and file groups like RAFT (Rank and File Team) in steel and Teamsters for a Decent Contract (TDC). But the minimal program line tended to undermine the very need for an avowedly socialist organization like the IS.

At the IS's 1976 Convention, there was an internal struggle over which layer to appeal to. A minority, leaders of the IS teamster work, proposed orienting toward "worker activists" who were already leaders of rank and file groups. They admitted that the majority of people in the rank and file caucuses were trade union reformists, but urged recruiting the leaders who were "often more committed to reformist ideas" than were the workers who followed them. The leaders could be convinced that the IS's revolutionary strategy would lead to bigger rank and file groups through even more limited and focused demands. "We have to demonstrate that our strategy is the only one that can consistently advance and broaden the rank and file movement *and* that our strategy is based on socialist principles (no commitment to profit, etc.)." Socialism is sold as a means to build the broad first stage of rank and file militancy. (Quotations from the internal document "Moving the IS Forward: Reply to the EC.")

One section of the IS majority gave a very significant reply. "While we *must* collaborate with these people, they cannot and will not form the raw material of the emerging revolutionary movement." Why not? They have "a basic lack of confidence in the ability of workers to assert themselves and control anything...To the extent that rank and file leaders have a base, it is almost inevitably a conservative pressure. These leaders tend to lead workers who they perceive are more conservative and passive than themselves." (Quotations from the document "A Contribution to the Political Discussion.") That is, the ISers agree with the rank and file leaders in blaming the workers for the conservatism of their leaders. This is a cynical tendency which we will come across again.

While the leadership's position prevailed, the alliances did not. Sure enough, many of the "worker activists" with reformist politics and aspirations took off for greener pastures, like PROD (Professional Drivers Council) in the Teamsters, where their common minimum-level program seemed to have

more substance: actual bureaucrats, staffers and even lawyers. Having rested its aspirations on its links to the base, the IS received a rude shock. And then Sadlowski came along.

The IS was somewhat more critical of Sadlowski's weak-kneed fight against McBride than was the SWP. This did not prevent an IS conference during the campaign from voting down a resolution to establish an independent presence. IS agreed to submerge itself entirely within Sadlowski's organization ("In each mill, it should be our perspective to fold our existing work into the fightback movement," said the National Steel Committee of the IS), and, like the SWP, the IS was frequently indistinguishable from Steelworkers Fight Back.

In fact, the IS actively sought to make itself indistinguishable, especially on the political level. "Nor was there any credible way to pose ourselves as an 'independent' force supporting Sadlowski because we lacked the forces to build the campaign independently. Therefore the only way to insist on our 'independence' would have been to do so programmatically, and we could only have done this by dividing ourselves off from the campaign in a sectarian manner." (*I.S. in the Sadlowski Campaign*, an "Evaluation" dated March 1977 by the National Steel Fraction Steering Committee, pages 4-5.)

The IS was almost as steadfast as the SWP in rejecting, under the heading of critical support, any political criticism of its bedfellows. The above Evaluation went on: "While we are critical of Sadlowski, our criticisms would *not* begin from the view that our main task was exposure — counterposing ourselves and our program to Sadlowski and his." Like the SWP, the IS believes that differentiating itself politically from the left reformists is "sectarian." Thus they continually undermine their own reason for existence while insisting on building their separate organizations. Given their political identities, they *are* being sectarian in maintaining separate groups from Sadlowski's.

The IS had never distinguished itself politically from its previous allies, whom it thought of as trade union reformists, and it would not do so with its new, more powerful, associates. For the same reason that the IS's previous allies had frequently moved to the right and attached themselves to willing staffers and out-bureaucrats, the IS did so now. The IS learned the same lesson, that of "a basic lack of confidence in the ability of the workers to control anything." Seeing little interest among the workers in shop floor blind alleys, the IS is in the process of moving towards the same strata of the labor aristocracy and bureaucracy that the SWP is already devoting itself to.

However, the IS transition from the weak layer of militant stewards and long-term oppositionists to the more stable and more powerful left bureaucracy is still somewhat ambivalent. While the SWP would like to build Sadlowski's Fight Back organization into a more massive one, the IS still conceives of it as a route to more genuine rank and file groups, and the IS is critical of Sadlowski for not contributing to this. The IS is more conscious of the need to incorporate the shop floor militants into the left bureaucracy's operation than is the SWP, which is satisfied with its "young local presidents."

The IS was quite disappointed not only with the results of the election but also with the lack of workers' involvement in Steelworkers Fight Back. But despite the internal criticism of Sadlowski, they lay the blame on ...the workers! "In balance, it was the low level of rank and file self-activity, more than even the bureaucratic conservatism generated by Sadlowski's reformism, that limited the dynamism of the campaign (though of course the two are not independent variables)."

"Though of course..." indeed! The IS, which could not politically distinguish itself from Sadlowski's "bureaucratic conservatism," which chose to "fold our existing work into" Sadlowski's organization, which never thought to warn the working class in the pages of its newspaper than Sadlowski was bureaucratic, conservative, or even just a "reformist," has the gall to say that the inactivity of the workers was more to blame than Sadlowski. By accepting Sadlowski's "bureaucratic conservatism" and not fighting against it, the IS contributed to it and to the workers' disillusionment in their own capacity to fight back.

If the IS believes that Sadlowski generated bureaucratic conservatism, it spent the entire campaign simply lying to the working class, reinforcing the cynical lessons the workers have absorbed as a result of the defeats inflicted by the labor lieutenants of capital, from left to right. Like the SWP, the IS's real solidarity in the working class is with a layer of the bureaucracy. That's whose interests, quite different materially from those of the mass of workers, the IS defended by its policy of silence on Sadlowski's faults. Whereas the SWP is developing a stable base in the labor aristocracy and bureaucracy and is therefore clearly a right centrist group verging on outright reformism, the IS's ambivalence (now verging more in the same direction as the SWP) marks it as more typically centrist — but no less misleading for the working class.

The Split in the IS

The shift in the IS's labor orientation (together with other factors which lie outside the scope of this article) generated a split in the IS at its 1977 convention. The new group is now called the International Socialist Organization (ISO): its opposition inside the IS was accelerated by its unwillingness to abandon the old rank and file strategy. In its document on the Sadlowski campaign, the minority opposition indicted the IS leadership as follows:

"(1) We are abandoning our orientation to the shop floor and to the militant minority and shifting our orientation to other lefties, out bureaucrats, or to an 'average steelworker' that only exists on paper. (2) We are abandoning our orientation to change from the bottom up, and beginning to claim that the union can be significantly changed from the top down. (3) We now claim that the immediate problem blocking the formation of a rank and file movement is the absence of effective leadership (ours), rather than a problem of steelworkers' consciousness, i.e. steelworkers are not convinced of the necessity of fighting."

As for the last point, the minority does the IS an injustice, as we have seen, for the IS leadership also blames the steelworkers for the lack of progress in the union. (Neither observes that the workers were quite justified in not flocking to Sadlowski's standard; why should hard-pressed workers take the risk of "fighting" when he offered little more than Abel and devoted his candidacy to deterring any movement from being created.)

But the other ISO criticisms of the IS are correct. The IS did shift from its rank and file approach to "other lefties" and bureaucrats; the "other lefties" refers to the several other groups which vied with the IS inside Steelworkers Fight Back. And the orientation to the "average steelworker" simply means that the IS, in moving beyond militant shop floor con-



Eugene V. Debs (above), Sadlowski's "model," rallying the workers for socialist revolution. Lloyd McBride and Ed Sadlowski (right) beg for crumbs.



sciousness, had begun to accept Sadlowski's attempt to win the ranks on a less advanced program than even that of the shop floor militants. After all, these militants are generally in flat opposition to the Experimental Negotiating Agreement, over which Sadlowski equivocated. By surrendering its own organization to Fight Back, the IS eroded even its own rank and file-ist, but still reformist, criticism. Such is the logic of stagism.

The ISO in its own right is hardly an improvement over the petty-bourgeois labor-aristocratic politics of the IS. The "top down" critique which it makes of the IS is correct and applies to its own position, the old rank-and-file-ism of the IS, as well. For there is no particular politics of the rank and file. The ranks' consciousness is often a mixture of conservative and rebellious ideas co-existing in contradictory fashion. Those members of the ranks who are organized by the self-proclaimed rank-and-file-ists are provided with an amorphous program and "anti-elitist" spokesmen, who interpret the ranks' will through their own unacknowledged class outlook and hide their own supposedly socialist politics. The rank-and-file-ists thereby vocalize (tail) the demands of a section of non-revolutionary, therefore pro-capitalist, workers. The ISO demonstrates, like the IS before it, that what this comes down to is placing the blame for the lack of heightened class struggle upon the workers rather than the bureaucrats. No wonder the ISO has discouraged its members from joining the industrial working class and has decided upon a greater orientation toward white collar and middle class arenas. The industrial

workers, after all, are the ones responsible for the conservatism of the IS.

The ISO also abjures running in union elections as a fruitless effort — after all, look what Sadlowski and Arnold Miller led to. Their objection is not that Sadlowski and Miller are agents of bourgeois politics inside the working class; for the ISO, the lesson to be drawn is to return to the parochialism of shop floor-limited militancy. Whereas the SWP tries to work with a bureaucratic layer that has a national or at least union-wide awareness and therefore argues, however timidly, for its reformist labor party as an alternative to the Democrats, the IS and ISO put forward only a hopelessly limited industrial struggle and say little or nothing about political solutions. Theirs is the more syndicalist form of reformism in its centrist clothes.

Sadlowski's Non-Supporters

Some of the left groups found Sadlowski's campaign too timid to swallow and withheld support. Their non-support, in several cases, meant no rejection of the stagist method but only the realization that Sadlowski's version of the reformist stage was insufficiently left.

One such grouping is the Revolutionary Socialist League and its small group of supporters in the USWA, the Revolutionary Steelworkers Caucus. The RSL-RSC has been a vocal opponent of Sadlowski and has correctly cited Sadlowski's hesitations over taking on the ENA and the lack of a fighting rank and file movement around him as important

considerations in withholding support. The RSL-RSC did find it appropriate, however, to attempt to write a program for Sadlowski even while declaring its opposition. A September 1976 leaflet of "Revolutionary Steelworker" offered Sadlowski the following advice:

"Sادلowski's program for the election should revolve around three basic points: 1) Tear up the ENA — so that steelworkers can begin to regain some of the lost ground from the last two contracts, 2) For the democratic right to vote on all contracts — this to ensure that the contract is the one that steelworkers understand and want, and 3) Build a national strike — all other program planks mean nothing unless we talk about how to get them, and the strike is the only way that the ENA will be defeated. This is a program that is concrete and attainable if steelworkers start now to build support for it."

While it is absolutely correct and necessary to pose demands upon bureaucrats as a method of exposing their hesitations and capitulations to the bosses, this is different from writing reformist election programs for reformist candidates. The counseling of Sadlowski is connected to the RSL's increasing substitution of narrow industrial militancy for a political, revolutionary intervention. The RSC's program for Sadlowski meshed precisely with the "concrete and attainable" demands of reformist shop floor militants who were turned off by Sadlowski because he wouldn't fight against the ENA and build for a strike. And it equally reflected this layer's cynicism towards the rank and file and its ability to comprehend politics.

According to the RSL-RSC's new ranks-and-file-ism, the main problem with Sadlowski is that he wasn't a good enough militant. This is false, and the workers must be told the truth: no mere militant program can solve their problems; their direction must be that of a political solution leading to state power. If this direction is not taken, all the democratic gains and reforms promised by the reformists (but not delivered) will be lost — and more.

The RSL's militant-sounding industrial work is but a slightly more left version of the old IS and present ISO style. Like the IS, the RSL calls for a revolutionary party but now weds it to a prior stage of rank and file democracy and trade union reforms. Like the ISO, which rejects elections and argues instead for "organizing," the RSL's slogan in the steel election was not merely opposition to Sadlowski and McBride but boycott: "Don't Vote — Organize." They counterposed "organizing" to elections. In contrast, revolutionaries had the obligation to use the election and workers' attention to it to demonstrate and organize for a revolutionary solution. We openly indicate that it is a shame we couldn't field an alternative revolutionary candidate. Boycotting elections only tells the workers that it is useless to fight over the broader political and industrial issues. (The RSL has committed similar errors for similar reasons over elections for government offices; see, for example, the Letter to Jamaica in this issue.)

The RSL increasingly employs a stagist model for the struggles of workers — today trade union militancy, and rank and file movements, tomorrow revolutionary program and leadership. This approach can only help build a base now for a future left bureaucracy. After all, if the "realistic" solutions are trade union militancy rather than revolution, then what is a more appropriate leadership than one based on a non-revolutionary trade union militant program, i.e. a left-reformist leadership? The RSL-RSC argued that "unless

Sادلowski starts to organize now for the contract negotiations, he proves to be just another bureaucratic politician." Sadlowski proved to be just that. But the rise in the class struggle will push aspiring misleaders to the fore with programs more militant than Sadlowski's, along the lines of the RSL's advice — and even further to the left, because the RSL's program of industrial reformism is far too mild to exhaust the rhetorical capacity of left bureaucrats when under pressure.

Unlike the IS, which recognized that its forces were far too weak to build an alternative to Sadlowski based upon a roughly similar political line, the even weaker RSL was unwilling to bury itself inside his apparatus because it conceives of *itself* as the further-left champion in the future. The RSL's method paves the way for the coming of the "good" reformist; its implicit policy of conditioned non-support to Sadlowski will lead the organization either to capitulate to a better hero when he arrives or to substitute for him as his identical political twin. The RSL has moved into an adaptation to the consciousness of the very layer that the IS is deserting in its rightward drift, and it too will be caught up in the same tides. Four years ago the RSL broke from the IS tradition but it is now only in an earlier stage in the process of degeneration. This position makes it more left rhetorically, but also more vacillating and more overtly cynical.

Spartacists Misuse Critical Support

The Spartacist League (SL) is another group that refused to support either candidate in the election. In doing this, the SL maintained that virtually no difference existed between McBride and Sadlowski, an assessment that was simply incorrect in light of the differing alignment of forces behind the two candidates. The real meaning of this assertion is brought out in the Spartacists' criterion for using the tactic of critical support, as described, for example, in *Workers Vanguard*, January 28, 1977:

"Leninists are in principle prepared to consider critical support to a candidate running in an election within the labor movement (e.g. for union office) only if on issues fundamental to the campaign he breaks programmatically from the class collaboration shared by all wings of the bureaucracy. Should such a candidate later refuse to carry out the class-struggle course he promised, the communist pole which extended him critical support is in a position to demand the implementation of the programmatic points he has betrayed and thus win over his base of militant workers.

"In the absence of a programmatic break from class collaborationism, however, 'critical support' only serves as an excuse to tail popular bureaucrats...."

"The SL will, and has, extended critical support in union elections to elements which campaign on a program which breaks from reformism on key issues, but which may be incomplete, confused or even incorrect on other issues."

The SL is obviously correct in pointing out that Sadlowski has not taken a revolutionary position on any important question. But in reality only the revolutionary leadership represents a break from class collaborationism, only the revolutionary program is "fundamentally different" from that of Abel and the other reformists. Any non-revolutionary

leadership, no matter how militant, fundamentally stands for class collaborationism. The SL position implies, however, that there exist reformists whose programs are merely "incomplete" or confused in certain ways; the appropriate form of "critical support" that follows would be to make their programs "complete." As the class struggle heats up and forces certain bureaucratic strata to the left, the result of the SL's policy will be to make it the left cover for that layer of the bureaucracy whose program will satisfy the SL's non-Marxist criterion. Like the RSL, the SL is building the base for this future left bureaucracy.

Two examples of the Spartacists' criterion will prove the point; both are taken from a series of newspaper articles by Chris Knox on Trotskyist work in the trade unions, considered by the SL to be authoritative.

"The period of the 1933-1934 upsurge required exactly the kind of trade-union tactics Cannon advocated: a broad but principled united-front bloc around the key burning issues. In 1934, organization of the unorganized was such an issue. It clearly separated those willing to follow revolutionary leadership from the vast bulk of the trade-union bureaucracy of the time ..."

It was of course correct for the Trotskyists to join in the mass unionization drive of the mid-1930's. But it is a vast and dangerous distortion to claim that only revolutionaries (and their followers) were in favor of organizing the unorganized, and to imply that such an issue was a break with class collaboration. On the contrary, the rising rebellion of industrial workers combined with the troubles of the miners' union led John L. Lewis, head of the UMWA, to ride the workers' upsurge with a new program of collaboration with the ruling class. Lewis maintained his ties both with bourgeois politicians and with leading capitalists; he sought to help regulate capitalism by using industrial unionism to eliminate "cutthroat competition," the enemy of the finance capitalists. Critical support to Lewis in the struggle of the workers against the recalcitrant AFL bureaucrats was a necessary tactic; it did not imply that Lewis was following revolutionary leadership or that he was "breaking from reformism on key issues."

The second example refers to the Rank and File Caucus in the auto workers' union in 1944. This Caucus, with a leadership of secondary bureaucrats, arose under the pressure of the ranks' anger at the passivity enforced by the union leadership during World War II.

"The SWP's work around the UAW RFC was also a high point in Trotskyist trade-union work. Though representing only a partial break from trade-union reformism by secondary bureaucrats, the RFC was qualitatively to the left of the bureaucracy as a whole. Its program represented a break with the key points upon which the imperialist bourgeoisie relied in its dependence on the trade unions to keep the workers tied to the imperialist aims of the state. The SWP was correct to enter and build this caucus, since pursuance of its program was bound to enhance revolutionary leadership." (Workers Vanguard, September 14, 1973.)

Again, it was correct to work in the Rank and File Caucus because of the mass upsurge which it reflected, but not for the reason the SL gives. Its program in Knox's version was "based on four points: end the no-strike pledge, labor leaders off the government War Labor Board, for an independent labor party and smash the 'Little Steel' formula (i.e., break the freeze on wage raises)." This was a fine reformist program

but not one whose pursuance "was bound to enhance revolutionary leadership." Such a formulation is merely a left version of the SWP's notion that consistent democracy, consistent black nationalism, etc., leads objectively and inexorably to socialism.

Knox goes on to point out that the SWP's support of the Rank and File Caucus was "not ingratiating or uncritical" and that the SWP urged the Caucus to call for a labor party "with a 'fundamental program against the financial parasites and monopolists.'" Knox praises the SWP because it "had not hesitated to raise programmatic demands on the RFC as it was forming, in order to make its break with the bureaucracy complete." But programmatic *counterposition* to the RFC's left reformism was necessary for revolutionaries. Raising programmatic demands is a tactic for doing this, not for making "complete" its program or even its break with the entrenched bureaucracy. Revolutionaries solidarize with the ranks' aspirations, not with the "incomplete" (read left reformist) program of their leaders. In giving critical support to the RFC's program rather than to the struggle that gave rise to it the SL, like the current SWP, IS *et al.*, is providing a socialist cover to left bureaucrats.

In the case of the UMW today, the SL challenges the left tendencies who supported Arnold Miller in 1972 (the SL, using its criteria, did not) to defend their position, on the grounds that Miller in office has proved to be rotten and that the militant miners now recognize this. Indeed, the groups who gave Miller political support with some criticisms refrain from answering. Their application of the *same method* as that of the Spartacist League — the degree of political agreement — proved wrong. But the real question is what was done by the left to help expose the Miller leadership in such a way that the working class could draw revolutionary lessons? The SL examined Miller's program rather than the upsurge of the miners which had thrust Miller forward, and abstained. What was necessary was an intervention through the critical support tactic to align with the fighting workers without failing to point to Miller's inevitable betrayal; that was the method advocated by the Revolutionary Tendency in the IS, the political forerunner of the League for the Revolutionary Party.

The Spartacist League does not intervene in such a way as to split the militant workers in motion from their reformist leaders. It makes no distinction between the two. Its equation of Sadlowski and McBride is similar; there was a difference between the two bureaucrats in that Sadlowski's campaign was a response to the steel workers' feelings of hostility to Abel's policies. Since there was no active movement, revolutionaries did not have to intervene with the critical support tactic to sever the base from the leadership. But the SL's reason for not intervening with the critical support tactic was something different: not the direction and activity of the mass of militant workers, but the policies of the reformist leaders on top. Sadlowski simply wasn't as good as John L. Lewis or the secondary bureaucrats of 1944.

The Spartacist League apparently conceives the reformists and revolutionaries as part of the same spectrum. Sadlowski is barely to the left of Abel and McBride; then there are the John L. Lewises further to the left needing programmatic completions and corrections. And over on the far left stands the SL. But the "qualitative break" in the spectrum stands not between reformists and revolutionaries, but between bad and good reformists, the "good" being those whose program "breaks from reformism on key issues." This notion that the petty-bourgeois agents of capital within the workers movement

can have a near-revolutionary program is part and parcel of the Spartacist belief (dealt with in the previous issue of *Socialist Voice*) that the achievement of socialism is a function of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia and its correct program. It bespeaks the same cynicism towards the workers, in a further left disguise that is openly paraded by other petty-bourgeois leftists in the working class.

The Future of the Centrists

It may be difficult to accept our opinion that the divided and squabbling centrist groupings of today will provide the base for the left bureaucrats of the future and will even occupy some of the bureaucratic niches themselves. We therefore point out that many labor officials of the present and past, including not-so-left ones, developed out of the organizations of the radical left, and that many of the conceptions of these centrists of the past which led them into their later bureaucratic careers are the same ones that motivate the centrists of today. The "left" has been the graduate school of some of the worst labor fakers in the business. Those who do not understand their own history are doomed to repeat it.

In addition to the many early leaders of the AFL who were originally ardent socialists, one of the best known examples is that of the numerous CIO organizers in the 1930's who were either former Marxists or currently members of left parties, especially the CP. Some of these were working class people who came to Marxist consciousness; other were revolutionaries who were "colonized" into the factories and trade unions by the organizations they belonged to. Because of their Marxist convictions, such individuals provided the leftward momentum and the willingness to organize the masses that the business unionists and bureaucratic timeservers could not muster. However, the historic capitulations of the left organizations in the United States meant that the programs of many of the most dedicated left cadres led to one or another form of tailing the reformists.

In the thirties, the union bureaucrat most admired on the left was the Mine Workers' John L. Lewis, who for his part was willing to hire large numbers of CPers and other radicals as organizers. Lewis refused to worry about the danger of their revolutionary influence on the workers; he is supposed to have quipped, "Who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?" The radicals viewed Lewis and other leftist bureaucrats as allies with whom they could work for the current stage of struggle as a prelude to the future revolutionary stage (not an unfamiliar conception today). But their method of alliance was programmatic agreement, not programmatic counterposition based on common struggles. Consequently, they fooled the workers as well as themselves.

Today both the right and left wings of the labor bureaucracy are filled with ex-radicals, including many who still consider themselves to be socialist. Former CPers are legion in the union bureaucracy, but of more significance for the pseudo-Trotskyist groups of today is the lesser-known layer of ex-Trotskyists which is even expanding its influence within the bureaucracy. A whole cluster of right-wing leaders and advisers grouped around Albert Shanker and George Meany, as well as "left-wingers" like many of the labor officials attached to Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, can trace their political ancestry directly to the centrist tendency of the 1940's led by Max Shachtman. This grouping, originally the Workers Party (WP) and later the Independent Socialist League, broke from the Fourth International in 1940 and gradually learned to

water down its program to mesh with the democratic and trade unionist struggles of the moment. They thereby found themselves in the camp of a *really* militant reformist, Walter Reuther. (We have published a fuller analysis of the Shachtmanites in the article "The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party" in *Socialist Voice* No. 1.)

The centrist groupings are the left wing of the reformist current of Sadlowski, Miller-Patrick, Winpisinger, Gotbaum *et al* which is now developing in response to the rising unrest in the ranks. Their different degrees of militancy, their different conditions for support or non-support to the bureaucrats, are merely the different price tags and dates which they place upon their notices of future betrayals. Some will ask for more and wait for the mass struggle to push the official leaders a few more steps to the left. Others will hurry to get their capitulations in on time to win a spot on the ground floor.

Just as the bureaucracy is a social layer representing the material interests of the labor aristocracy, the centrists are becoming the political spokesmen for a series of layers and atomized groupings, termed by Lenin the "new middle classes," which blend into the bourgeoisie at one end of the social scale and interpenetrate the proletariat at the other. With the erosion of capitalist prosperity the material support for the lower rungs of the new middle classes is disintegrating. Semi-professionals are plunged into the proletariat or below; even the labor aristocracy suffers losses or the constant threat of losses. The basis for stable reformist (and Stalinist) politics thereby erodes as well, and by the same token the centrists' "time" is approaching. The centrists will still promise a return to a reformist "stage," on which the fantasy-farce of renewed bourgeois democracy will be played. The multitudinous differences among the centrist groups, at times so mystifying and discouraging, reflect their allegiance to different sectors and interests within the new middle classes and especially the infiltrations of these layers into the proletariat.

The rising class struggle will have other effects besides bringing out the betrayals of the centrist leaderships. Just as there is a continuing contradiction between the base and the leadership in the unions, even when they espouse the same nominal politics, so there is a contradiction between base and leadership within the centrist organizations. The ranks join these groups believing them to be Marxist and revolutionary, but the groups are products of the historic defeats of the working class and are now divorced from a fighting, politically conscious proletariat.

The ranks, however, have ties beyond those of the centrist leaderships, with the ranks of the working class, and they both adapt to and reflect this base. In the present, the right-wing drift of the unions means that the base of the various left groups will frequently appear to be to the right of their leaders (just as this often *appears* to be the case in the unions). Many are. But far more, as the period changes and the power of working class struggles now incubating ceases to be a wish and an abstraction and moves toward a mass reality they will come over to the side of the revolution. That is, they will recognize the inadequacy of reformist programs, however militant and "rank-and-file-ist," and will seek out the actual revolutionary program. With the material basis for the workers' acceptance of the bureaucrats' programs disintegrating, the same objective conditions that point to a changing mass working class consciousness will have an impact on the ranks of the far left groups. Despite the disheartening betrayals of the centrists, the political lines are all being tested and the revolutionary aspirations for a proletarian solution will be able to come to fruition. ■

RMC into SWP:

A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism

The centrality of the Russian question, the class nature of the Soviet Union and the other state capitalist states, has always been stressed in the pages of *Socialist Voice*. A correct understanding of state capitalism as an aspect and a prop of state monopoly capitalism in this epoch of bourgeois decay is crucial. From our first issue, we have pointed out that theoretical errors committed over the questions of the nature of a workers' state, the role of the proletariat in the socialist revolution, and the workings of modern capitalism in the epoch of imperialist decay—all of which are bound up with the "Russian question"—have been intimately connected with the abandonment of Marxist practice by almost the entire left. In particular, they have been instrumental in the degeneration of the Fourth International.

It is therefore welcome to us when any political tendency takes the trouble to publish its views on the Russian question in systematic form (few enough have actually done so!), and we have undertaken to report on and review these analyses when they do occur. For the differences among left tendencies, which may at one glance appear to be episodic and tactical, can in this way be probed to their roots.

A document on the Russian question was published over the summer by the Revolutionary Marxist Committee (RMC), a Detroit-based group which split from our own tendency, then the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), in February 1975 and has just joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). We take up here some of the central questions raised in this document. "State Capitalism and the Proletarian Dictatorship" by Eric Olsen and Bruce Landau, published as *Revolutionary Marxist Papers* 12. It is illuminating for two reasons: 1) it seizes and expands upon the weaknesses of the RSL's original analysis of state capitalism, weaknesses which the RSL itself has developed but with greater shallowness and less explicitness, and 2) it illustrates the striking similarities between Pabloism and Shachtmanism, the two opposite but symmetric distortions of Trotskyism that were among the major currents which grew out of the decay of the Fourth International. In fact, the RMC's practical agreement with the Pabloite SWP (over the Russian and American questions in particular), despite theoretical differences, is what makes their fusion possible.

The RMC-SWP fusion is a successful attempt to accomplish a merger, a synthesis, that Shachtman and Pablo contemplated in the late forties. On the surface, the RMC's theory of Russian state capitalism is enormously different from the SWP's policy of defense of the Soviet Union. But the RMC theory remains just that, a theory. Its practical consequence is only to offer the SWP and its fellow Pabloites a better rationale for the practice they all agree on. That is, the RMC's contribution to the SWP is to attempt to give it a richer cover than the threadbare Pabloite mantle of "deformed and

degenerated workers' states" which it now bears. But the new cloak is made of just as shoddy material beneath the surface sheen and it will not stand the wear.

The Date of the Russian Counterrevolution

Because of its origins inside the RSL, the RMC inherited some of the achievements which the old RSL had made in coming to grips with the degeneration of the Russian revolution. One of these is the "date question," the question of when the final stage in the Stalinist counterrevolution took place, when the Soviet Union could no longer be considered a workers' state. Other state capitalist theorists, notably Tony Cliff and the British SWP (formerly International Socialists and at one time Shachtman's allies), had placed the date of the counterrevolution at 1928 or earlier. Their assumption was that the working class had lost state power at the time when the bureaucracy decided to accumulate capital on a vast scale and therefore to slash the proletariat's living and working conditions and end the vestiges of workers' control in the factories.

Cliff's "bureaucratic state capitalism" theory was a more sophisticated version of Shachtman's "bureaucratic collectivism"; both represented a surrender of the gains of the Bolshevik revolution, as we have explained in previous issues, and reflected a cynical rejection of the revolutionary potential of the working class. The October Revolution of 1917 was the most decisive act of the proletariat in this epoch, in which the workers put together a new state and new institutions which heralded the dawn of a new era for humanity. Tragically, the isolation of the Russian revolution through the defeats of the world proletariat laid the basis for its degeneration. As Trotsky pointed out, the premature surrender of the need for revolutionaries to defend the encircled workers' state meant not only giving up on the gains of October but the gains of workers in other nations as well. The bureaucratization of the unions and parties of the working class throughout the world, both reflecting and abetting the degeneration of the USSR, led many leftists to conclude that it was the incapacity of the workers themselves which was responsible. The ultra-left version of this cynicism was to deny that trade unions were even a distorted instrument of the working class. The symmetrically opposite notion was that benevolent bureaucrats and intellectuals were necessary to save the overwhelmed workers from the evil bureaucrats and intellectuals (Stalinists and social-democrats) who led them. The adaptations of both Shachtmanites and Pabloites to the labor bureaucracy were a direct outgrowth of the all-pervasive cynicism that grew out of the material factors stemming from the USSR's degeneration.

The RSL broke with this precedent, although its reasons for doing so were incomplete. It dated the counterrevolution with

the destruction of the Russian Communist Party during the great purges of 1936 to 1938; this represented the severing of the last ties to the October Revolution. The RSL's understanding was based upon the perception of Marx and Lenin that the question of the workers' state is decisively a question of the advanced proletariat's control, its dictatorship, over a society by means of state power. The so-called "economic" factors, nationalization of industry, etc., were necessary but not sufficient. As well, this relationship could not be understood on the basis of a snapshot at any given moment but only in the context of a historical process.

That is, Russia became a workers' state when the proletariat seized state power and destroyed the bourgeois state in 1917, not simply when industry was nationalized. Similarly, capitalism could be restored in the Soviet Union only when political power, which had been gradually withdrawn from the workers and taken into its own hands by the Stalinist bureaucracy since the early twenties, was finally wrested from the proletariat not, as with Cliff, when the bureaucracy set about transforming the Russian economy. The wiping out of

strongly to a position that capitalism had been restored by 1933. After considerable effort he was convinced of its incorrectness, but in reality, as we will show, the change was only superficial.)

Recognition of the fact that capitalism was restored in the late thirties is the only view of the degeneration consistent with the Trotskyist world outlook, the theory of permanent revolution. This theory states that the historical tasks of the bourgeoisie, including the achievement of national and democratic rights and the massive accumulation of capital necessary to lay the basis for socialism, can no longer be achieved under bourgeois rule; in the epoch of imperialist decay, the incompleting bourgeois tasks will be completed only in the course of the socialist and ultimately, the international proletarian revolution. The Russian revolution had to accomplish the most fundamental tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution; in contrast, in the West it is a question of carrying through certain important democratic rights which were left unfinished by the nineteenth century democratic revolutions or have been undermined in the epoch



Tremendous industrial growth in 1930's was a product of Soviet workers' revolution. Accumulation necessary for socialism was driven by Stalin towards bourgeois restoration.

the remaining elements of the Party and bureaucracy which had ties to October meant the elimination of the last links to the revolutionary leadership of 1917. The Pabloite conception that Russia is still a workers' state because property remains nationalized is equally wrong; nationalized property, in the absence (or with the breaking) of historical and political ties to the worker's revolution, becomes a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie stolen from the arsenal of the proletariat.

(Bruce Landau, who as a leader of the RMC likes to take credit for many of the RSL's accomplishments, originally held

of imperialist decay.

In Russia, the bourgeois-democratic rights were won during and shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, but the intensive capital accumulation took place only in the thirties. Despite the monstrous victimization of workers and peasants wreaked by the Stalinists, the accumulation was an achievement of the Soviet workers and their state. Only the revolutionary proletariat could have centralized and consolidated Russian society to the degree necessary to harness the resources needed for massive growth. To place the date of the Stalinist coun-

terrevolution in the early thirties or before is to grant the Stalinists, as a bourgeois class, the capability as well as the full credit for the gigantic efforts of the Soviet working class. The theory of permanent revolution does not deny the possibility of bourgeois development in this and that advanced imperialist country; indeed, such unevenness is characteristic of the imperialist epoch. However, the unmatched achievements of workers' Russia were of a different order.

Conversely, to deny that the bourgeois counterrevolution took place before World War II and thereby accept the notion that Eastern Europe, China and the other post-war Stalinist countries are workers' states, is to do violence to reality and to commit a double violation against the lessons of permanent revolution as well. The Pabloites believe that new workers' states could be created by the petty-bourgeois bureaucracy which Stalinism represents, on the one hand — and that the modern Stalinist states, whose technological dependence on the West is plain for all to see, are progressive in comparison to capitalism, on the other. All such ideas make a mockery of the central Marxist teaching that the proletariat is the only progressive class in this epoch.

The RMC asserts that the date of the Stalinist counterrevolution was 1939, but in the introduction to their document they specifically rule out of consideration the theory of permanent revolution as one of the "basic theoretical and historical premises" for examining the Russian question. Elsewhere, however, co-author Landau's summational statement "Revolution and Counter-revolution in Russia" (*Revolutionary Marxist Papers* 14, "Fusion Conference of the Revolutionary Marxist Committee"), corrects this omission: "Why bring it up here, in a discussion of the Russian revolution's decline and fall? Precisely because the theory of permanent revolution contains the key to that decline and fall." A fine theory which can be ignored in one document and cited as "the key" in the next. The reason is that the RMC has banalized permanent revolution from the start, turning it into an apology for a purely democratic program. The contradiction comes to a head when Landau and Olsen address themselves to the period of struggle between Stalin and Bukharin for the leadership of the Communist Party.

Bukharin versus Stalin

The program of Trotsky and the Left Opposition during the Stalin-Bukharin dispute was opposed to both sides. Against Bukharin, the Trotskyists pointed out that his policy of conciliating the wealthier peasants (the kulaks) and petty-bourgeois traders and entrepreneurs (the so-called NEPmen, named after the New Economic Policy of 1921 which had permitted elements of private capitalism to flourish in Russia in order to restore a war-devastated economy) would lead to a strengthening of bourgeois forces within the workers' state, and ultimately to the abandonment of the monopoly of foreign trade and the opening of the country to imperialist penetration. The Left Opposition advocated an industrialization program to strengthen the material conditions of the masses, increase the social weight of the proletariat in Soviet society, and make possible steps toward equalizing living conditions. Bukharin's industrialization "at a snail's pace" prevented the proletariat from strengthening its position in the workers' state.

Stalin had supported Bukharin's program until 1928 in order to defeat the Left Opposition, the vanguard of the working class. This done, he was able to break with his allies without fear of an immediate proletarian intervention when it

became clear that Bukharin's policies threatened the nationalist outlook of the bureaucracy and its program of "socialism in one country." As the Trotskyists had predicted, Bukharinism enabled the kulaks to withhold grain from the cities for higher prices and to threaten not only the workers but the bureaucracy's economic power as well.

Stalin turned to a brutal forced collectivization of agriculture that destroyed the kulaks and the entire independent peasantry. Recognizing the danger that Russia's economic backwardness had created, he also transformed the first Five Year Plan into a bureaucratic, repressive model for rapid industrialization of the country. Unlike the program of the Left Opposition, Stalin's industrialization was an attempt to make permanent the bureaucracy's domination of the proletariat. "Socialism in one country" was an unrealizable goal that led to reactionary results by making a virtue of Russia's isolation and downplaying (later sabotaging) the world revolution.

What was the Trotskyists' attitude towards Stalin's upheaval? Some leaders of the Left Opposition interpreted the new industrialization policy as an adoption, however distorted, of the Trotskyists' own program; these made their peace with Stalin and agreed to serve in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy (only to perish in the purges to come). Trotsky himself took a different course. He denounced Stalin's forced industrialization and collectivization, as he was later to denounce the great purges, because their barbarism, irrationality and disorganization led to the weakening of the very foundations of the Soviet workers' state. The bureaucracy, he believed, in striving at all costs to maintain its own rule on top of society, was undermining the foundations of the workers' state not least because it fanned the flames of discontent among the masses and widened the gap between the oppressed workers and the ruling caste.

Thus both Bukharin's and Stalin's policies led to the danger of a restoration of capitalism. The danger with Bukharin was more immediate, for the petty entrepreneurs and kulaks were in a position to become the direct embodiment of a revived bourgeoisie. And not simply a Russian bourgeoisie, but a restored capitalism beholden to imperialism. Trotsky pointed out that without industry to produce machinery for the peasants, Russia's necessary entry into the world market would link the kulaks to imperialism rather than enable the Russian workers' state to benefit from a controlled transmission of technology and trade. Any minimalist industrialization policy, any capitulation to Bukharinism, could lead only to the victory of world imperialism over the workers' state.

With Stalin's policy, the potential of counterrevolution lay in the future. Contrary to Trotsky's view, the danger was not that Stalin, if he succeeded in keeping the proletariat suppressed, would dissolve nationalized property. Stalinism, at least at that time, meant the strengthening of bourgeois social relations within the bounds of the nationalized property created by the workers' state. As we have explained previously (in "Capitalism in the Soviet Union," *Socialist Voice* No.2), Stalin as well as Bukharin stood for the enforcement of the law of value against the working class. The exigencies of the law of value — widening inequality within the working class and between classes, constant pressure against the living and working conditions of the masses — which under traditional capitalism are carried out through market mechanisms at least in part, under Stalinism were bureaucratically implemented and directed.

Nevertheless, the Trotskyists did not take an attitude of

indifference between the courses of Stalin and Bukharin. Bukharin — more accurately the forces arrayed behind him — represented the present danger of bourgeois restoration; Stalin the potential danger. Stalin's industrialization, bureaucratic and destructive though it was, still kept open the possibility of a proletarian revival. The growth of the proletariat itself together with the expanded means of production could have been the basis for a regeneration of proletarian rule — had, for example, a successful workers' revolution in Germany swept away the fog of defeatism and cynicism within which the bureaucracy flourished. For these reasons, the Left Opposition supported Stalin's attack in 1928 against Bukharin on the economic front, at the same time exposing Stalin's shift as a phony left turn and fighting against his stepped-up bureaucratization of Party life, and, later against the vicious assault he carried out against the peasant and proletarian masses.

The Need for Capital Accumulation

The Trotskyist choice of Stalin over Bukharin never appears in the RMC's account, despite its lengthy narrative and criticism of Trotsky's views on the Stalin-Bukharin battle. Trotsky thought that Stalin was capitulating to Bukharin, and this proved to be erroneous. But Landau-Olsen, admittedly taking the same line as Shachtman, conspicuously forget to mention Trotsky's correct judgment that Bukharin represented the immediate danger. Shachtman subsequently made his pro-Bukharin view explicit; for the RMC, a little decoding is required.

The key question is that of capital accumulation. Under Russia's conditions of backwardness and international isolation, the Soviet workers' state (even more than would be necessary in the advanced industrial countries) was compelled to undertake the bourgeois task of capital accumulation in order to survive. The material conditions allowed no other choice for the working class; it is impossible to avoid this conclusion and still adhere to the theory of permanent revolution. But for Landau-Olsen, capital accumulation appears as not merely a bourgeois task but one that inevitably necessitates a bourgeois regime to carry it out.

Thus capital accumulation is referred to as "the uncontested domination of capitalism ... over the process of production" (p.53). In contrast, a leading Left Oppositionist, Preobrazhensky, called for the "primitive socialist accumulation" (of capital) as a primary task of the workers' state. When Landau-Olsen cite the Trotskyists' program for industry, they name it "industrialization" or "an increase in the economic level of the society," avoiding the frightening term "capital accumulation." Landau in his summary article states: "This is why we call the rise of the bureaucracy the 'primitive re-accumulation of capital' in the Soviet Union. The term signifies that the old division of labor, the whole class structure characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, was being completely re-established ..." (p.9).

For the Left Opposition, however, the term did not signify that at all, but rather the necessary obligation of the backward workers' state that we have referred to. Capital accumulation, far from being an automatic indication of "the rise of the bureaucracy," was the only way — pending and in conjunction with the international revolution — to defend the USSR against the imperialist domination. As well, it was the only way to overcome scarcity and ease the pressures toward privilege and inequality that gave the rising bureaucracy its

strength. The RMC position amounts to arguing against "socialism in one country" by proposing to wait for the international revolution to come to the rescue. But the answer to "socialism in one country" is not to abandon the workers' state to imperialist pressure. Stalinist industrialization, especially the policy of building bureaucratic privileges and a labor aristocracy, could be fought only through a steadfast program of capital accumulation in the interests of the working class.

Both the inevitability of degeneration and a horror towards the notion of capital accumulation under a workers' state are expressed by the British Cliff tendency. Cliff wrote, "The industrialization and a technical revolution in agriculture ('collectivization') in a backward country under conditions of siege transforms the bureaucracy from a layer which is under the direct and indirect pressure and control of the proletariat, into a ruling class..." (*Russia: a Marxist Analysis*, p. 107). As if any industrialization program in Soviet Russia would have had Stalin's results, or even that the counterrevolution was the inevitable result of Stalinist industrialization!

Cliff, of course, draws the logical conclusion of his method and dates the final counterrevolution at 1928. The RMC formally stands on a 1939 date, but its content argues against this at every turn. The Cliff theory bespeaks the cynical view of the revolutionary capacities of the proletariat; Landau, his formal correctness on the date notwithstanding, is travelling the same road. The RMC, denying that the conquests of October were the basis for the huge advances of the thirties, insisting that capital accumulation meant an inexorable course towards state capitalism based upon the working class's incapacity to regenerate its rule, finds it necessary to prove that Russia's industrialization necessarily had only a bourgeois content. They therefore attempt to show that Russia's growth wasn't very remarkable after all and was well within the compass of bourgeois capability.

In a section of the pamphlet devoted to the refutation of Trotsky's theory that Russia was a degenerated workers' state, the RMC takes on Trotsky's argument that in the RMC's words, "the development of the productive forces in Russia proved that it couldn't be capitalism" (p.90). The need to refute this is itself indicative; after all, the RMC in theory holds that the Soviet Union was still a workers' state in the period 1928 to 1937, which is the period under discussion!

But the RMC's insistence on equating industrialization with bourgeois power makes them pin their whole case on refuting Trotsky on this point. And the whole case for their refutation rests upon a desperate misreading of statistical figures. Trotsky is cited (from *The Revolution Betrayed*, p.7) as stating that Russian industrial production increased approximately 250 percent (in 1928-1937), while the leading capitalist countries either declined or grew at a far lower rate. The RMC assumes that Trotsky's figures were obtained from official Soviet sources and calls them false; it then brings out its figures. (After all, since Trotsky's time, "the study of comparative economic growth has progressed considerably.") These figures according to the RMC, show that the real growth rate of Gross National Product in the Soviet Union from 1913 to 1928 was less than Japan's and Norway's; and that from 1938 to 1953, the USSR did worse than Canada and the United States.

The RMC's dates and countries here are dealt out of a stacked deck. The "Soviet Union" in 1913? The Soviet workers' state is hardly responsible for any inadequate growth rates of the Czarist empire, and even the Czar's growth rates are hardly to be tested by their performance under the devastating conditions of a world war. The period 1913 to 1928 included

World War I, the Civil War, foreign invasions, famine to the point of cannibalism and decimation of the working class in the time of tortuous recovery after eight years of war; that the Soviet economy managed to surpass Russia's 1913 levels was in itself remarkable. As for 1938-1953, this period included World War II and the post-war recovery during which industry in invaded and partially occupied Russia was severely damaged but that of the U.S. and Canada, the countries the RMC chooses for comparison, was not. Trotsky may not have had the RMC's modern bourgeois economic science at his fingertips, but he did have a certain command of Marxism and respect for the intelligence of his readers.

Having smashed any illusions about Russian growth rates during the two World Wars, the RMC then returns to the 1928-1937 period for which they had criticized Trotsky's figures. They cite one economic authority (Angus Maddison, in his book *Economic Growth in Japan and the USSR*) whose maximum estimate for the period works out to a 175 percent increase in Soviet GNP. The RMC, which does not calculate the total figure, nevertheless exclaims, "Certainly it is far removed from Trotsky's figures of 250 percent!" However, Trotsky was referring to industrial production, not GNP, and Maddison's calculations elsewhere in the same book indicate that Russian GNP (which includes the agricultural sector that Stalin nearly destroyed) grew at a much slower rate than manufacturing output alone.

The RMC's comment on the 1928 to 1937 period gives their game away. "... we discover that not only was Soviet growth during this, the period of its most rapid growth, not qualitatively different from that of many other (sic) capitalist countries, it was certainly not the most rapid in the history of capitalism (sic)." Two slips in one sentence imply that Russia in the 1930's was just another capitalist country! A fitting conclusion to a totally false argument.

Trotsky's figures may well have been based on the notoriously exaggerated Stalinist figures, but his interpretation was grounded in Marxism. Russian industrial growth rates, while it was still a workers' state, were well beyond the possibilities of any capitalist country. And, as we pointed out in our polemic against the Spartacist League in *Socialist Voice* No. 4, such rates of growth were not duplicated subsequently, in the years when capitalism had been resurrected. The RMC's interpretation, designed to prove that a workers' state cannot achieve outstanding industrial growth, can only be understood as an attempt to defend Bukharin's minimal growth policy. Whatever its purpose, it leaves unanswered an overwhelming question: how did Russia once "the most backward country in Europe" according to Landau, become the world's second military and industrial power after World War II, if its expansion as a workers' state in the 1930's was so ordinary? The RMC, whether it considers Russia of that period to be a workers' state or not in form, denies that it is in content. It thereby denies the gains of the proletarian class and the defense of the workers' state from imperialist domination.

The Importance of Proletarian Democracy

The RMC's implicit capitulation to Bukharinism emerges also from its treatment of workers' democracy. For the RMC, the fight for democracy is predominant over the perspective of industrialization linked to world revolution. It is the central consideration in the struggle for socialism within the workers' state. They emphasize, "Proletarian democracy is nothing other than the vehicle for the organization of socialist relations

of production. In its absence, those socialist relations of production cannot emerge." (p. 29).

The second of these two sentences is a truism, for socialist relations of production will not be achieved until the workers' state has withered away and the laws of capitalism, especially the law of value, have finally been overcome by the conscious proletariat. The socialist society itself will not be a proletarian democracy, since the state in all its forms will no longer be a necessity and the working class will be on the verge of self-negation. But the conditions of proletarian democracy must have been achieved by the time the workers' state begins to disappear, the entire proletariat is brought into the administration of affairs, and socialist relations emerge in their near-developed form.

The first sentence, however, which is meant to be proved by the final one, is not true at all; necessary though it is, proletarian democracy cannot be the vehicle for the organization of socialist production relations. The most democratically constructed workers' state (the Paris Commune can serve as an example) will not achieve socialism unless a Marxist vanguard is able to win the leadership and win the struggle against the surviving laws, and representatives, of capitalism. All the quotations from Lenin which the RMC musters, some of which correctly point to the desirability and necessity of proletarian democracy, nowhere make it the key to the achievement of socialist relations. The RMC argument is that democracy (in Russia, this meant above all the soviets) is the decisive manifestation of the proletarian class character of the state. Soviets, however, are organizational forms which the revolutionary vanguard can use to carry out its leadership; nevertheless, the form can exist without the revolutionary content, as with Soviets in mid-1917 under Menshevik domination. The crucial question is who leads the soviets under what program.

The RMC counters Trotsky's contention that nationalized property forms demonstrate the class character of the state but they oversimplify Trotsky's point and deny any validity to it. Here too, forms exist for them without any relationship to class content. They do, however, point out the decisive aspect of the class nature of the state, that it is a question of the control by the proletariat over the state; but they equate this with democracy. The RMC's error is that, despite the ritual phrases necessary for pseudo-Trotskyists, the centrality of vanguard leadership is rejected. This is far more devastating to the integrity of revolutionary politics than was Trotsky's error over property forms.

The dangerous implication of the RMC's understanding of workers' democracy is brought out by their statement that "proletarian democracy, which most Trotskyists believe to be merely the 'political superstructure' of the transitional society, is in fact also the *social and economic* foundation for the development of socialist relations of production." (p. 29.)

A single historical instance will show how false this conception is. Trotsky, at one stage during the Stalin-Bukharin conflict, suggested a joint campaign by the Left Opposition and the Bukharinite Right Opposition to restore democratic norms in the bureaucratized Communist Party. Trotsky's proposal was sharply limited: it was not a bloc with Bukharin on all questions, for their differences on the decisive economic and social questions remained as wide as ever; it was certainly no proposal for a joint opposition or a unified faction, pressure for which Trotsky adamantly opposed. It was an attempt to establish, among other things, a democratically elected Party congress within which to wage the battle between Right and Left.

It is clear from this example that workers' democracy in Trotsky's eyes was an important question, but still one which was subordinate to the overriding debates over the industrialization-internationalism question that meant life or death for the workers' state. Had he considered workers' democracy to be the "social and economic foundation" for socialist relations, Trotsky's bloc with Bukharin would have had to be not just an episodic proposal (which in fact was not carried out by the Left Opposition), but a fundamental alliance, even unification, which would have taken precedence over other questions of industrial and wage policy. In fact, if the RMC had had its way in the twenties and Trotsky had blocked with Bukharin over economic and social questions, the result would perhaps have been a victorious kulak-imperialist regime. That is the obvious result of "workers' democracy" attached to bourgeois economic policies. The slaughter of the proletariat under such a regime would have been no less bloody than under Stalin's.

What the RMC means by proletarian democracy as the "social and economic foundation for the development of socialist relations of production" is developed through a series of arguments which further illuminates the RMC's antipathy to the USSR's economic growth. First of all, democracy is made the cause of the elimination of the division of labor: "Through proletarian democracy, the proletariat not only assures its political supremacy over the bourgeoisie. It also begins to dissolve the division of labor upon which capitalism (and ultimately the bourgeoisie's dictatorship) rests." (p. 28.)

Second, the division of labor turns out to mean "especially" the division between mental and manual labor. The RMC writers devote page after page to the low cultural level of the Russian workers, their inability to provide the technical, managerial and intellectual skills needed to run society. The point is true but its centrality is deliberately exaggerated. The myriad quotations from Lenin backing it up are taken almost entirely from the 1917-1919 period. Later, it became clear to the Left Opposition that the international revolution had been delayed and that an internal build-up of the economy was central. In a passage *not* cited by Olsen and Landau (in itself remarkable, given that at times well over half of their text is devoted to citations from Marxist authority), Trotsky explains:

"Basing himself wholly upon the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin did not succeed...either in his chief work dedicated to this question (*State and Revolution*), or in the program of the party, in drawing all the conclusions as to the character of the state from the economic backwardness and isolatedness of the country. *Explaining the revival of bureaucratism by the unfamiliarity of the masses with administration* and by the special difficulties resulting from the war, *the program prescribes merely political measures for the overcoming of 'bureaucratic distortions': election and recall at anytime of all plenipotentiaries, abolition of material privileges, active control by the masses, etc....*

"This obvious underestimation of impending difficulties is explained by the fact that the program was based wholly upon an international perspective...."

Lenin's original solution of "merely political measures" is somewhat stronger than what Landau and Olsen advocate under their slogan of workers democracy. But what was at one time an "underestimation of impending difficulties" becomes, at a later stage, a treacherous refusal to recognize the threat of

capitalist restoration and to combat it. Trotsky goes on to point out what the real problem was:

"While the first attempt to create a state cleansed of bureaucratism fell foul, in the first place, of the unfamiliarity of the masses with self-government, the lack of qualified workers devoted to socialism, etc., it very soon after these immediate difficulties encountered others more profound. That reduction of the state to functions of 'accounting and control,' with a continual narrowing of the function of compulsion, demanded by the party program, assumed at least a relative condition of general contentment. Just this necessary condition was lacking." (*The Revolution Betrayed*, pp. 58-59, emphasis added.)

We have already shown that the overwhelming economic scarcity Trotsky refers to engendered a regime of privilege and inequality and made necessary a program of capital accumulation beyond that of a healthy workers' state. For Landau and Olsen, however, the division of labor is entirely a question of mental versus manual labor and not at all the materially based gap between the labor aristocracy and the oppressed. That's why the RMC can afford to think that industrialization wasn't as crucial as Trotsky believed, why they can de-emphasize the centrality of scarcity in favor of an emphasis on the cultural unpreparedness of the proletariat in explaining the degeneration of the revolution.

Each time they take up the question, they are careful to blame even-handedly both the workers and the bureaucracy. For example, "The Russian working class, already badly demoralized as the result of previous defeats of the world revolution, fell into an even deeper pessimism. Reflecting the same process at the opposite pole, the state bureaucracy drew even further away from the proletariat." (p. 63.)

But the bureaucracy did not merely "reflect the same process" that affected the consciousness of the masses, no more than did Hitler simply reflect the conditions producing the pessimism among the German masses. The central responsibility does not lie in the objective situation but in the leadership. The Stalinist bureaucracy's primary devotion to its own privileges ensured that the unfavorable conditions visited hardships upon the masses and multiplied their demoralization. Landau and Olsen again downplay the role of leadership in favor of a "democratic" solution, in this case one that democratically makes the proletariat responsible for the defeats inflicted upon it. That is always the real meaning of "democracy" over and above revolutionary leadership: capitulation to the most backward workers and, through them, to the inevitability of bureaucracy.

Workers Democracy and the SWP

Trotsky's avoidance of the course that would have subordinated the proletariat's economic and social interests to a key stage of "workers' democracy" should bear a lesson for latter-day "Trotskyists." But the contrary is far more frequently true. Thus the RMC writes, in its statement on fusion with the SWP:

"We share a common approach to the events of the class struggle today. We see that the transitional program and its method provide the necessary direction for advancing the struggle of the proletariat in all of its manifestations today — from the centrality of the labor party demand in the U.S., to the counterposition between the workers government slogan and the popular

front in Europe, to black majority rule in South Africa, to the defense of democratic rights against the Stalinist regimes."

A thousand and one "Trotskyist" tendencies pay homage to the transitional program; and each means something entirely different by it, as revealed in countless practical tests. And despite the RMC's citation of the transitional program, none

within it two antagonistic wings, the right wing of the liberal bourgeoisie and the left wing of the revolutionary proletariat." It is generous of Landau to notice the antagonism between the two forces, despite his insistence on lumping the Bolsheviks into the cross-class "democratic movement." It was precisely in 1917, as Trotsky pointed out, that the forces devoted to "consolidating, developing, or consummating the 'democratic



Stalin under the banner of "Liquidation of the Kulaks." After crippling the Left Opposition, he turned against his Bukharinist right-wing allies.

of the planks in the above program of agreement with the SWP are socialist. Two are bourgeois-democratic in content and two call for reformist leadership of the working class; all pose a reformist, democratic stage as a prior condition for socialist struggles. (An accompanying article actually refers to the "democratic struggles" in Portugal, Spain and southern Africa — as if that is the limit of the aspirations of the workers in those countries, including the tens of thousands who marched under the banner of the proletarian dictatorship in Portugal.) What the centrality of "workers' democracy" really means for the RMC and the SWP is not the hindsight that would have meant disaster for the Soviet Union of the twenties, but a commitment to a democratic stage in the struggles of today.

In his summary article Landau states, "In 1917, the democratic movement (very broadly defined) contained

revolution" were counterposed to the Bolsheviks (in *Lessons of October*). This curious selection of a "broadly defined" amalgam stems from the RMC's desire to adapt to the democratic stage today. Such an outlook is not original with the RMC. It is the hallmark of centrism in our time, including the variants of centrism that have emerged from the Trotskyist tradition. Despite their differing theoretical analyses, the RMC and the SWP — like Shachtman and Pablo before them — agree that democracy is the heart of the solution to the Russian question.

The Shachtmanites were characteristically the most overt: "The nature of Stalinism is such that, for the first time in the history of the world, the fight for democracy is not merely 'bound up with' or 'a part of the fight for socialism; the fight for democracy is the fight for socialism, wherever Stalinism holds sway." (*Labor Action*, May 4, 1953.) Both the SWP and

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the RMC politically support the democratic dissidents in Russia (not simply their democratic *rights* but their democratic and non-socialist political approach), and assume, with Shachtman, that the socialist program and stage will logically follow. Unfortunately, as we have shown, what logically follows from even the most consistent fight for democracy is not socialism but one or another form of capitalism. In the context of Russia and Eastern Europe today, this will mean at best a somewhat looser and reformed state capitalism for a time. But because democracy is no solution at all to the epochal crisis of capitalism, a fight limited to democracy will leave the repressive state apparatus of the (state capitalist) ruling class intact. In all capitalist countries of this epoch, state capitalist and state monopoly capitalist, the failure of democracy leads to the extreme polarization of the oppressed masses. If the left is wedded to a democratic "solution," then the way is paved for Bonapartism and fascism.

For the United States, the RMC has an equally democratic and opportunist program. In her document on "The Road to Unity" in *RMP* 14, Shelley Kramer reports that the RMC went through an intensive discussion (concluded "only days before our March conference") on the relationship between democracy and socialism in the light of a new understanding of the question of permanent revolution. This discussion "removed the final barriers to recognizing the wide agreement we shared with the SWP, particularly with regard to perspectives for the American Revolution — what we commonly call the combined revolution in the United States."

Incredible! In the most advanced imperialist country of the world, a "combined" democratic and socialist revolution instead of the socialist revolution. Compare Trotsky on Spain:

"...the October Revolution has vigorously demonstrated that the socialist revolution cannot be carried out within the framework of democracy. The 'democratic' revolution and the socialist revolution are on opposite sides of the barricades. The Third International theoretically confirmed this experience. The 'democratic' revolution in Spain has already been carried out. The Popular Front is renewing it...The socialist revolution is yet to be made in uncompromising struggle against the 'democratic' revolution and its Popular Front. What does this 'synthesis,' 'democratic socialist revolution' mean? Nothing at all. It is only an eclectic hodge-podge." (*The Spanish Revolution*, p. 213, second footnote.)

If Spain in the 1930's needed no further democratic revolution, why should a hodgepodge "combined revolution" be necessary in the United States? Democratic tasks, yes. But the "combined" American revolution is the "Trotskyist" way of arguing for stagism which can't be advocated openly. It means first presenting the democratic stage and then later, "when people are ready for it," comes the socialist stage. Again, Shachtman beat them to it:

"As a goal, socialism seeks the socialization of the major means of production, which is another way of saying their real democratization. For private ownership and arbitrary control of the basic economic machinery on which all are dependent for their livelihood, it proposes to substitute democratic ownership, democratic control and democratic planning in the interest of all." In a nutshell, "Socialism is the extension of democracy into all sectors of social life." (*Labor Action*, same issue.)

The unity of the SWP and the RMC has been consummated because of their agreement on tactical and democratic questions. Their supposedly basic and principled differences over the class nature of the USSR and its defense is cast aside. The very act of putting forward the democratic questions as the primary ones, which allows for the bloc, proves in addition that the partners belong together — as capitulators in practice and in theory to the petty-bourgeois notion that democracy is the answer to the social crisis of capitalism.

The isolation and defeat of the proletarian state has reinforced the cynicism of the "progressive" intellectuals with regard to the proletariat. The bureaucracies and labor aristocracies, East and West, have been constantly replenished from such layers as the result of workers' defeats. In the West, the crisis inspires them to press for the restoration of what Trotsky referred to as the aristocratic achievement of democracy in the advanced countries, resting upon imperialism elsewhere. Each generation of the bureaucratic layers gains a new infusion from the ranks of the far left, Bukharin-Lovestoneites, Shachtmanites, Pabloites and even newer versions who stand on the shoulders of their pioneers. ■

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