

# Angela Davis Acquitted

## — Free Ruchell Magee!

This is the summer of content for American liberalism. A long unsuccessful war, contributing to an inflation and economic contraction, has created a general lack of confidence in the traditional patterns of bourgeois rule. This is manifest in the heavy Wallace vote and the McGovern victory in the Democratic Party.

It is against this background that we must view the unwillingness of white middle-class juries to convict Angela Davis and other black militants such as the remaining Soledad Brothers, Huey Newton and the New York Black Panther 21. Even with liberal juries, the bourgeois penal-judicial system regularly metes out injustices on left-wing political prisoners. Angela Davis was kept in prison for a year. The same "public opinion" which is credited with defending and freeing Angela Davis has virtually ignored her co-defendant, Ruchell Magee, who remains imprisoned and stands a far smaller chance of acquittal. Ruchell Magee, like almost all working-class and black militants, is no philosophy professor—Angela Davis' education and concomitant middle-class standing made her case relatively attractive to white liberals.

The *New York Times* naturally crows over the acquittals of Davis, Newton et al. as a great demonstration of American democracy and lectures radicals to take this to heart.

"The acquittal of Angela Davis should—but unfortunately will not—deflate worldwide propaganda aimed at perpetuating the myth that American justice, represented in San Jose by an all-white jury, is loaded against all political dissenters, black revolutionaries in particular.... the jury trial in the American judicial system... represents confidence in the sound judgment of the general citizenry—a faith scorned by the political ideologies to which Miss Davis is attracted."

—*New York Times*, 6 June 1972

In like manner, the Stalinist *Daily World* accepts the Davis acquittal as proof that "progressive" pressure can blunt the cutting edge of the repressive state apparatus. Henry Winston, Communist Party National Chairman, declared the trial verdict was "a blow struck for liberty and peace throughout the world."

Juries are not the basis of the repressive apparatus. Its core is the power of the police. If the "democratic" methods of the repression (white middle-class juries) fail to destroy black militants, particularly those accused of attacks on police, the police will destroy them without the benefit of trial by jury. And this is what is happening. Chicago's DA Hanrahan stepped up the pace of police executions in the murderous attack on the Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. The Attica massacre and killing of George Jackson show how prisons are becoming

a death trap for blacks. If Angela Davis had been killed "resisting arrest" in that New York motel room there would be no possibility of a "blow struck for liberty and peace" at her trial. Enough verdicts like Davis' and Newton's and tomorrow's Daveses and Newtons won't be getting trials.

Even reactionary regimes often try to appear formally progressive. Eighteenth-century Tsarist Russia was one of the first countries to abolish



from THE BLACK PANTHER

Ruchell Magee

the death penalty for most major crimes. While Catherine the Great corresponded with Voltaire, however, sentences of 12,000 blows with the lash were common; no one could survive more than 3,000. The American ruling class is more reactionary and vicious in the twentieth century than Tsarism was in the eighteenth. Anyone believing that the U.S. ruling class will permit the unreliable functioning of its "justice" or the vagaries of middle-class "public opinion" to prevent it from destroying working-class and black militants exists in a fool's paradise. Either the juries will be circumvented, the "public opinion" altered, or both.

The acquittals of Angela Davis and other militants are a victory for the working class—of an extremely temporary and reversible character. Leftists must intensify efforts to obtain the freedom of radical and working-class victims of bourgeois repression, not abandon them in a sense of impending doom. But while using to the fullest the avenues allowed by a fragile bourgeois legality, the working-class and radical movements must place no confidence whatever in the bourgeoisie's ultimate commitment to that legality. Bourgeois democracy—i. e., "fair" trials for the rich and prominent, cop brutality and frame-ups for the rest—is one form of bourgeois rule. The other is fascism, which only workers' revolution can prevent. The CP's pious preachments serve only to disarm the class before that menace. ■

## AS FISCAL CRUNCH SWELLS UNION RANKS

# AFSCME Woos Cops, Mayors, Democrats

Jerry Wurf, President of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO demonstrated at the union's 19th International Convention in Houston, Texas, how seriously he meant his remark: "I do not intend to be the head of the most militant union in the country." Wurf insisted again and again during the four days of Convention sessions that in the words of his pamphlet, "From Confrontation to Cooperation": "Confrontation is not the purpose of this union."

To attain his goal of "more" for AFSCME, in the tradition of Samuel Gompers, Wurf seeks to create a "united front" (his words) with mayors and governors, with the capitalists and especially with the Democratic Party. Crucial to his coalition is the growing police constituency in the union which Wurf advertises as a kind of experiment in reconciliation of counterposed forces.

The nation's city and state budgets have been tightened and in some cases have virtually collapsed under the strain of increased expenditures in the face of diminishing revenues. The fiscal crunch, itself a product of the depressed state of industry and the economy, has led to massive employment cutbacks, speedup and abuse of public employees many of whom have until recently been unorganized. AFSCME's spectacular growth has been the result; yet union organization is only the precondition for waging the economic struggle and not at all the equivalent of victory.

Wurf stands therefore in the contradictory position of claiming credit for the membership growth under his administration and simultaneously applying the brakes to an increasingly restive and growing rank and file.

AFSCME is today the fastest-growing major union in the U.S. It has gained an average of 1,000 new members per week for the past two years. The Brookings Institute recently concluded that AFSCME, with 2,400 locals and representing 1,000,000 workers in bargaining, was the sixth largest AFL-CIO union today and destined to become the largest in the country. With a power base of this size, the Wurf/Lucy administration drools over the possibilities of lobbying in Congress and influencing the Democratic bigwigs.

International Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ames introduced Wurf's main Convention address. He attributed union gains to Wurf's brilliant leadership with the implication that everything would

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# Trotsky and the Spanish Revolution

by Pierre Broué



# Ranks Angry, Beirne Holds On Business as Usual at CWA Convention

Despite the bureaucratic stranglehold imposed on the Communication Workers of America (CWA) by the leadership headed by President Joseph A. Beirne, anger and unrest among the ranks have increased dramatically in recent years, surfacing in numerous large-scale wildcat actions. The recent 34th Annual Convention of the CWA demonstrated, however, that oppositional voices remain isolated, localized and generally tied to liberalism, with the masses of telephone workers alternating between outbursts of tremendous militancy and resentful demoralization.

In 1968 the large Michigan Local 4016 voted to stay on strike after rejecting Beirne's national contract; only by splitting the Local, forcing out the Local President and joining with the Company to cut off the Local's dues did Beirne manage to beat the ranks into line. In the 1971 strike, Beirne's wildcat problems mushroomed. Five days after promising that only a membership vote could end the strike, Beirne accepted Company terms and called off the strike. Important sections of the union refused to go back to work, including locals in New York, Pennsylvania, California, Illinois and Michigan.

New York Local 1101 stuck it out for seven months, forcing Beirne and Local President Carnivale to put on a face of support for the strike (see WV #5). But by February of this year isolation and Company pressure finally enabled Beirne and Carnivale to end the strike and accept a meager Company offer which did not even compensate for inflation. Typically, the operators, at the bottom of the pay scale and represented by a Company union, received the smallest increases. The bureaucrats obtained the "modified agency shop" provision to swell the treasury without strengthening the union (as under this arrangement dues are collected from all workers with no requirement to join the union—in fact, an escape clause allows members to quit, helping disgruntled elements to purge themselves).

The exceptionally long and bitter New York strike was undermined not only by local misleadership and Beirne's blatant treachery, but by the striking workers' inability to shut down telephone service. Although part of the problem is that the industry is highly automated, crucial to the Company's ability to continue service was the fact that the operators did not strike. Shortly before the strike began, the CWA had actually been defeated by the Company union in an election for bargaining agent to represent the operators. The refusal of the socially reactionary CWA leadership to concern itself with the needs of these women workers by fighting for higher wages, upgrading to skilled job categories (now virtually the monopoly of male workers) and an end to Company paternalism and harassment of the operators heavily reinforced the apathy and anti-union attitudes among the traditionally less militant operators and led directly to the CWA's defeat in the bargaining election. Thus "business union" policies destroyed the possibility of workers' unity against the Company and demonstrated their inability to secure even "bread and butter" gains for the membership.

## More of the Same

Against the backdrop of membership unrest, the 34th Annual CWA Convention, held in Los Angeles June 12-16 with over 2,000 delegates, demonstrated once again the urgent necessity for an anti-capitalist program to fight the bureaucrats. It was clear that Beirne and Co. know where their interests lie. While their resolution "Politics—1972" did not endorse a specific candidate, it urged members to vote for labor's so-called "friends" among capitalist politicians by checking voting records; meanwhile, literature was distributed urging donations to COPE (the AFL-CIO's "Committee on Political Education") which metes out labor's endorsements to bourgeois candidates). Behind Beirne's denunciatory rhetoric about lying politicians stood the time-worn bureaucratic strategy of supporting the "friends of

labor" who have stabbed labor time and again. (McGovern, the current Democratic favorite, supports Nixon's wage control program with only minor differences in style.) Another resolution sought to lend respectability to the capitalist two-party system through proposing a National Primary. Supporters of the CWA Militant Action Caucus distributed a leaflet titled "We Need a Labor Party!" pointing out how the bureaucracy functions to aid the capitalist class, and noting that "A fight for such a party will involve throwing out the reactionary union bureaucracy that ties the unions to the Democrats."

Beirne opposes Nixon's anti-strike legislation in order to support the Democrats' anti-strike legislation. While formally opposing Nixon's compulsory arbitration plans, the "Arbitration" resolution endorsed Senate bill S.832 "sponsored by Sen. Harrison A. Williams, chairman of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee, which would regulate transportation strikes so that essential goods are delivered, and single carrier strikes are permitted." The resolution further implied that the union could support compulsory arbitration under another (Democratic?) administration:

"There is another aspect to the Administration's compulsory arbitration legislation which is worth looking at. Under it, the present administration in office could be expected to please its friends in management by appointing arbitrators who would favor industry."

"But Administrations change, and another President could be expected to consider the interests of American workers, and their need for decent wages and working conditions, more important than inflated corporation profits."

Beirne supports the capitalist attack on the working class, but would prefer that the slicker Democrats carry it out.

There was no major opposition to Beirne on the floor. All the official resolutions were passed. Only two fights broke out which reflected the underlying unrest. New York Local 1101 sought consideration for its motion to exempt its members from paying back dues owed from the period of the seven-month strike. A vote to get this motion on the floor passed on a division of the house. Many expressed sympathy for New York but called the motion a "bad precedent." An amendment to exempt Western Electric and Long Lines workers who had supported the New York strikers was defeated. Finally Beirne announced that the exemption motion required a 3/4 vote as a constitutional change, effectively killing the motion even though the final vote was about 50-50.

Another fight broke out over the Foreign Policy Statement. An impulse in favor of withdrawal from Indochina (mixed with anti-communist sentiments) led to an attempt to delete the Statement's sections on Vietnam and China. The motion to delete got a sizable vote but lost. The Foreign Policy Statement, which was overwhelmingly passed, demonstrates the connection between bureaucratic betrayal of the day-to-day needs of workers on the job and virulent anti-communism. The document contains statements of position on China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Ireland, the Middle East, South Africa, Latin America and Greece. In keeping with the cold warrior tradition of the Beirne leadership, the document stands to the right of Nixon's statements on Vietnam and China, warning that Nixon has come dangerously close to "unconditional surrender" by his visits to Moscow and Peking and his offers to Hanoi. The document endorses operations like the "American Institute for Free Labor Development," a CIA-sponsored project for establishing anti-communist "free trade unions" in Latin America.

## Merger Hoax

The only real Convention surprise was the first resolution. It announced the intention to merge the CWA (550,000 members) with the American Postal Workers Union (300,000 members). Reason: "When unions merge, their strength has been shown to grow." Other things being equal,

of course, union mergers increase the power of the workers affected. But other things are often not equal, and merger schemes have very often proven to be ways to strengthen bureaucracies against restive memberships, for example, the proposed merger between the ILWU and the Teamsters, the main purpose of which is to reinforce Bridges against the angry Longshore ranks by joining with the wealthy, corrupt and heavy-handed Fitzsimmons Teamster bureaucracy (see WV #6).

The very way the merger idea was put forward was indicative: delegates did not know about it until they arrived at the Convention; and the resolution, which was passed, empowers the President of each union to appoint merger committees, authorizes the Executive Boards to finalize the proposals, and allows the final agreement to be "by convention and/or membership referendum." Hence the merger can be pushed through with a minimum of membership discussion or challenge; the bureaucracy enjoys wide latitude in choosing the means of final ratification, and if it resorts to the referendum method, it will face only dispersed, isolated grumblings from the ranks.

The postal strike of 1970 was a massive wildcat against the rotten postal union leaderships which opposed it every step of the way. Although several postal unions have merged since then, it is by no means clear that the leadership of the fused union is any better. CWA members must recognize that strength is not achieved simply by merger of bureaucracies and treasuries. Only the ouster of the sellout leaderships of both unions in favor of a working-class program can unite the telephone and postal workers behind working-class policies.

The CWA Convention revealed how little Beirne has changed since his years as a company unionist in the 1930's and his subsequent enlistment in the ranks of the most extreme cold warriors within the union movement. A change cannot be staved off forever, as the widespread wildcatting of recent years demonstrates. Whether Beirne will be replaced merely by some slicker, less tarnished bureaucrat or by a leadership dedicated to the fight for workers' power, to replace Beirne and the system which spawned him and kept him in power, will depend in great part upon the work of those in the CWA struggling to found a national oppositional caucus based on a thoroughly anti-capitalist program. ■

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# Caucus Gains in Phone Ranks

OAKLAND, CALIF.—In Local 9415 of the Communication Workers of America (CWA), the dissatisfaction characteristic of many CWA locals has surfaced in an exceptionally militant and class-conscious form. What especially distinguishes the Oakland local from most other CWA locals equally dissatisfied with the policies of the international bureaucracy headed by President Joseph A. Beirne is the presence of a caucus, the Militant Action Caucus (MAC), struggling to transform the rage of the membership into a class-struggle program which can combat the root causes of Bell Telephone's offensive against its workers and the Beirne bureaucracy's capitulations.

In summer 1971 Local 9415 greeted the news of Beirne's back-to-work decision ending the national strike with extreme hostility. MAC members at that time called for continuing the strike. Despite enthusiastic membership response, the proposed wildcat strike did not materialize. The membership was not yet prepared for such a step, and Local President Loren Blasingame persuaded the ranks to return to work.

In recent months unrest has again surfaced in Local 9415. In April, 19 operators walked out at

the Franklin center in response to the arbitrary firing of a black trainee. The company rehired the trainee, but retaliated by suspending the 19 operators including a shop steward in May.

Members of the MAC proposed a special strike-vote meeting demanding no reprisals, but Blasingame instead pushed through the most minimal "defense"—a one-day sympathy "work holiday" strictly limited to the Franklin St. offices. The Company answered this posture of weakness with an attack on the whole Local: President Blasingame was fired and suspensions meted out to officers and 14 stewards. Blasingame launched a half-hearted and ill-prepared strike. Eleven Bay Area local presidents met and talked of strike action, and district councils threatened statewide action. But despite widespread membership approval of strike action, the local leadership caved in, apparently under pressure from Beirne himself. The final "settlement" accepted a 60-day suspension and final warning for the President, and suspensions for many other local officers, stewards and rank-and-file militants. To top it off, the union agreed not to use the grievance procedure further on the firing or suspensions, though there was no provision against reprisals. As a result of this backdown, numerous militants have been threatened by final warnings and other actions. In total fear of mobilizing the ranks, the bureaucrats have opened the union up for total wrecking by the Company.

Throughout the recent struggle, the role of the MAC has been exemplary. While opposing the rotten Blasingame leadership, the caucus did not flinch from defending it against company attack, seeking at every turn to widen the scope of the union's defense by calling for such actions as Central Labor Council support through a general strike, massive picketing to stop scabs, etc.

## MAC's Program

But the caucus program is much more than militant strike policies—it is a recognition of the need to fight the entire capitalist system, and especially the bureaucratic agents of the capitalist class in the workers movement, the

conservative union "leadership." In the recent election for alternate representative to the Executive Board, Jane Margolis of the MAC (who is on final notice because of her participation in walkouts) won in a runoff election by a vote of 73 to 71. Her platform included such demands as: End Racial and Women's Oppression—equal pay for equal work, equal access to all job categories; For an Equalized Wage System—raise the lower paid categories; End Unemployment—30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay; End Government Control of Unions—no court or cop interference in union affairs; Rank-and-File Control—for direct election of shop stewards; Immediate Unconditional Withdrawal of U.S. Troops from Southeast Asia—labor strikes against the war; Nationalize the Phone Company and all major industry under workers control; a Workers Party—toward a Workers Government. The victory of the MAC candidate is more significant in light of the fact that her opponent was a black woman union steward who ran on no program, but enjoyed the prestige of having led the first walkout.

To remain at the level of trade union militancy will mean death or cooption for any caucus, as it has for all the recent wildcats. A caucus which intends to mobilize the workers to fight for their class interests must provide an understanding of the role of the labor bureaucracy and its relationship to the capitalist class, and provide an explicit program to throw out the labor bureaucrats. In short, the caucus must provide class consciousness through the struggle for a working-class program.

The workers in Local 9415 have had an opportunity to compare directly the programs and behavior of another "militant" alternative, a splitoff from MAC supported by the International Socialists. Its publication, *The Bell Winger*, has gone through five issues since April without once mentioning vital demands such as the call for a labor party counterposed to the parties of the bourgeoisie. The paper concentrates instead on narrower grievances such as undemocratic selection of shop stewards. Criticism of the local bureaucrats is subdued in line with spontaneist theories which reject Lenin's insistence that consciousness and program must be created by the vigorous and forthright intervention of worker-communists. The 30 May issue of *The Bell Winger* disingenuously explained "We have our own criticisms of Blasingame, but we think it is up to the rank and file to decide what to do about him." The 7 June issue merely offers the solution of more trade union reformism:

"The events of last week have proven that the union leadership will do everything in their power to prevent direct rank and file activity. They negotiated deal with the company, without a strike, proves that they're even willing to weaken the union to maintain their positions of leadership. Direct rank and file action can only lead to a democratic union which, controlled by the ranks, not the bureaucrats, will fight militantly for our needs.

"... Democratic control of the union must start at the most basic level—the shop floor. We must have people who represent us in fighting against the everyday harassment on the job. This means DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED STEWARDS. Election assures that we are represented and that the stewards who fight militantly will have a base of support behind them.

"... Elected stewards is only one step in building a democratic union. We must go on to build a strong stewards' council, then to challenge the local leadership, and finally to ally with rank and file groups nationally to win democratic control of the International." [Emphasis in original]

On what program can the struggle lead up to "control of the International"? The bureaucratic suppression of union democracy is required by the bureaucrats' loyalty to the class enemy—the capitalists—through the state and the capitalist parties, especially the "friend of labor" Democratic Party. For this reason no real struggle to democratize the unions can be waged in the absence of political demands such as those raised by the MAC. The fight for union democracy opens a wedge into which a working-class program can be driven, but the struggle for "democracy" separated from revolutionary class consciousness can easily provide simply a wedge for new bureaucrats to rise to power on a wave of rank-and-file resentment against the incumbent bureaucracy and its abuses.

The successes of the MAC in the Oakland CWA local are but a small dent in the Beirne machine of class-collaboration, a small victory in a single union. Yet the MAC program, and the rank-and-file support for it, provide a beacon to militant oppositionists who wish to battle the causes as well as the bureaucratic symptoms of the union's capitulation before the political and economic system of wage slavery. ■

## On Contradiction

Boston, Mass.  
June 6, 1972

Editorial Board  
*Workers Vanguard*

Greetings:

Riding in the bus to Washington on May 21 to demonstrate against Nixon's latest escalation of the war in Vietnam, I came across the May issue of *Workers Vanguard*. Your paper however did nothing to strengthen my resolve against the war. On the contrary, I was dismayed by your criticism of the North Vietnamese leadership, while professing all along to oppose the war.

I don't doubt that you oppose the war, but your manner of doing so seems to me strange and divisive. I find it hard to believe that a "Marxist" publication can criticize the leadership of the Vietnamese people's heroic struggle against U.S. imperialism, in the hour of their greatest need, for this your notion of internationalist solidarity with those who are in the forefront of the struggle against U.S. aggression, and who are making unparalleled and unbelievable sacrifices in resisting that aggression?

Surely it must be apparent to you that it is one thing to call for all-out military victory against the U.S. aggressors from behind a typewriter 10,000 miles away, and quite another thing to be fighting the aggressor against incredible odds, in the face of a rain of bombs day after day, week after week, year after year. Surely it must occur to you that if the leaders of the Vietnamese people, whom you attack as "Stalinists," seek a negotiated end to the war, it is because they are forced to do so by the conditions of the struggle. You can afford to be ideologically "pure" and fight the U.S. invaders in accordance with your doctrine. The Vietnamese people and their leaders cannot afford that luxury. They have to be realists, for they have to deal with the horrible toll of death and destruction which their country has undergone these past three decades.

I have no doubt whatsoever that they know what they are doing, and I support them unconditionally. You, unfortunately, are defending a position on the war which objectively serves Nixon and his murderous aims in Indochina, since any attack on the Vietnamese leadership automatically strengthens his hand. It amounts to support for his policy. Apparently you are unaware of the contradiction.

In Solidarity with the Vietnamese,  
Peter P.

*Workers Vanguard*, like you, believes that the DRV/NLF leaders "know what they are doing." But their own declared intention (see WV #9) is not to struggle for a workers state in South Vietnam. The heroism of the Vietnamese working masses is not in question. But the DRV/NLF leadership puts this heroism at the service of the goal of a bourgeois "independent" South Vietnam. This even victory can only lead to an early resumption of civil war and almost certain imperialist intervention—the "horrible toll of death and destruction" for the workers and peasants of Vietnam will only begin over again, as it did after Ho Chi Minh voluntarily gave South Vietnam back in 1954.

By way of analogy, did support to the Hitler-Stalin Pact (or immediately thereafter the bloc with "progressive" imperialists like FDR) help defend the Soviet Union? Certainly not! But few would-be communists recognized that crucial distinction at the time, and today many radicals refuse to recognize that support to the Vietnamese revolution and the military victory over imperialism by the DRV/NLF forces, requires opposition to the bureaucratic-nationalist policies of the DRV, USSR and China which gravely endanger that victory.

We are not "unaware of the contradiction." That contradiction, however, exists in objective reality and not in our heads. The contradiction between the class base of the DRV and NLF on the one side and the narrow interests of its leadership on the other explains why the DRV, USSR, China, etc., are non-capitalist states whose policies at the same time buttress world capitalism, open the road to socialist development in Vietnam and socialist revolution abroad until the Vietnamese working class wrests political power from the usurping bureaucratic parasites.

It is the same Stalinist policy of "socialism in one country" which compels the USSR and China to betray the Vietnamese by refusing to provide them with the military aid which would stop the "rain of bombs day after day, week after week, year after year."

The Stalinist policy dictates that the Vietnamese revolution will be derailed on the road to socialism and the enormous sacrifices of the working masses of Vietnam may be sacrificed to "peaceful coexistence." Only a Trotskyist perspective can achieve the realization of the socialist aspirations for which the Vietnamese masses have already given so much.

For the Vietnamese Revolution,  
*Workers Vanguard*



# Trotsky and the Spanish Revolution

by Pierre Broué

*The spiral of history has turned so that the international situation, in terms of the recovery and combativity of the working class and the sharpening of the world capitalist crisis, creates a strategic context clearly highlighting the situation which faced the vanguard in the 1930's, of which Spain was the most fully developed, as well as the bloodiest, example. In particular, the relationship of forces in Chile today, and the response of Chilean and international leftists, in some ways strikingly parallels the evolution of the Spanish POUM. Against this background, this article acquires a pressing topicality as well as its evident historical and theoretical merit. As Santayana said, those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.*

*The article "Trotsky and the Spanish Revolution" was published in French in the theoretical journal of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (Internationalist Communist Organization, also referred to as the Lambert group), La Vérité #537, April-May 1967. An English translation appeared in the theoretical magazine of Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League of Britain, Fourth International Vol. 4 #1, April 1967. This new translation from the French is by Bill Grey.*

*The author of the article, Pierre Broué, is a well-known supporter of the OCI as well as a prominent Marxist historian. His writings in French include a general history of the Russian Communist Party and a work on the Spanish Revolution, La Révolution et la Guerre Civile d'Espagne, co-authored by Emile Terminié. He is also the editor of several collections of documents including a volume of Trotsky's writings on France.*

Spain of 1936 was the last battlefield where, during Trotsky's lifetime, armed workers and peasants confronted the bourgeoisie in revolutionary struggle. In essence, the Spanish Civil War was the prologue to the Second World War whose first year was marked by the assassination of Trotsky. But Spain was also the first arena where the GPU was active on a large scale outside the Soviet Union. During the course of the great purge and the Moscow trials, the Old Bolsheviks were murdered in the cellars of the GPU, while Stalin's assassins in Spain liquidated all those revolutionaries who were indiscriminately labeled "Trotskyists." Nevertheless, no party, no group which played a real role in the Spanish revolution was Trotskyist. The POUM,<sup>1</sup> which the Stalinists exterminated in 1937, vigorously denied that it was Trotskyist to the end, and Trotsky, in his political works, did not mince words about his differences with the POUM.

Trotsky's biographers—especially Isaac Deutscher—pass very quickly over the Spanish Civil War, particularly the role that Trotsky strove to play there as well as the place that it occupied in his thought and his action. Truly, this is no accident. The struggle for the construction of the Fourth International, in the eyes of Isaac Deutscher, was a grave error on Trotsky's part because the objective was utopian. But Trotsky's position on the Spanish events cannot be understood apart from his broad militant perspective of the time, and, in particular, in isolation from his central objective of this period: the construction of a revolutionary leadership, a world party of revolution, the Fourth International. Through the blows which struck the anti-Stalinist revolutionaries—those non-Trotskyists whom Trotsky called "centrists"—like the POUM militants, it was in reality the Fourth International which Stalin and his henchmen strove to annihilate on the Spanish battlefield.

## THE TASKS OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

Trotsky did not wait until 1936 to devote attention to the Spanish question. His writings on Spain figure honorably in comparison with his works on Germany, which, one should remember, he justly described as the key to the world situation at the time of the Nazi rise to power in Germany.

The revolution which began in Spain with the fall of the monarchy and the departure of Alfonso XIII in 1931 should have clearly resolved the tasks which Marxists call "bourgeois democratic." But it would be dangerous for revolutionaries to

imagine that the tottering Spanish bourgeoisie, represented on the political plane by the republican parties, had the power to accomplish this democratic revolution. "The Spanish republicans," Trotsky wrote, "remain entirely on the basis of the existing property relations. One cannot look to them for the expropriation of the great landed estates, the liquidation of the privileged position of the Catholic Church, and the radical purging of the Augean stables of the civil and military bureaucracy." Conforming to the analysis known for thirty years as the theory of the "permanent revolution," which had been confirmed brilliantly, positively by the victory of the Russian revolution and negatively by the defeat of the 1927 Chinese revolution, Trotsky thought that only under a dictatorship of the proletariat would the democratic tasks of the revolution be fully realized, at the same time as the beginning of socialist transformations. The problem was then essentially that of the revolutionary policy of the proletariat, of its capacity to stand up at one and the same time against the oligarchy of the *ancien régime* and against the bourgeoisie.

In an article dated 24 January 1931, analyzing the political situation in Spain, Trotsky noted the depth of the strike movement, and at the same time, its totally spontaneous character. He characterized the period as "the period of the awakening of the masses, of their mobilization, of their entry into struggle." "By these strikes," he wrote, "the class begins to consider itself as a class." Nevertheless, this spontaneous character which at one moment gives the whole force to the workers' movement, risks at the next stage, being the source of weakness and defeats. A workers' movement left to its own resources, "without a clear program, without leadership" would inevitably wind up by finding itself confronted with "a hopeless



(1) POUM: Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification).



perspective." The Socialists (the PSOE<sup>2</sup>) had collaborated with the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera: they now found themselves dragged along in the wake of the republicans. "If the Socialist Party," wrote Trotsky, "captured the majority of the proletariat, it would only be able to do one thing: transfer the power conquered by the revolution to the hands of the republican wing, who would then automatically allow the power to slip into the hands of its real stockholders." The Spanish Communist Party<sup>3</sup> was very weak, deeply divided by the methods of leadership that had been imposed upon it by the Stalinized Communist International. It had experienced split after split; it was thus largely discredited in the eyes of a good proportion of class conscious workers who criticized the Party as much for its use of bureaucratic methods of leadership as for its servile submission to orders from Moscow, notably the adoption of "adventurist" slogans in the course of the "Third Period."<sup>4</sup> The authentic revolutionary cadres had been chased out or had turned away. The masses turned their back to it. In reality, the revolutionary vanguard, the most combative elements of the proletariat, were organized within the CNT<sup>5</sup> where, Trotsky said, "the selection was carried out over several years." He wrote, "To consolidate this confederation and transform it into a real mass organization is the duty for every advanced worker and above all for the communists." The revolutionary vanguard would inevitably run up against the FAI,<sup>6</sup> the small conspiratorial group of anarchists, who actually held the reins of power in the CNT. The mobilization of the proletariat on the basis of democratic transitional slogans in the struggle for power would require the working class to organize itself into soviets—*juntas*. But this in turn would require revolutionaries to wage a struggle on two fronts within the working-class movement



Leon  
Trotsky

itself: against the "parliamentary cretinism" of the Socialists as well as against the "anti-parliamentary cretinism" of the anarchists. "The anarchists," he wrote, "deny politics until the moment when it grabs them by the collar: then they yield to the policies of the class enemy."

To win the masses to organized and audacious revolutionary politics, to tear the workers away from the influence of the leading Socialists and anarchists, to recognize the *juntas* as the superior form of class organization, to prepare in the end for the victorious insurrection and the liquidation of the old state apparatus: such was the foremost political task of the Spanish revolutionaries. To resolve these tasks Trotsky judged that "there are three conditions: a party, again a party, and always a party." But in Spain, this party did not exist. In 1931 Trotsky wrote, "If the leadership of the Communist International proves incapable of offering the Spanish workers anything other than false politics, bureaucratic commandism and splits, then the real communist party of Spain will be formed and tempered outside the cadres of the Communist

International. In any case this party must be created."

It was to this task that the Spanish militants who were members of the International Left Opposition<sup>7</sup> applied themselves in this period, organized in the *Communist Left*.<sup>8</sup> Their goal seemed perhaps more realizable in Spain than that of Left Oppositionists in all other countries. In the ranks of the Spanish Oppositionists were to be found some of the best elements of Spanish communism, some of its pioneers, like Andrés Nin, who came to communism when he was secretary of the CNT, and was former secretary of the Red International of Trade Unions; Juan Andrade, who had brought to the Communist International after the war the majority of Socialist youth; and many other cadre of great distinction. Their journal, *Comunismo*, was distinguished by the quality of its research and theoretical studies, by its effort to develop a concrete analysis of the Spanish reality. In the workers' movement, the parliamentarianism of the Socialists and the anti-parliamentarianism of the anarchists set their sights on each other and mutually served to cancel one another out, but the slogans of the *Communist Left* offered a way out for the militants misled by social democracy or anarchism. The road that opened to the building of a communist party of the Bolshevik type was uncontestably more attainable than in many other countries. It was probably for

**Trotsky judged that "there are three conditions: a party, again a party, and always a party."**

this reason that certain militants became impatient and proposed to abandon the attitude of "opposition" toward a non-existent party, in order to begin the construction of a new communist party. Trotsky energetically combatted this tendency in the discussion. The question for him was the rectification of all the Communist parties and especially the Communist International itself by vigorous political struggle. One and the same analysis must prevail for the tactics of all revolutionary communists on the international level. So long as there remained a chance to rectify the Communist International, no partisan of the Opposition should quit the International of his own accord and renounce the defense in the International of the ideas which were those of the founders. The Spanish "Trotskyists"—who called themselves "Bolshevik-Leninists"—remained in opposition and the majority of the *Communist Left* followed Trotsky in the years that the center of the struggle passed to Germany and the attempt to rectify the International through implacable criticism of Stalin's catastrophic policies, which were paving the way for Hitler.

#### THE TURN OF 1934-1935

Hitler's accession to power and the obliteration without a struggle of the German working class, a class bound hand and foot until the end by the policies of the Social Democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies, marked the decisive turning point in the inter-war period. In the long run, it heralded the Second World War, and more immediately, the approach of decisive struggles between the working class and the fascists, the shock troops of counter-revolution. The Communist International accepted without flinching the policies dictated by Moscow, proclaimed the infallibility of its leaders, denied the importance of the German defeat, directed all its blows against internal criticism, and sabotaged the building of a workers united front which alone would have been able to constitute a valuable weapon against Hitler's storm troops. For Trotsky, the German defeat was the "4 August 1914" of the Communist International, the equivalent of what it had meant for Social Democracy and the Second International when its leaders rallied behind the imperialist war. The Second and Third Internationals were only corpses, and it would have been futile to imagine reviving them in struggle from within to "rectify" them. The Bolshevik-Leninists renounced their attitude of opposition: henceforth they had to work for the construction of the revolutionary leadership which was lacking, to settle

(2) PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), formed in the late 19th century by those who supported Marx after the break between Marx and the anarchist Bakunin. What was unusual was that most of the early Spanish socialists followed Bakunin, and anarchism continued to dominate the Spanish working-class movement in the 1930's.

(3) Spanish Communist Party: Partido Comunista Español, organized in 1921 by dissident Socialists and anarchists after the Socialist Party had voted not to affiliate with the Communist (Third) International.

(4) "Third Period": After the Stalin-Bukharin policy of class collaboration had been rebuffed in China and Britain, Stalin in 1928 initiated an ultra-left turn in the Communist International, posited on the characterization of a new "third" period (after the "first" period, 1917-24, of capitalist crisis and revolutionary upsurge, and the "second" period, 1925-28, of capitalist stabilization), in which the masses under the direct leadership of the Communists would immediately proceed to the final overthrow of capitalism. All other workers' organizations were therefore counter-revolutionary, especially the Social Democracy which was declared "social fascist." The sectarian refusal to form a united front with the Social Democrats in

Germany enabled Hitler to take power without the workers having fired a shot. A new turn in favor of collaboration with the "democratic" imperialists was officially made at the 7th (and last) Congress of the International in 1935. The French Popular Front government of Leon Blum—composed of his Socialists, the Communists and the bourgeois Radicals—was formed in 1936. As in all Popular Fronts, the bourgeois party provided the program and the working-class parties delivered up their base.

(5) CNT: Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labor), mass anarcho-syndicalist trade union.

(6) FAI: Federación Anarquista Ibérica (Iberian Anarchist Federation), organized in 1927 as a secret society within the CNT.

(7) International Left Opposition: The Bolshevik-Leninists led by Trotsky considered themselves the expelled Left Opposition of the Communist International fighting to rectify its policies. After the Stalinist line had led directly to the triumph of fascism in Germany, Trotsky and his cothinkers of the International Left Opposition in 1934 initiated the "Declaration of the Four" which called for the building of a new, Fourth, International.

(8) Communist Left: Izquierda Comunista.



down to the task of the creation of a new International, the Fourth. While striving to promote through action a policy of a workers united front, they would link themselves to the formation of independent revolutionary nuclei in order to completely isolate the old leadership from the militants of the young generation of workers.

The unfolding of the class struggle in Spain seemed favorable to this plan. In fact, the *Communist Left*, in the course of several years' work as the communist opposition, had made serious progress which was based upon a minimum program, conceived as a program of transitional demands designed to raise the level of consciousness of the masses in struggle and at the same time leading the masses into new struggles.

The *Communist Left* developed rapidly: in 1932, it numbered at least 2,000 cadre, recruited among the youth of all political tendencies and union backgrounds, not only in Catalonia, and notably in Barcelona, but also in Madrid and in the two Castilles, in Bilbao, and in Asturias, in Salamanca, in Andalusia, and Extremadura. Its influence continued to grow among advanced workers who were members of the Socialist or Communist parties, as well as in the CNT and UGT,<sup>9</sup> corresponding to the forceful exposure of the bankruptcy of the Socialist policy of compromise with bourgeois parties, and the anarchist policy of isolated uprisings, and the necessity of the workers united front which the Spanish Communist Party fought against with all its might, as in Germany, in the name of first combatting the Socialists, labeled "social fascists."

#### THE COMMUNIST LEFT AND THE WORKER-PEASANT BLOC: BIRTH OF THE POUM

In Catalonia, at least, the *Communist Left* came together over the need for the united front with another organization, born in opposition to the Communist Party and the Stalinist line of the Third Period. By splitting the Communist Federation of Catalonia-Baleares, the Worker and Peasant Bloc<sup>10</sup> was constituted under the leadership of Joaquín Maurín, another pioneer of Spanish communism. This formation had drained all the worthwhile militants in Catalonia from the Spanish Communist Party. Maurín's opposition, according to Trotsky's analysis, was a "right opposition," of the same type as had been developed by Brandler in Germany. Lovestone in the U.S., and Tasca in Italy. Ideologically linked to the "rightists" of the CPSU—the Bukharin tendency—it was essentially nourished by its opposition to the sectarian policy of the Communist Party and International during the "Third Period," the refusal to form "united fronts," and the accusation of "social-fascism" against the Socialists. Trotsky wrote that these right oppositional groups "are destitute of a clear program of action," and—even worse—that "they have been won over to the prejudices which have been largely spread . . . by the epigones of Bolshevism."

After the manifesto of the Worker and Peasant Bloc, he wrote of this document in June 1931, "that it represents pure 'Kuomintangism' transported to Spanish soil." He was soon to upbraid the Maurínists for their opportunism in their relations with the petty bourgeois Catalan nationalist movements, their refusal to raise any criticism of the Stalinist policies inside the USSR, and their efforts to convince the Moscow leaders that the leadership of the Spanish Communist movement should be entrusted to them. In his correspondence he repeatedly warned against Maurín and the Bloc of his political cronies, calling for merciless political criticism of what he considered a variety of "centrism even worse than the official centrism" of Stalinism. In fact, the Maurínist opposition created a confusion prejudicial to the development of the Left: it was only in Madrid that the Bolshevik-Leninists succeeded in winning a majority of the militants from a Communist Party circle. Elsewhere, and notably in Catalonia, the confused and often contradictory politics of the Bloc, its opportunism in practice joined to its criticisms in principle, gave it the role of a veritable screen between the ideas of the Left and the discontented Communist militants at the base of the party.

It was in the Socialist Party and particularly in the ranks of the youth that the radicalization of the Spanish working class and the progress of Trotskyist ideas in its vanguard was most clearly manifested. The bankruptcy of the Socialists' policy of class collaboration with the republican governments provoked a profound crisis in the ranks of the party, then the crystallization of a powerful left wing, paradoxically led by the old working-class leader Francisco Largo Caballero who, drawing the correct lessons from his reformist experience, rallied spectacularly to revolutionary politics and declared in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Carried by an extraordinary enthusiasm, Largo Caballero accelerated considerably the movement of radicalization which had led to his turn. His disciples, the leaders and members of the Socialist youth, the intellectuals who grouped around him and edited the newspaper of the UGT,

**Instead of the struggle for a new revolutionary party formed by political differentiation as advocated by Trotsky, his former Spanish disciples substituted the struggle for the fusion of old apparatuses.**

*Claridad*, clearly expressed this phenomenon and its immense consequences. Thus Luis Araquistain, his official spokesman, wrote in 1934 in the preface to *Speeches to Workers* of the secretary of the UGT:

"I believe that the Second and Third Socialist Internationals are virtually dead; dead is the reformist, democratic, parliamentary socialism represented by the Second International; dead also is the revolutionary socialism of the Third International, which received the *santo y seña* of Moscow for the whole world. I am convinced that what must come forward is a Fourth International founded upon the first two, taking up again from the one the revolutionary tactics and from the other the principle of national autonomy. In this sense, the attitude of Largo Caballero, that of the Spanish Socialist Party and UGT, seems to me an attitude of the Fourth International, that is to say, a *superación* of historical socialism."

Even taking into consideration the demagogic exaggeration in these declarations by long-time opportunist leaders, so lately reconciled with revolutionary politics, the current in favor of "bolshevization" of the Socialist Party, of its adherence to the construction of the Fourth International, was exceptionally vigorous at the base, as was further shown by the resolutions of the regional congresses of youth and the content of the newspapers and demonstrations.

The CNT, at the same time, was going through a profound crisis. While the rightist current, the "trinitistas," led by the former secretary Ángel Pestaña, oriented openly towards a sort of reformist unionism, the vigorous reaction of the FAI did not prevent the majority of the anarcho-syndicalist militants from coming to the realization that "apoliticism" was in the long run only a form of passivity, benefitting only the class enemy. Despite the hesitations and equivocations of its leaders, including the left Socialists, the Asturian proletariat was fighting, with the energy it was already known for, in the October insurrection; meanwhile the leaders of the CNT who had held themselves—except for those of Asturias—aside from the mass movement by refusing to join the workers' Alliances constituted by the call of the Left and the Bloc, risked even more: isolation in relation to a powerful movement for revolutionary proletarian unity (Union of Proletarian Brothers) which swept the country after the October insurrection, and to which even the official Communists rallied at the last moment.

For Trotsky there could be no possible hesitation. On the eve of gigantic class struggle when the Stalinists and reformists were near the realization of a united front on the platform of "defense of democracy," under the immediate menace of counter-revolution, the small Bolshevik-Leninist organizations would not have sufficient time to intervene decisively in the class struggle, above all if they found themselves excluded from the Socialist-Communist united front being constituted. In spite of their progress, they were still numerically weak, lacking ties with the large mass of workers drawn by the large organizations, and were incapable of benefitting in a reasonable amount of time from this spontaneous current of radicalization which was in the process of shaking up the reformist dust within the Socialist Party. Already in August 1934, in the wake of the fascist uprising of 6 February in Paris, and the first riposte of the Socialist-Communist united front, the French Bolshevik-Leninists grouped around *La Vérité* had entered the SFIO,<sup>11</sup> where they were beginning to establish solidly their influence among the left milieu of the Federation of the Seine and in the ranks of the youth. The ground was even more favorable in Spain, where the radicalization was deeper and the influence and prestige of the Trotskyists was considerable. The organ of the JS<sup>12</sup> of Madrid, *Renovación*, repeated calls to the Trotskyists whom they termed "the best revolutionaries and the best theoreticians in Spain, who are invited to enter the Youth and the Socialist Party in order to bring about Bolshevization." Trotsky thought it necessary to seize this opportunity, to establish a solid faction in the Socialist Party, in order to make it a pole of attraction of revolutionary regroupment capable of exercising decisive influence over the militants of the Communist Party surprised by the brutality of the opportunist turn of their party, and upon the militants of the CNT disoriented by the impotence of their own principles of action in the new situation, capable also of giving a real Bolshevik form to this spontaneous radicalization, which, lacking revolutionary leadership, risked being soon led astray by Stalinists and left

(9) UGT: Unión General del Trabajadores (General Workers' Union), mass Socialist-led trade union.

(10) Worker and Peasant Bloc: Bloque Obrero Campesino.

(11) SFIO: Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (French Section of the Workers' International), the Socialist Party of France. Trotsky's

advocacy of short-term entry into the Social Democracy in order to recruit desperately needed Trotskyist cadres was first implemented in France (hence the name "French Turn" is commonly applied to the tactic) but was also undertaken in other countries, notably Spain, Belgium and the U.S.

(12) JS: Juventud Socialista, youth group of the Socialists.



Socialists, willing to be revolutionary only in words.

But Trotsky did not succeed in convincing his Spanish comrades. While the majority of the French Bolshevik-Leninists had effected the "turn," the Spanish organization, by a majority, refused to do so. The minority favorable to Trotsky's proposals would not go so far as to break with the discipline of the organization, which, after a long and difficult discussion at the end of 1934, refused to enter the Socialist Party. Instead, in the following year, on 25 September 1935, the leaders of the two organizations, the *Communist Left* and the Worker and Peasant Bloc, held a joint fusion congress, giving birth to a new party: the POUM, Workers Party of Marxist Unification. Thus—paradoxically, at first glance—it was the birth of a new communist party born of the fusion of the right and left oppositions, a "trotsko-bukharinite bloc," as the Stalinist Koltsov wrote, that culminated the political regroupment in Spain and the radicalization born of the events of 1933-35. Instead of the struggle for a new revolutionary party formed by political differentiation as advocated by Trotsky, his former Spanish disciples substituted the struggle for the fusion of old apparatuses, declaring in the joint resolution of the unification congress:

"The great revolutionary socialist communist party will be formed by the unitary regroupment of the existing revolutionary Marxist nuclei, and the new wave of revolutionaries entering into action, impelled forward by the Marxist unity, and the elements which, demoralized by the factionalism of the workers' movement, have remained momentarily inactive"

and going so far as to proclaim the intention of the POUM to dissolve into the great party at a congress which would be held "as soon as the principle of Marxist unity has triumphed in the Socialist and Communist parties."

Trotsky, justifiably from his point of view, considered the passage of the former leaders of the Communist Left to the positions which had been those of Maurin and the Bloc all the time as a betrayal: for them, it could no longer be a question of working for the construction of the Fourth International, but

...by the end of 1935, there was no longer a single group in the workers' movement which stood for the necessity of merciless ideological delineation and denunciation of class collaboration under the mask of unity.

solely of fusing the two preceding Internationals—which, of course, were corpses to Trotsky: it is not surprising that on the international plane, the POUM rapidly joined the London Bureau,<sup>13</sup> a liaison organization between different groups which had broken with the Socialist or Communist parties in their respective countries, but had in common the refusal to struggle for a "new International."

Henceforth, there did not exist, in the configuration of Spanish political forces, any force, however small, which was capable of opposing itself to the pressure exerted, in the name of "unity," by the right Socialists and the Stalinist Communists for an electoral alliance with the bourgeois republicans. The forthcoming fusion of the Socialist and Communist youth into the JSU which constituted from 1936 on the mass base of Spanish Stalinism, the adherence of every workers organization to the bourgeois program of the popular front, were, in a very real way, implied in the decision of the leading Spanish Trotskyists, Nin and Andrade, to refuse to enter the Socialist Party and to opt for fusion with Maurin's right communists. G. Munis expressed Trotsky's thoughts on this situation when he wrote:

"The masses followed the inverse process of that of the parties. The masses went to the left in their radicalization and perfecting of their socialist consciousness; the parties oriented to the right, forming a closed circle of collaborationist organizations. At the precise moment when the masses went to undertake the attack on bourgeois property and the state, all the parties, some more than others, bowed their heads reverently before this same state."

While in 1934 the partisans of the Fourth International organized against the reformists and the Stalinists had a real influence and possibilities to consolidate it, to extend it and directly combat the politics of class collaboration, by the end of 1935, there was no longer a single group in the workers' movement which stood for the necessity of merciless ideological delineation and denunciation of class collaborationism under the mask of unity. It was that which Trotsky called betrayal from his former comrades in arms, and for which he would bitterly reproach them until his death.

#### FROM THE POPULAR FRONT TO THE REVOLUTION

Chased out of France in 1935, and in spite of the infinite

difficulties that he encountered in his new Norwegian refuge, Trotsky had analyzed the "popular front" current which was manifested in France under the impulse of new directives given by the Stalinized International to the French CP. The resounding rallying of the French Communists to Stalin's declaration "fully approving the policy of national defense" of the reactionary government of Pierre Laval, on the morrow of the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet pact, the expulsion of revolutionaries from the Socialist and Communist parties in the perspective of this new "union sacrée," the efforts of the leaders of these parties to channel the radicalization of the French workers into the parliamentary road and into the alliance with the Radical Party, their condemnation of spontaneous wildcat strikes of the defense workers at the arsenals of Brest and Toulon in the name of solidarity with the bourgeois republican parties, all these revealed the true face of the French popular front: a rehabilitation of the Radical Party, the party of imperialism and the French bourgeoisie, and the stifling of the revolutionary aspirations of the French proletariat in the name of the principles of bourgeois democracy and a purely parliamentary perspective.



Francisco  
Largo  
Caballero (right)

The pact of the Spanish popular front, signed on 15 January 1936 in Madrid, was written in the same ink as its French equivalent. All the historians of this period were pleased to stress its extremely moderate character, which was in fact as little revolutionary as possible. The signatory parties had established a common program to serve, among other things, "the rule of government which the left republican parties will develop in case of victory with the support of the working-class forces." They invoked here the "public peace" to justify amnesty, while upholding "in all its vigor the principle of authority." The declaration specifically stated: "The republicans do not accept the principle of the nationalization of the land and its free reversion to the peasants." Its economic program was framed under the slogan "for the general interest of the economy and national production."

The agreement specified: "The republican parties do not accept measures for nationalization of the banks... workers' control claimed by the delegation of the Socialist Party... The republic envisaged by the republican parties is not a republic guided by class-oriented social or economic motives, but a regime of democratic freedoms motivated by the cause of the general interest and social progress... its international policy is oriented toward adherence to the principles and methods of the League of Nations."

The pact was signed by representatives of the republican parties, the Socialist Party and the UGT, the Socialist Youth, the Communist Party, the Syndicalist Party of Pestaña and... for the POUM, Juan Andrade. Twelve days previously, the editorial of the POUM's paper *La Batalla* of 3 January 1936, under the title "The Crucial Year of Our Revolution," had written: "Two roads open up before us and two only: either the march toward socialism, toward the second revolution, or an overwhelming set-back and the triumph of counter-revolution... We are now entering the period of great struggles in the march toward the victory of socialism." The POUM adopted Maurin's declaration: the only alternative is "Fascism or socialism." How, then, can one explain their adherence to the popular front? How can one explain the call to the workers to vote for this election bloc which looked forward to the establishment of a republican bourgeoisie, which forbade all attacks on "property" and the bourgeois order? The leaders of the POUM invoked their desire to do everything to prevent the electoral victory of the right, their anxiety to obtain the immediate release, through amnesty, of the thousands of militant workers still held after the Asturian defeat; also, on a purely tactical level, not "to cut themselves off from the masses," not to be isolated from the powerful unitary current which then carried the masses toward enthusiasm for the

(13) London Bureau: The appalling Stalinist degeneration of Communism and the gross failure of Social Democracy drove a motley collection of centrists and opportunists out of the Second and Third Internationals. The so-called London Bureau was set up in 1932 by the Norwegian Labor Party (NAP) and the British Independent Labor Party in collaboration with the German Socialist Workers Party (SAP) and the left wing of the Dutch Social Democracy. At various times it encompassed other parties of the same stripe.



popular front. Were they perhaps sensitive to the criticisms of Trotsky which were made immediately, stigmatizing the complicity of the POUM "centrists" with the bourgeois-Stalinist coalition? Was there perhaps a sharp reaction among certain militants, surprised at what was, in any case, a turn which was just a little bit brutal? In any case, the POUM, although its single deputy Maurin voted for Azaña, specified immediately thereafter that it was taking up again its freedom of action and had signed the pact only with the exclusive intention of assuring the defeat of the right in the elections. These reservations did not prevent Trotsky from demonstrating that the POUM's policy—precisely because of the criticisms it formulated against the popular front after having signed the pact—made it a "left" cover for the coalition and bound the POUM to the bourgeoisie through the intermediary of the large working-class parties.

When, some months later, Franco's military pronunciamiento exploded, prepared in full view and with the complete knowledge of the popular front government, whose only concern was to restrain the movement of the masses, to reassure the right and to protect the army and officer corps, Trotsky stressed once again the class nature of the popular front:

"When the bourgeoisie is constrained to conclude through the intermediary of its left wing an alliance with the workers' organizations, then it needs all the more its officer corps as a counterweight."

The policy of the republican government of the popular front toward the army, which it allowed to openly prepare its own overthrow, arose neither from its "blindness" nor from some kind of error: it was simply the policy of the Spanish bourgeoisie. In Trotsky's eyes, obviously, those most responsible were those workers' leaders who permitted the popular front swindle to be realized. He wrote:

"One sees now much more clearly what crime was committed at the beginning of this year by the leaders of the POUM, Maurin and Nin. Every worker who reflects can—and will—ask: Didn't you foresee anything? How then could you sign the program of the popular front and make us put our confidence in Azaña and Co., instead of permeating us with the greatest distrust of the radical bourgeoisie? Now we must pay for your mistakes with our blood."

However, some people still could believe for the moment that a revolutionary regroupment was going to be carried through. The POUM was far from being homogeneous. The experience of six months of popular front government had obviously condemned POUM's January signature in the eyes of many militants. Above all, the workers' riposte to the military *coup d'état* had, from one day to the next, transformed the political atmosphere of Spain: the armed workers were masters of the streets, were establishing everywhere the authority of their committees, destroying the army, police, and bourgeois courts, seizing the factories and the land. Trotsky and Nin found themselves in agreement that the spontaneous revolutionary action of the Spanish workers and peasants had carried them to a superior level than even that of the Russian Revolution in its early stages. The International Secretariat of the Fourth International delegated Jean Rous to Barcelona to meet with Andrés Nin and Andrade. They negotiated around the question of the "entry" of the Trotskyists into the POUM: the leaders of the POUM agreed to publish a weekly article by Trotsky on the first page of *La Batalla*, as well as promising to demand for him the right of asylum. Brutally, it was all broken off. Was it really the blunders of Rous which were responsible, as several witnesses have suggested? Was compromise impossible after Trotsky's new attacks against Nin and Andrade, as others assert? One suspects, however, that the tactical disagreements were deeper than they appeared in the enthusiasm of the early days: the political developments were soon going to show this with the POUM taking a step which Trotsky would judge even more severely from the revolutionary point of view than the "crime" they had committed in signing the popular front pact.

### THE ENTRY OF THE POUM INTO THE CATALAN GOVERNMENT

On 6 September, commenting on the popular front government formed at Madrid, including republicans, Socialists and Communists, and presided over by Largo Caballero, Andrés Nin wrote:

"The present government represents without doubt a step forward in relation to the previous government; but it is a popular front government, it is a government which corresponds to the situation before 19 July, when the workers' insurrection had not yet occurred, and in this regard . . . it represents a step backward. There is no way out other than a workers' government. The slogan for the whole working class in the coming days must be: 'Throw out the bourgeois ministers, and long live the working-class government!'"

Some days later, on 26 September, a new government on the model of the Madrid regime was constituted at Barcelona under the direction of the Catalan republican President of the Generality.<sup>14</sup> Companys: Andrés Nin himself was a member, with the title "counsellor of justice."

It was the government of the Generality which was to decree and carry out the effective dissolution of the revolutionary committees and liquidation of the "dual power" situation created by the riposte to the military insurrection. Companys' biographer summarized this political episode when he wrote:

"Companys, who recognized the right of the workers to govern and even offered to abandon their post, managed things with such finesse that little by little he reconstituted the legitimate organs of power, curbed the action of the councils and left the working-class organizations reduced to the role of auxiliaries, assessors, and rubber stamps. In the space of four or five months, things had returned to normal."

Commenting on the refusal of the working-class organizations of the popular front, the CNT and the POUM as well as the Socialist and Communist parties, to seize power in the so-called republican zone immediately after 19 July, Trotsky wrote:

"To renounce the conquest of power is to voluntarily allow it to remain with those who possess it, the exploiters. The foundation of all revolution consisted and still consists in carrying a new class to power and thus, to give this class the possibility of realizing its own program. . . . The refusal to conquer power inevitably hurls back any workers' organization into the swamp of reformism, and makes it the plaything of the bourgeoisie: it cannot be otherwise, given the structure of society."

A striking coincidence with the point of view of President Azaña, mouthpiece of the republican bourgeoisie, who wrote with some cynicism:

"A revolution renders necessary the taking of power, the setting up of a government led according to its own goals. This has not been done . . . The old order could have been replaced by another, a revolutionary order. It has not been."

Andrés Nin, commenting on the entry of his party into the Generality government, shouted on the radio: "The struggle that is beginning is not the struggle between bourgeois democracy and fascism, as some think, but between fascism and socialism." The organ of the POUM youth, *Juventud Comunista*, indirectly revealed the hesitations and oppositions within the central leadership of the POUM on this question when it wrote:

"There are in this Council too many representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, who have given us plenty of proof of their incapacity and absence of foresight. As for us, our party entered the

(14) Generality: the regional government which gave Catalonia some measure of autonomy beginning in 1932. Derived from the Barcelona Municipal Government which inherited the name (meaning a medieval town council).



Ernő Gero, Hungarian Comintern agent in Catalonia.



Dolores Ibarruri ("La Pasionaria"), instrument of Stalinist policy in Spain whose fanaticism and oratorical talents made her a powerful hack for the Moscow line.



Generality because it did not wish to swim against the stream in these hours of extreme gravity, and because it believed that the socialist revolution could have been given impetus through the Generality."

In fact, Andrés Nin who had affirmed twenty days previously in a meeting in Barcelona that the dictatorship of the proletariat already existed in Catalonia, specified:

"It is incomprehensible that in the existing circumstances, there should be in Catalonia a government formed by representatives of the republican Left (Esquerra), just as it is absolutely incomprehensible that at this moment there should be in Spain a government with bourgeois ministers."

But he had entrusted the task of eliminating the bourgeois ministers to the anarchist leaders, affirming: "If our anarchist comrades take charge of the situation and are willing to make some sacrifices, before long there will no longer be a single bourgeois minister in Spain."



A mountain bivouac of militiamen in the Sierra.

Trotsky retorted:

"In practice Nin has transformed the Leninist formula into its opposite; he entered a bourgeois government which has for its objective to despoil and smother all the acquisitions, all the strongest points of support for the nascent socialist revolution. The basis of his thought amounts to this: since this revolution is a socialist revolution 'in essence,' our entry into the government can only aid it . . . Did not Nin recognize that the revolution is 'in essence' socialist? Yes, he proclaimed it, but only to justify a policy which saps the very bases of the revolution."

In another article, drawing the balance sheet, he wrote:

"The POUM has indeed attempted theoretically to lean on the formula of the permanent revolution. (That is why the Stalinists have treated the Poumists as Trotskyists) but the revolution is not content with simple theoretical recognition. Instead of mobilizing the masses against the reformist leaders, including the anarchists, the POUM endeavors to convince these gentlemen of the superiority of socialism over capitalism."

With the entry of the POUM into the council of the Generality, the bridges were definitely burnt between Trotsky and the POUM. The dialogue was nevertheless going to be pursued until the extinction of the POUM and the liquidation of the revolutionary conquests by the coalition of Stalinists and bourgeoisie in the Negrin government and the restored bourgeois state.

#### THE SPRING 1937 DISCUSSION: NIN AND TROTSKY

In this light, we have the good fortune to have access to two important documents: Andrés Nin's speeches of 21 March and 25 April 1937, delivered at Barcelona, and an article by Trotsky, responding to the first, dated 23 April, on the eve of the May Days.

Nin declared: "The POUM, and with it the whole vanguard of the proletariat, is taking account of the fact that the revolutionary workers' upsurge which began on 19 July has receded considerably, that the revolutionary process is undergoing a pause, and that the workers' situation is today much weaker than six months ago." Recalling the dislocation of the mechanism of the bourgeois state in July and August 1936, the fact that the proletariat "imposed its will and its determination" because it was armed, the fact that "power was in the streets," he stated: "Today, Companys, in the name of the bourgeoisie, dares to tell the workers to shut up and obey."

Nin then analyzes the "symptoms of retreat which the Revolution is experiencing": he sees them in the "process of the reconstruction of the bourgeois state," "the campaign for the

**"Instead of mobilizing the masses against the reformist leaders, including the anarchists, the POUM endeavors to convince these gentlemen of the superiority of socialism over capitalism."**

creation of an apolitical regular army," the desire of the Madrid government to put into question the autonomy of Catalonia, the project for reforming "the services and bodies charged with the maintenance of public order" which significantly was to forbid employees of the civil services belonging to political organizations or to trade unions. This whole process began, according to him, with the elimination of the POUM from the government of the Generality in December.

Seeking then to analyze the causes of this "counter-revolutionary process," Andrés Nin raised first "the political role which was and is still being played by reformism in our Revolution, supported by that international organization which still has the cynicism to call itself 'communist'." "Reformism," he asserted, "was bound and is bound to fill the role in Catalonia and in Spain that it has filled in the entire world: that of the watchdog of the bourgeoisie." He then affirmed the responsibility of the leaders of the CNT in the retreat which "was able to occur as a result of the absence in this organization of a clear vision of the problem of power in so far as it was the essential problem of the Revolution." He specified: "The erroneous attitude of this organization has had fundamental consequences in the counter-revolutionary process. Without it, the retreat we face would in no way have been possible."

The remedies were right at hand, since it was not too late and "all is not yet lost." Turning toward the anarchist leaders, Nin declared: "The CNT should go to confession, abandon its old prejudices, which are surpassed a hundred times over by circumstances." Was it a question of struggling for power through violence? "No. Today the working class with the positions it still holds, is able to attack the power without recourse to violence."

He affirmed once again that the civil war was inseparable from the revolution and that this war was a revolutionary war, as was demonstrated by the political importance of the victory of Guadalajara, secured through revolutionary propaganda among the Italian troops. He called for increased repression against fascist agents and reprisals against the bombings, and concluded that for victory what was necessary was: "One flag. The red flag of the proletarian revolution. One government. A workers and peasants government, the working-class government."

On 25 April during the course of a conference on "the problem of power in the revolution," Nin completed and clarified his view. For him, "the formulas of the Russian Revolution, mechanically applied, will lead to defeat. It is necessary to adopt the spirit, not the letter, of the Russian Revolution." Even if it were true that in Spain, as in Russia, the bourgeoisie was incapable of accomplishing the democratic revolution, the differences between the Russian situation of 1917 and the existing situation of Spain were nevertheless important: the Spanish reformists were incomparably more powerful, benefitting from Anglo-French support and their desire to transform the civil war into an imperialist war. It was in those parties labeled working-class that the bourgeoisie sought refuge. In addition, the Russian working class had no democratic tradition; in Spain, the existence of the trade unions, parties, working-class organizations explained why Soviets had not arisen. In Spain, finally, anarchism was a mass movement, which was not the case in Russia, and this imposed "new problems and different tactics": "The problem is for the revolutionary instinct of the CNT to be turned into revolutionary consciousness. And for the heroism of the masses to be transformed into coherent politics." And the leader of the POUM addressed himself to those of the FAI and the CNT in order to appeal for the formation of a revolutionary workers front which would:

"convoke and convene the congress of the delegates of the workers' and peasants' trade unions and soldiers units, which will establish the bases for a new society and give birth to the Workers' and Peasants' Government, the government of victory and of the revolution."

At the same time, posing the problems of the Spanish Revolution, Trotsky asked: "Is victory possible?" It was incontestable that the republican popular front regime of Largo Caballero was doing its utmost to make the army the "democratic guard for the defense of private property." The

**"Without a proletarian revolution, the victory of democracy would only signify a detour on the way to the very same fascism."**



duty of revolutionists was clear: to defend bourgeois democracy with arms in hand, but without taking responsibility for it, without entering its government, and conserving their complete freedom of criticism and action, preparing for the overthrow of bourgeois democracy at the next stage. "Any other policy," he affirmed, "is a criminal undertaking with no hope of consolidating bourgeois democracy which is ineluctably destined to collapse, whatever the immediate military outcome of the civil war." It is because it defends private property that the popular front prepares the triumph of fascism: "without a proletarian revolution, the victory of democracy would only signify a detour on the way to the very same fascism."

Trotsky emphasized the fact that Nin had admitted that the revolution had receded. He wrote:

"Nin forgets to add: with the direct cooperation of the leadership of the POUM which, under the cover of 'criticism', adapted itself to the Socialists and the Stalinists, which is to say, to the bourgeoisie, instead of counterposing at all stages its party to all other parties and thus preparing the victory of the proletariat. We predicted to Nin, at the very beginning of the Spanish revolution six years ago, the consequences of this fatal policy of hesitation and adaptation."

**Amnistie Générale pour tous les prisonniers antifascistes.**

**Libération immédiate de tous les Camarades du P. O. U. M.**

**Nous n'admettons pas le principe d'un procès contre les camarades du C. E. du P. O. U. M. sans la garantie de la présence d'une délégation ouvrière internationale.**

**Nous protestons contre les exécutions sommaires et les assassinats de Camarades du P. O. U. M.**



Où se trouvent André NIN et les autres disparus ?

Andrés Nin as portrayed on a postcard: part of the international campaign against the persecution of POUM leaders.

Contrary to what Nin thought, it was not the POUM's expulsion from the Catalan government which marked the beginning of reaction, but its entry into this government. In reality, as Trotsky emphasized:

"It is necessary to say: 'Our participation in the Catalan government facilitated the possibility of the bourgeoisie reinforcing its rule, of chasing us out and entering openly upon the road of reaction.' At bottom, the POUM still finds itself half in the popular front. The heads of the POUM exhort the government plaintively to enter on the road of the socialist revolution. The heads of the POUM respectfully urge the heads of the CNT to finally understand the Marxist teachings on the state. The heads of the POUM consider themselves 'revolutionary counsellors' close to the heads of the popular front."

What is to be done?

"It is necessary to openly and boldly mobilize the masses against the popular front government. It is necessary to unveil to the syndicalist and anarchist workers the betrayals of those gentlemen who call themselves anarchists, but who are in reality simple liberals. It is necessary to relentlessly castigate Stalinism as the worst agent of the bourgeoisie. It is necessary to feel yourselves to be leaders of the revolutionary masses and not counsellors close to the bourgeois government."

Even if the "republican" army were to prevail over Franco, the victory of the revolution would be far from assured: such a victory, indeed, "would necessarily mean an explosion of civil war within the republican camp." "In this new civil war, the proletariat would only be able to win if, at its head, there was an inflexible revolutionary party, which had succeeded in winning the confidence of the majority of workers and semi-proletarian peasants. But if such a party does not appear at the critical hour, the civil war in the republican camp threatens to end in the victory of a Bonapartism by its nature very little distinguished from the dictatorship of General Franco. That is why the policy of the popular front is merely a detour on the road to the very same fascism."

In fact, as in 1931, the central problem from Trotsky's viewpoint was the party, the revolutionary leadership. And this is why, once again, he took up Nin—about whom he said on 14 April before the Dewey Commission: "He is my friend. I know him well. Nevertheless, I criticize him extremely vigorously." Trotsky wrote:

"The revolution retreats," announces Nin sentimentally, preparing in fact . . . for his own retreat . . . If Nin were capable of reflecting on his own words, he would comprehend that if the gentlemen leaders prevent the revolution from rising to the dicta-

torship of the proletariat, it inevitably will descend to fascism. It was thus in Germany, it was the same in Austria, and it will be thus in Spain, only after an incomparably shorter delay."

For Trotsky, Nin and his friends did not correctly analyze the situation, and especially, did not go to the end of the conclusions which it was necessary to draw.

"When Nin says that the Spanish workers are still today able to take power through peaceful means, he utters a flagrant falsehood. Already today, power is found in the hands of the highest echelons of the military and bureaucracy in league with the Stalinists and anarcho-reformists. In this struggle against the working class, these gentlemen lean on the foreign bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy. To talk under these conditions of a peaceful conquest of power is to delude oneself and to deceive the working class. In the same speech, Nin says that they want to take away the arms from the workers and advises not giving them up. This advice is surely correct. But when one class wants to disarm another, and that class, notably the proletariat, refuses to give them up, this signifies precisely the approach of civil war."

and Trotsky took on Nin's perspectives which he termed "mealy-mouthed": "The mealy-mouthed false perspective of

the peaceful conquest of power inverts all of Nin's radical reasoning on the dictatorship of the proletariat." The essence of Nin's policy lay here: "it permits him not to draw practical conclusions from his radical analysis and to continue the politics of centrist oscillations . . . The politics of POUM, do not, either in content or tone, correspond to the acuteness of the situation. The POUM leadership consoles itself in thinking that it is 'in advance' of other parties. This doesn't amount to much. We must regulate ourselves by events, by the march of the class struggle, not by the conduct of other parties."

Thus Nin's revolutionary phrases did not succeed in convincing Trotsky that the POUM had corrected itself. "We must," he wrote, "cleanly, resolutely and boldly detach ourselves from the umbilical cord of bourgeois public opinion. We must break with the petty-bourgeois parties, including the syndicalist leaders. We must go to the masses in their deepest and most exploited layers. We must not indulge illusions about a future victory that will come of itself. We must tell them the truth, however bitter. We must teach them to distrust the petty-bourgeois agents of capital. They must learn to rely on themselves. They must bind themselves indissolubly to their own destiny. They must learn to create for themselves their own fighting organizations—soviets—in opposition to the bourgeois state."

Trotsky demanded:

"Can one hope that the leadership of the POUM will accomplish this turn? Alas, the experience of six years of revolution leaves no room for such hopes. The revolutionaries outside as well as inside the POUM would certify themselves bankrupt if they reduced their own role to 'exhorting' Nin, Andrade and Gorkin in the same fashion that these latter exhort Caballero, Companys, and others. Revolutionaries must address themselves to the rank and file workers and oppose Nin's hesitations and vacillations."

The declaration on this last point was purely platonic: neither the militants organized in the *Leninist Voice* group, Spanish section of the Fourth International, nor their comrades organized in the rival group *The Soviet*, very young and almost all of foreign origin, would have the means or the time to address themselves "to the ranks" to denounce Nin outside or inside the POUM whose destruction approached.

#### THE MAY DAYS

The unfolding of the May Days themselves was going to definitively cut off discussion between the estranged comrades. Faced with the provocation organized by the PSUC men against



the Telefonica workers,<sup>15</sup> the working class of Barcelona countered with a spontaneous rising. For Trotsky, "this fact shows what an abyss has been dug between the anarchists and Poumists on the one side and the masses of workers on the other. The conception propagated by Nin that the 'proletariat can seize power by peaceful means' has been established as false to the core."

For Nin, the movement was produced because, not having posed the problem of reaction in political terms, "the accumulated irritation of the working class" had finally erupted in "a violent explosion, and, afterwards, a spontaneous and chaotic movement without immediate perspectives." The POUM placed itself at the side of the workers: "the course of the armed struggle, the spirit of the revolutionary workers and the importance of the strategic positions won were such that it would have been possible to seize power." He maintained, however: "our party, a minority force in the workers movement, could not take upon itself the responsibility for launching such a

of the real influence acquired in the years 1933-1935 in the Spanish working-class vanguard, Trotsky found himself reduced *vis à vis* the revolution to the role of commentator—what others call "prophet"—the opposite of the role he hoped to play. From this perspective, we are indebted to him for his brilliant analysis which perfectly clarifies certain aspects of the class struggle on this battleground.

On civil war—and its particular conditions—he wrote:

"In civil war, incomparably more than in ordinary war, *politics dominates strategy*. Robert Lee, as a military leader, certainly had more talent than Grant, but the program of the abolition of slavery assured the victory of Grant. During the three years of our civil war, the superiority of the art and technique of war was often on the side of the enemy, but at the end, it was the Bolshevik program which prevailed. The worker knew full well for what he fought. The peasant hesitated for a long time, but having compared by experience the two regimes, he finally supported the Bolshevik camp. In Spain the Stalinists, who led



Soldiers of the newly formed People's Army on their way to the front in Aragon, 1936.

ROBERT CAPA

slogan, especially since the leaders of the CNT and FAI are urgently requesting in radio speeches from the broadcasting stations in Barcelona that the workers abandon the struggle, sowing confusion and disorder among them." The POUM too, while demanding the withdrawal of the police and the promise not to disarm the workers, called on the morning of 7 May for abandoning the struggle, urging the workers to return to work.

In a document drafted for the Central Committee of the POUM on 12 May, Andrés Nin wrote on these events: "We are proud to proclaim that the attitude of our party effectively contributed to putting an end to the bloody struggle... and preventing the workers movement from being crushed by a ferocious repression." On 28 May *La Batalla* was banned. On 16 June Andrés Nin was arrested, to be assassinated by Stalin's henchmen. The POUM's policy did not impede the ferocious repression which crashed down upon all Spanish revolutionaries. During the insurrection, Trotsky had written: "It is necessary to put the revolutionary vanguard on guard against all that is ambiguous, confused, equivocal in the upper layers of the proletariat, nationally and internationally. Those who do not have the courage to oppose the Fourth International to the Second and Third will never have the courage to lead the workers in decisive struggles." In one sentence Trotsky summarized what the political line of Nin had represented to him in the course of the years of the Spanish Revolution.

#### THE GENERAL LESSONS OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

Thus, in spite of the years dedicated to the formation of authentic communist cadre within the *Communist Left*, in spite

the chorus from above, have advanced the formula to which Caballero has rallied: *first* the military victory and *then* the social reforms. Not seeing any radical differences between the two programs in actual practice, the laboring masses, the peasants especially, fall into indifference. Under these conditions, fascism will inevitably triumph, because the purely military advantage is on its side. Bold social reforms constitute the most effective arm in civil war and the fundamental condition for victory over fascism."

On world perspectives:

"If fascism prevails in Spain, France will be held like a vise from which she will not be able to free herself. The dictatorship of Franco will signify the inevitable acceleration of the European war under the most difficult conditions for France. It is unnecessary to add that a new European war will bleed the French people until their last drop of blood and will lead them into degeneration, carrying with it at the same time a terrible blow to all humanity."

On Stalinism and its role in the Spanish revolution, he wrote:

"Stalin, certainly, attempted to transport the external procedures of Bolshevism to Spanish soil: the Political Bureau, commissars, cells, GPU, etc. But he had emptied these forms of their socialist content. He had rejected the Bolshevik program and with that, soviets as the necessary form of the initiative of the masses. He put the Bolshevik techniques into the service of bourgeois property. In his bureaucratic narrow-mindedness, he thought that commissars in themselves were capable of assuring victory. But commissars of private property are found capable only of assuring defeat... Neither the heroism of the masses nor the courage of isolated revolutionaries was lacking. But the masses were left to themselves and the revolutionaries on the sidelines, without program or plan of action. The military chiefs were more concerned with crushing the social revolution than with military victory. The soldiers lost confidence in their commanders, the masses in the government; the peasants stepped aside, the workers grew weary, defeats mounted, demoralization mushroomed. It was not difficult to foresee all this at the beginning of the civil war. In posing the health of the capitalist regime as its task, the popular front was pledged to military defeat. Standing Bolshevism on its head, Stalin successfully fulfilled his role as the principal gravedigger of the revolution."

"The Spanish revolution showed once again that it is impossible to defend democracy against the revolutionary masses other than by the methods of fascist reaction. Inversely, it is impossible to lead a real struggle against fascism other than by the methods of the proletarian revolution."

(15) PSUC: Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), born of the fusion of the Socialist and Communist Parties of Catalonia in 1936. The incident referred to occurred on 3 May 1937 when three truckloads of Government Assault Guards, under the personal command of the PSUC's Rodríguez Sala, the Commissioner of Public Order, attempted to take over the Telefónica, which was dominated by the CNT and managed by a CNT-UGT committee. This Government provocation against a concrete instance of dual power was met with brief armed resistance by the telephone workers. News quickly spread throughout the city and workers flocked to their local CNT and POUM headquarters, taking arms and building barricades.



Such is the most general conclusion, which has not in the least been contradicted by the revolutionary events of the world in the last quarter century—on the contrary.

#### THE NEED FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

In 1936-1937 the Spanish working class did not have the tool which permitted the victory of the Revolution in Russia, a revolutionary party: according to Trotsky, the fundamental cause of the defeat of the revolution lies in this failure of the revolutionaries. For him, "in spite of its intentions, the POUM was in the last analysis the principal obstacle in the path of the construction of a revolutionary party." Its fate merits contemplation. Trotsky wrote on this subject: "The problem of the revolution must be analyzed to the bottom, to its final concrete consequences. Politics must conform to the fundamental laws of revolution, that is to say, to the movement of classes in struggle, and not to the fears and superficial prejudices of the petty-bourgeois groups who call themselves the popular front and many other things. The line of least resistance is revealed in revolution as the line of greatest failures. Fear of isolating oneself from the bourgeoisie leads to isolation from the masses. Adaptation to the conservative prejudices of the labor aristocracy means betrayal of the working class and the revolution. Excess of prudence is the most fatal imprudence. Such is the principal lesson of the collapse of the most honest political organization in Spain, the POUM, a centrist party."

It nevertheless remains that once again since the victory of Stalin in the Soviet Union, Trotsky was correct about Spain only in a negative way: the Spanish "Bolshevik-Leninists" had not been any more capable than had the French or German Trotskyists of building the revolutionary instrument which Trotsky called upon them to create; the Fourth International at that time was in fact embodied by this man alone, a giant who dominated his partisans and adversaries alike by his thought and by his experience of a third of a century of revolutionary struggle. The impotence and the mortal divisions of the Spanish Trotskyists, their tragic inability to orient in the path of revolutionary Marxism the groups of young socialists and libertarian militants, like the *Friends of Durruti*<sup>16</sup> who were incontestably evolving in their direction, does not present a more attractive balance sheet than that of the POUM leadership. Is it necessary then to conclude, as some have, that Trotsky in working resolutely to construct the Fourth International was still pursuing an outdated old dream—world revolution—and that the era of revolutions, which had opened with October 1917 had also, under the pressure of events, been ended then? This would be to reveal unwarranted optimism regarding capitalism's capacity to organize the world and assure its domination by man—an optimism, a confidence which nothing has occurred in the history of humanity since the tragic hours of the fall of Barcelona to confirm; on the contrary, Franco's Spain is there to remind those who have a tendency to forget.

The great lesson which emerges from the life work of Trotsky, particularly the pages dedicated to the Spanish Revolution, is his affirmation that humanity—that is, the class upon whom the future rests, the working class—is the master of

its fate and that it belongs to the working class to utilize the mechanisms of historical laws to put an end to the capitalist regime.

Those who believe neither in the capacities of the working class nor in the necessity for its emancipation from the yoke of exploitation, in a word, those who do not believe in the revolution and are by that fact against it, can surely for their own reasons declare the construction of the Fourth Intern:

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**"In spite of its intentions, the POUM was in the last analysis the principle obstacle in the path of the construction of a revolutionary party."**

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tional proclaimed by Trotsky to be "Utopian." On the other hand, those who think that humanity is not for all time doomed to terrorist dictatorships, to Hitler or Mussolini, Trujillo, Chiang Kai-shek, Castelo Branco or Ky, to concentration camps, to napalm bombing and atomic incineration, to pogroms and racist lynchings, all those who think that defeats contain lessons which will enable victory to be achieved one day, those people know that the problem is posed of a world revolutionary organization, the International.

Those people will think about the lines which Trotsky devoted to his final warning on history before World War II and will remember that revolutions—the locomotives of history, as Karl Marx said—are sometimes able to overtake the best intentioned revolutionaries. The failure of Nin, an honest revolutionary, was inherent in his political errors. A revolutionary Marxist cannot allow himself to proclaim that "the dictatorship of the proletariat exists"—when the bureaucratic apparatuses are in the process of transforming into empty shells the committees, which through the mobilization of the masses could become authentic soviets, and when there exists, even if it is only a "phantom" as Trotsky said, a bourgeois state which aspires to its revenge and does not lack pseudo-revolutionaries and pseudo-socialists to undertake its restoration: a revolutionary Marxist cannot, while proclaiming that a workers' state already exists, demobilize the masses whom he should be leading in the struggle to establish it. Nor can a revolutionary Marxist under the pretext of "not isolating himself" and "not swimming against the stream," adapt to the prejudices of the masses dictated by the reformist apparatuses, abstain from criticizing them in order to be a "counsellor" to the leaders carried to power by the first revolutionary wave, exhort to revolutionary activity those same "leaders" who fear the masses, in a word, renounce being at each moment the faithful interpreter of the historic needs of the masses of workers and poor peasants, their revolutionary leadership. When a revolutionary of such rare merit as Andrés Nin commits such errors, history is there to testify that the subsequent generations must pay for them, for decades, with their flesh and blood. Such is Trotsky's essential message on Spain, a message addressed to revolutionary militants who might be tempted to look for shortcuts and substitutes for organization of the laboring masses for class-conscious action on the road to power.

TRANSLATED BY BILL GREY.

(16) Friends of Durruti: left-wing anarchist formation within the CNT-FAI. Together with the anarchist youth it constituted the left wing of anarchism which in a pragmatic way embraced many of the programmatic points of Bolshevism.



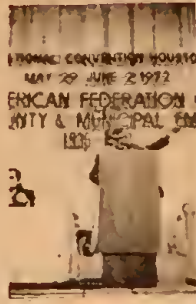
Defeated Republican troops entering France 1939.

ROBERT CAPA





from THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE



Democrat Barbara Jordan (left) called for "New Coalition" behind same old politics at 19th International Convention of AFSCME

## Continued from page 1

# AFSCME

keep getting bigger and better. Ames omitted a description of the conditions in public employment and glossed over the AFSCME policy of sweetheart mergers such as the one in Hawaii which exempted the union from any per capita dues for a year and mergers with the All City Employees Association in Los Angeles with a rumored dues loophole for two years.

### Growth of Cop Membership

By far the most serious, dangerous and repulsive element in the union's expansion plans has been the increase of organization among prison guards and police, particularly in the New York State area. Discussion of this controversial issue was shoved toward the Convention's end. The Militant Caucus of AFSCME alone introduced a resolution calling for the expulsion of cops from AFSCME.

Wurf, dripping with liberal moralisms, took the floor to say what a shame Attica had been, how racism and a repressive mentality indeed existed among AFSCME guards there, how it was the result of bad local leadership, how he had to intervene personally to set things right, how "our" union was the only one in the country to stand for inmate rights, how inmates and guards must realize that they are not enemies but must unite against the state administration. He of course blasted Rockefeller. He argued further that through association with labor the police would be liberalized. Finally, he opposed the oppositional resolution on the grounds that it was no solution to the "very real" problems we face.

Keith Dodd, a Militant Caucus member who had taken the floor a number of times earlier in the Convention, spoke for the anti-cop resolution. The hall was very quiet as he began his remarks. He pointed out that the issue was not good cops versus bad cops, but a question of role and function: the function of police and prison guards is determined by their relationship to the state as its hired guns. The guards at Attica made only token demands for the prisoners; their main demands were better riot training, more guards, more weapons, a special maximum security facility for "incorrigible" criminals, etc. Dodd denounced these as a call for outright concentration camps for militants—especially black militants—and as demands directed against the inmates. He pointed out that the state and its armed bodies have always been the determined and brutal opponents of workers'

struggles, and declared that only to the extent that cops refuse to be cops, refuse to carry out their orders, could they ever come over to the workers' side.

He underscored the truth that "A liberal cop can shoot you just as dead as a conservative cop!" He ended on the note that excluding the cops would strengthen the union as a labor organization because it is impossible to simultaneously defend the rights of those who struggle against exploitation and oppression and the "rights" of those whose job it is to suppress the struggle.

The resolution was clearly defeated, but the cops watched very closely, knowing that the small support for the resolution was a harbinger of future battles to be waged against them.

Wurf's cop members succeeded in embarrassing him in his attempt on the last day of the Convention to brighten his liberal image with an "Out Now" resolution on the Vietnam War. A cop made an amendment linking U.S. withdrawal to release of POW's. The amendment passed amid confusion, and Wurff then ruled that the passage of the amendment signified an "aye" vote on the main motion. It was left to Victor Gotbaum of New York District Council 37 to point out to Wurff that the motion as amended contradicted the International's 1970 position and would greatly embarrass them both at the St. Louis "Labor for Peace" Conference they both sponsored. After offering not to attend that conference, Wurff ordered that the amended resolution be tabled and moved with obvious relief to the next agenda point.

### Turning to the Democrats

For the first time in its history AFSCME took a stand on a national election. The union has set aside "PEOPLE" (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality), a slush fund to aid favored candidates, and is busily constructing a lobby to pressure Washington under Wurff's theory that "everything we've won on the local level can be taken away in Washington." That is true enough, and is in fact an important reason for the call for a Labor Party based on a program for a workers government. But to Wurff, the significance of politics over narrow economic struggle is simply an argument for keeping the union in the hip pocket of the liberal capitalists.

Barbara Jordan, a black woman Democrat who is currently a Texas State Senator and a Congressional candidate in Texas' 10th District, called for the creation of a "new coalition" based on the old Roosevelt coalition of blacks and organized labor with the Democrats—this time with black people as an "equal member." She attacked third parties for "giving up" and as divisive while blaming everything evil on Nixon.

During a speech following telephone messages to the Convention from Humphrey and McGovern, Wurff made clear his leaning toward Humphrey. Wurff had earlier committed the union to supporting Muskie, who made a major address to the Convention in person. Wurff lamely defended his earlier stand on the grounds that support for Muskie would somehow eliminate "fratricidal warfare" and that his endorsement "gave a marvelous opportunity to prove our strength." All Wurff had proved was a penchant for picking the losers in his game of "influencing" the capitalist enemy through the Democratic Party. Dropping Muskie, Wurff proceeded to support the probable next loser in the race.

The Militant Caucus centered its struggle around opposition to both capitalist parties. Its main resolution called for a Labor Party based on the trade unions. A number of speakers for the resolution took the floor and were fairly well received. Victor Gotbaum, New York City AFSCME chief, opposed the resolution and argued "I have never expected perfection from American democracy, only progress." He then posited that progress had been made and that "those communists and

Trotskyites" who refused to unite with the Social Democrats in Germany helped bring fascism to power. Gotbaum was forced to distort the history of the Trotskyist movement and obliquely red-bait to beat down the arguments for fighting for a Labor Party.

The Militant Caucus pointed out that McGovern was performing an invaluable service for the Democratic Party by luring back those disenchanted with "mainstream" Johnson-Humphrey-Muskie politics. The Labor Party resolution received about forty votes. The Caucus issued a leaflet to all delegates which stated in part:

"Long considered 'friends of labor' the liberal Democrats have shown that they are controlled by the big corporations just as are the Republicans. Every leading Democrat supported the wage freeze; in fact, it was a Democratic Congress that authored the Economic Stabilization Act under which Nixon invoked the freeze. Every leading Democrat has supported the war in Southeast Asia (HHH & Muskie ran together in '66 defending Johnson's war record, while McGovern, the so-called 'peace candidate' voted not to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in '67 and has consistently voted for defense appropriations, including those specifically earmarked to continue the war effort.) And despite their purely verbal attacks on the Republicans, they join hands with them against the workers, quickly voting for anti-labor, anti-strike legislation (e.g. the recent dock strike).

"In short, the 'lesser of two evils' blind alley is a dead end. And it is precisely now, when millions of workers (many turning to the racist Wallace as

## Class Series

This class is intended as a brief introduction to Marxism and the positions of the Spartacist League/Revolutionary Communist Youth. Classes will be held weekly beginning June 20 (Tuesdays). For more information, call Tweet at 467-6855 or Jan at 390-6048.

## LOS ANGELES

a 'protest' of all races and ages have no real enthusiasm for any of the leading Democrats, that the labor leaders are in an absolute frenzy to whip up support for them."

### Clamps are Tightened

Wurff's favorite theme is the "integrity" and "decency" of "our union." He loves to sound the note that AFSCME is "the most democratic union in the country." Behind the phrases stands the reality of an increasingly privileged bureaucracy, distant from the rank and file and even from its own staff.

The bureaucrats sought to push through three major proposals which go a long way toward consolidating their position. The three amendments were: (1) that the International President would have the power to appoint members of the Judicial Panel and that the Panel's functions would be slightly changed; (2) that there be an extension of the terms of office from two years to four years for the International Secretary-Treasurer, the International President and Vice Presidents; and (3) that the International Executive Board gain the power to set salaries. These measures were introduced separately on different days but together

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## WORKERS VANGUARD

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## AFSCME

they present the picture of a bureaucracy in consolidation.

A California AFSCME local presented an alternative amendment which carefully detailed the powers of the Judicial Panel and provided for election of its members by the biennial Convention, rather than the present system of appointment or election by the International Executive Board, as is now the case.

The question was finally called and a close vote was recorded. A demand for a roll call vote—which requires a 25% vote—failed with 260 votes.

The same afternoon the amendment on extension of terms for top officials was introduced. It met with even greater opposition. The voice vote went for the amendment but a call for a roll call vote won and the roll was called. Then one of the oldest bureaucratic tricks in the book was pulled with four hours of vote counting until it was finally determined that the "ayes" had it. This tended to wear out the angry delegates who no doubt wished they would never see another roll call vote.

The third important bureaucracy-strengthening amendment, on salaries, provoked the most heated floor fight of the Convention. Most of the opposition raised mild suspicions: "Why should we take the power to set salaries out of the hands of the accredited delegates?", "If you need more ask for it, but why take the power yourselves?" Dodd of the Militant Caucus argued that AFSCME was like other unions in that it had a privileged bureaucracy and differed from notoriously undemocratic unions only in relatively more circumspect treatment of dissidents—no bureaucratic lead pipes yet.

The vote was called and it seemed to many observers that the "Nos" had it. The chair ruled differently. Delegates began booing, shouting "No" and making all sorts of outraged noises. A delegate called for a roll call vote—not generally appreciated after the earlier roll call ordeal—and then called for a standing division of the house. The chair ruled that out of order but a speaker from the floor demanded to know where it was written that this was out of order. The chair was unable to answer and simply forced it through over the large and apparent discontent and went on to the next resolution.

Wurf, hit where it hurt, took the floor and delivered a long diatribe about the "integrity of our union" and about those who "would use our union" instead of attending to organizing their locals,

etc. He stomped and raged, and generally made a hysterical fool of himself.

### Wage Freeze, Women's Rights

The myriad of other issues before the Convention was mostly significant as an exposure of the policies of the Wurf leadership. On the issue of the wage-freeze, Wurf blamed the construction trades as being partly responsible for inflation, thereby dividing the workers and accepting the capitalist premise that it is decent wages and not the workings of the capitalist system that creates inflation. Wurf had remarked before the Convention that the situation of women was about fiftieth on the order of priorities. At the Convention, the call for protective legislation for men and women as a condition for support to the Equal Rights Amendment came from the floor and not from the International Executive Board.

On civil rights Wurf came out for "equality and good education" and on Vietnam he was for "immediate withdrawal" but managed to keep any moves for labor political strikes against the war, demanded by the Militant Caucus, off the floor; on the labor movement he called for organizing the unorganized.

### Wurf Ticket Unopposed

As predicted, Wurf was nominated for President and Bill Lucy for Secretary-Treasurer without opposition. Opposition to the incumbents arose in only three district councils and no significant differences were apparent.

The Militant Caucus, basing its program on a transitional program seeking to link up the particular grievances in the ranks against the increasingly entrenched Wurf bureaucracy with the struggle to overwhelm and destroy the system of capitalist wage slavery, was the only organized opposition at the Convention. Other political tendencies represented by individuals gave an even more miserable account of themselves than one might assume on the basis of their reformist programs. A delegate sporting a "Vote Socialist Workers" button was unable to strike even a militant posture on an issue as clear-cut as the proposal to grant the top bureaucrats control over their own salaries; he declared that he "just didn't understand why the International Executive Board was proposing this—haven't we been generous enough?"—a grovelling performance wrapped in naiveté. The Workers League's sympathizers distinguished themselves, as expected, by their spirited defense of cop membership in the union. One Workers League supporter carried the WL line to its logical extreme, commiserating in conversation with police delegates about how unfortunate it was that a few delegates wanted the cops thrown out.

The contradiction between the substantial oppositionist sentiment expressed in floor debates over bureaucracy and privilege and the absence of widely-based organized opposition to Wurf and Co. was glaringly apparent. It was precisely to present a programmatically principled opposition that the Militant Caucus intervened at this Convention. ■

## Sub Drive Surpasses Goal

The drive for 600 new one-year Workers Vanguard subscriptions is a success. This issue goes to press too soon to give final tabulation by area or the announcement of those comrades with highest (and lowest) scores. These will be reported in the next issue. But we are over the top nationally and in most localities. In addition hundreds of RCY Newsletter and Women and Revolution subs were sold in the course of the drive.

Securing these subs has been in the main, for the individual comrades involved, hard, grinding, uncertain work. Typically some three to four hours has been expended for each sub sold at the factory gates, campuses, meetings, union halls and from individual contacts. But the steady expenditure of this effort has led local by local to the overall success of the drive. Workers Vanguard now goes forward with a broadened circulation base and an increased impact in the class struggle.

Continued from page 16

## Black New Left Turns to Labor

leadership which has usurped control, is evident also in the following Telum statement:

"Attend all local and union meetings. Usually a lot of things go on that are important for us to know. If you aren't there and some decisions are made that are not in your interests you lose and the union and company win." [Emphasis ours]

One of the contradictions the union bureaucracy encounters is that its policies weaken the unions which form its own social base. The bureaucrats are often forced to fight, within limits, after laying the groundwork for the union's defeat. The "union" didn't win when CWA President Beirne ended last summer's strike five days after promising that only a membership vote could end it, nor was it a "union" victory when most local leaderships quickly acceded to his betrayal. A victory for the Beirne bureaucracy it was, but only in the short run. Victory for the "union" it was not. Even the bureaucracy's dues coffers suffered through the refusal of New York City operators, disgusted by their treatment, to join CWA. To say that the union wins when a bureaucrat succeeds in ramming through a betrayal is tantamount to claiming that the Chinese deformed workers state "won" when Chairman Mao wheeled and dealt with Nixon, hoping to protect his own position at the expense of the workers in China and worldwide. The BWC claims precisely that; in the case of unions they merely turn their analysis upside-down and claim an identity of interests between bureaucrats and their unions—a victory for the bureaucrats is a victory for the union and a defeat for the workers.

The capitalist-union bureaucrat-union amalgam is a conception at once bourgeois and New Leftist. It is based in part on the useless truism that "a boss is a boss" and partly upon the confusion of class position in objective reality with the subjective issue of class loyalties. The New Left generally obscured this all-important Marxist distinction, often holding that a reactionary, relatively well-paid worker was, because of his delusions, part of the "ruling class."

### Racism and the Unions

It is a savage fact of American life that all unions are today heavily bureaucratized and most keep black workers on the bottom. But it is also true that unions are working-class organizations thrown up by the workers for struggle against the bosses despite—but conditioned by—the backwardness of the working-class white majority and especially its usually conservative and racist "leadership." White workers are squeezed, though often less and later, by the same capitalists with the assistance of the same union bureaucrats that black workers face, and their needs can be served only by the destruction of these same enemies.

But the BWC has already written off the white working class in all its sections and does not propose a battle inside the unions. In his speech Watson noted:

"Due to the years of class-collaborationist policies the established unions are hopelessly paralyzed when it comes to real class struggle.

"The old left has long ago given up revolutionary practice for reformist and revisionist policies which are totally out of touch with present reality.

"The new left is fragmented and demoralized and barely understands the role of the black and Third World working class anyway.

"The Black Workers Congress armed with a correct analysis and program, coupled with its projected activity being national in scope, is the only currently existing organization that promises to provide the leadership necessary in the upcoming struggle.

"We must rise to the historic task. We must put forth the revolutionary slogans.

"We must organize the broad masses to understand the necessity of building socialism."

The critical reader is forced to ask: What leadership, on what program, brought the union movement to its present "paralysis"? What was wrong with the policies of the "old" left in the

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days when it was not so old? What will prevent the BWC from following the same class-collaborationist path already trod by many thousands of militants in no way less dedicated subjectively to the class struggle than the BWC? These questions are not a scholastic quibble, and certainly not a "white," "old left" or "New Left" issue; the answers will determine on which side of the class line the BWC will stand.

Seeing the unions as "hopelessly paralyzed," the BWC writes off a perspective of fighting within the unions to defeat the bureaucracy, and instead accepts a policy of dual unionism along racial lines. Instead of promoting unity of the "broad masses," racial dual unionism allows the racist bureaucrats to portray the black workers as union-wreckers.

Racial dual unionism in fact has a much longer history in the American labor movement, particularly the AFL, than the BWC would care to admit—and it was racist union policy designed to isolate the potentially most militant section of the class, black workers, in separate unions or separate locals. The BWC policy is a reaction against racism, but its effect is to give a left cover to a revival of a hoary, reactionary and lily-white tradition in conservative unionism.

### Abstentionism

Instead of seeking to lead the class as a whole, the BWC encourages the breakaway of that section of the class which is in many ways most suited to lead it. The BWC abandons white workers to the union bureaucrats and the primitive prejudices they foster. In "Three Tactics," Forman insists that "our jobs as revolutionaries is to take nationalistic feelings and turn them into revolutionary positives." He concludes that "fundamentally, the task of combating racism in the white community and among white workers is the task of those whites who want to join in the revolutionary struggle." Thus the task of leading the white workers is left to whites; the backward can lead the backward.

In reality such a policy concedes defeat in advance. That is of course anyone's right, but it is not Leninism. It is an abstentionism which is a gift to the worst demagogues, who fan the fears and bolster the ignorance of the white workers. No Leninist, for example, would leave the task of radicalizing the Protestant working masses in Ireland to the Protestants. That would be an open invitation to the Paisleys—the program of the Orange societies and the Green Tories. Especially since the BWC explicitly states that all the "white" groups—old left and New Left alike—have incorrect politics, the statement that whites should organize whites means at best that consciousness will come to the whites spontaneously, a fundamentally New Left position, and at worst that the only politics whites will ever have is racist conservatism.

Racial separatism in general—whether taking the form of dual unionism, separate "community control," segregation of black students in schools, etc.—is not merely a bourgeois and reactionary policy, but one which helps free the hands of rightist and fascist elements which in a period of social crisis could urge the physical elimination of oppressed groups, primarily the black population. A fascist upsurge in the U.S., while not imminent, is a real long-term danger. A fascist movement could carry out intensified oppression, and possibly the physical annihilation of the black population, more easily if the leadership of its intended black victims has succeeded in cordoning off the bulk of black workers outside the decisive workers' organizations and major points of production. The struggle to integrate blacks fully into the working class and its organizations where they can wield immense organized power, and the struggle in the unions to offer real equal protection to black members, are inseparable from the basic duty of defense against U.S. racism and the potential base it offers for an indigenous fascist "final solution" of the race issue.

A transitional program for workers' struggles, which links up the necessity to overthrow bourgeois society with the felt grievances and need for defense of the working class and all the oppressed, demands an integrated program of class struggle. To assume otherwise is to grant the the pluralist notion that the real interests of white and black workers are counterposed and reduce the class struggle—as the bourgeoisie in "normal" times succeeds in doing—to a struggle within the class for a relatively greater share of the capitalist-controlled "pie."

It is precisely when masses of black workers have participated in struggles of the entire working class that the black population has made the most lasting gains. This is massively demonstrated in the rise of the CIO. A more recent example was covered in *Spartacist*:

"... the 1968 experience of the Concerned Transit Workers among Chicago bus drivers is a good counter-example. Around issues such as repair of unsafe buses, increased bus runs and elimination of a broken-up work day, the Black leadership of the CTW led two highly successful wildcats, carrying the majority of white bus drivers along with them. By providing genuine class leadership, the CTW was able to get white workers to support its demands for more Black representation in union posts and prohibiting the (largely white) retirees from voting on issues concerning only active drivers."

—*Spartacist* #18, Nov.-Dec. 1970

A perspective of united class struggle does not imply wooden inflexibility in tactics nor a postponement of struggle until the more backward are ready. Cases will arise in which all-black union caucuses may be unavoidable. Such groupings may still fight for the interests of the class as a whole if the imposed organizational tactic is not raised to the level of strategy or principle, i.e. if the program is not based on racial exclusion but struggles to overcome the racial division. It is a fundamentally different matter, however, to begin with the perspective of separatism, conceding the field to working-class backwardness and racism before the battle is joined.

The BWC poses racially separate union organizations as a principle in part because it has little else to raise to the workers by way of orientation or program. Its propaganda (*Siege*, *Point of Production*, various pamphlets) divides up about equally between denunciations of imperialism in Vietnam, Africa and elsewhere and exposés of discrimination and rotten conditions faced by black and other minority-group workers in various industries, as well as in prisons and the army. One article predicts a spontaneous strike wave in response to the wage-price freeze, another proposes a march through Detroit to protest the Attica massacre, but virtually nowhere is there any discussion of a program for the workplace, demands which can unite the class in struggle by linking black workers' rights to the upgrading of the class as a whole. Thus a proposed organizational form becomes the substitute for a program to revolutionize the labor movement.

### Nationalism

The American left has repeatedly tripped up on the key question of the nature of black oppression and the means to end it. The ubiquitous refusal to recognize that U.S. blacks do not constitute a nation—a potentially separate economic and cultural unit—is only the beginning. Even were the blacks a nation, the Leninist recognition of the right of nations to self-determination (i.e. the option of forming a separate state) has never meant support to the nationalist ideology the bourgeoisie peddles to the masses. Leninists reject and abhor nationalism, the ideology of the bourgeoisie; there is no "progressive nationalism."

The reactionary meaning of black nationalism was displayed recently by the convening of the National Black Political Convention held in Gary, Indiana last March. In the name of the "black community" the convention funnelled black votes into the Democratic Party. The convention was run by bourgeois politicians like members of the Congressional Black Caucus, Gary's Mayor Hatcher and nationalist demagogues like Leroi Jones, an open, well-known scab-herder in the Newark teachers' strike.

While we must recognize black nationalism as a trap, it is essential to stress that it is not blacks who bear the primary responsibility for undermining class unity. Racial division, fostered by the ruling class, is transmitted to the class as a whole through the largely white labor bureaucracy and is reflected among most white workers as racism or more usually as narrowly self-interested indifference to racial injustice.

### Stalinism

The distorted nationalist views of the BWC are related to its obeisance to the Stalinist bureau-

crats, the arch-class-collaborators. In true Stalinist form, the BWC race-baits left critics of Mao Tse-tung's regime:

"These racists brand the government of China as everything from revisionist to a petty bourgeois dictatorship. Some of these same voices were heard to say that the great Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese people were revisionists because they entered into diplomatic struggle in Paris. The Vietnamese have not relented on their armed struggle against United States imperialism and there is every reason to support China and to attack these arrogant white racist leftists who think they are the only true genuine revolutionaries in the world."

—"Nixon's Visit to China," *Siege*, Vol. 1, no. 1

To support the Vietnamese struggle, one must warn the workers and peasants of the danger of another Geneva Accords, endorsed by the bureaucrats of China, the USSR and North Vietnam in 1954. The Geneva agreement was no "diplomatic struggle"—it was a deliberate gift of South Vietnam to U.S. imperialism. It was a sellout not because it was a retreat—a necessity at times in class war as in all warfare—but because it was determined by the policy of "peaceful coexistence" which is nothing but class collaboration on a global scale. Profoundly nationalistic, the Stalinist bureaucrats sell out the workers in other countries in the hope of "easing tensions" between their own regime and world imperialism. Mao's recent cordial welcome to Nixon has laid the basis for another Geneva sellout. Supporting the Chinese revolution against imperialism is not the same as supporting its bureaucrats, just as supporting a union against the bosses is not the same as supporting George Meany. It is impossible for an organization which identifies its program with Stalinist "socialism in one country" and working-class betrayal through armed force and at the "peace" table, to do anything but vie with the Stalinists in betrayal.

### Class Struggle Ahead

Black nationalism among workers stems from a deep demoralization resulting from the failure of the liberal-led civil rights movement, the split and disintegration of the Panthers, the bankruptcy of most of the ostensible left and the racist reformism of the union movement under bureaucratic leadership. It stems from the hope that perhaps a "black thing" can at least halt the string of defeats. It is, at bottom, a reflection in a section of the working class of the economic and political crisis permeating society. Yet for all that it is another false perspective, one which will benefit only the ruling class and perhaps a small stratum of blacks. The real shattering of the nationalists' illusions will come with the inevitable outburst of massive labor struggles in the not too distant future.

The white working class in the U.S. is now far more fluid and less monolithic, more eager to be shaken to its senses than the BWC and black nationalist tendencies of all stripes recognize. Twenty-five years of conservatized unionism, lesser-evil bourgeois politics and cultural squalor in the richest capitalist country in the world have yielded even the upper layers of white workers at best fat mortgages and in recent years an actually declining standard of living. A section of the class—at present, primarily the younger workers—is subjectively prepared to throw off the defeatism and the retreat into backwardness produced by the betrayals of the left and its consequent purging from the unions after World War II.

But people accommodate in the long run, in one way or another, to the requirements of the existing social order if no way out is apparent; if a leadership is not built based on uncompromising hostility to the bourgeois order and possessing the resolve and the capacity to eliminate it for good, these workers too will fall victim to new outbreaks of virulent anti-communism and outright racism to "protect" their minimal advantages and offset their sense of powerlessness. If militant black workers, the present natural leaders of this section of the class, do not recognize this opportunity, it will not be primarily their fault; they will merely be remembering the indifference and the blows received from their white class brothers. But such a failure would be a tragedy for the American workers movement and the world proletarian revolution. ■



## BLACK WORKERS CONGRESS:

# Black New Left Turns to Labor

The cataclysmic shattering of the Black Panther Party, which previously had enjoyed virtually uncontested hegemony in the black radical movement (and vicariously among the white New Left) was graphic proof of the impossibility of fusing into a viable and self-consistent whole the contradictory impulses which from the first had animated black nationalism. In the main rejecting the simple hustlerism of the "porkchop" nationalists (whose rhetoric was aimed at the creation of black enclaves over which they could preside as administrative bureaucrats subsidized by the government or capitalist foundations) the Panthers embodied both an impulse toward radical terrorism ("urban guerilla war") and reformist populism ("community control," "serve the people"). The Panthers combined these impulses, with the proportions shifting from time to time, until the split, when the latter thrust became generally identified with the Newton wing and the former with the grouping around Cleaver.

The conflict flowed from a contradiction inherent in black nationalism, which views American blacks as a national group whereas they in fact constitute a specially oppressed color-caste almost entirely confined within, and at the bottom of, the U.S. working class. Two thirds of the American black population has shifted from the rural South to the urban ghettos all across the U.S. Thus blacks do not possess one of the crucial pre-conditions for the establishment of a separate political economy: a separate territory. As avowed nationalists unable to very convincingly pose the strategy deemed applicable by their Maoist mentors for oppressed nations—terrorism against the occupying imperialism aimed at the creation of a separate state—the Panthers were forced to seek an orientation toward American problems and class antagonisms, and in some way confront the problems of black American workers.

In the aftermath of the Panther split, several currents have crystallized stressing different aspects of the black nationalism which the Panthers encompassed. The most visible are probably the increasingly prominent reactionary "cultural nationalists" of the Leroi Jones type. Perhaps the most interesting is the Black Workers Congress, which has dropped the Panthers' concentration on street recruiting and glorification of lumpenization and seeks to organize in industry (something the Panthers tried only sporadically).

The Black Workers Congress held its first national conference on Labor Day 1971 in Gary, Indiana with a reported attendance of 300. The BWC grew out of earlier scattered black union movements, including the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit, and remnants of the Panthers. Among its leaders is James Forman, a SNCC leader from 1961 to 1967 and very briefly Panther Minister of Foreign Affairs until his resignation in July 1968. Forman embodies much of the history of the black movement over the past 15 years: an ambivalent black nationalism and a deep pessimism toward the capacity of the white majority of the U.S. working class to play a revolutionary role.

### "Theory"

The BWC avoids coming to terms with working-class theory and history, protecting itself from "unhealthy" ideas by white-baiting other tendencies. The "Manifesto of the Black Workers Congress" warns:

"...Some people in the traditional white left in this country have historically tried to jump on the bandwagon of black movements.... We must build our own revolutionary movement. We too can read all the revolutionary thinkers and apply their thoughts to our concrete realities."

The nationalist tunnel vision of the BWC forces it to deny the integrated composition of the so-called "traditional white left." Even the Communist Party has consistently had a higher percentage of black members than the percentage of blacks in the U.S. population as a whole (though not as high as the black percentage of the working class). Anything short of black exclusionism is painted as domination by the white man and his ideas.

The BWC espouses the most extreme eclecticism within its framework of nationalism and Stalinism. Forman's pamphlet "Three Tactics" discusses the importance of revolutionary thinkers:

"The works of Mao Tse Tung, Lin Biao, Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, General Glop, Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, the Tupamaros, the Palestinian guerillas—the wisdom of all these thinkers must be studied and applied to the concrete realities of the United States. All revolutionary theory can be applied in one form or another to some of the problems that we face in the United States."

"In one form or another" of course any theory can be applied to the "concrete realities" of the U.S. or anywhere else. And with such an approach anyone's thought—even Castro's or the bourgeois nationalist Nkrumah's—can be superficially squared with fragments of Marxism-Leninism. Such eclecticism, however, ignores the context and thrust of the particular features of political theories and theory becomes a sort of hardware store from which one can purchase whatever items are momentarily needed or seem attractive, and ignore the rest. One can take the revolutionary prestige of Marx and Lenin, add bourgeois nationalism to seem less "sectarian," add guerilla warfare to seem up-to-date, etc. The inevitable result is a theoretical hodgepodge which can as easily justify bourgeois impulses as revolutionary ones depending upon which of the contradictory bits of the "theory" one wishes to apply.

The declared goal of the BWC is socialism:

"Workers control of the means of work and production, transportation services and communication facilities so that the exploitation of labor will cease and no person or corporation will get rich off the labor of another person but all people will work for the collective benefit of humanity."

—Manifesto of the BWC

But the BWC's eclectic obeisance to Stalinist class-collaboration and "peaceful coexistence," and especially its inclusion of bourgeois militant-sounding nationalists like the late Nkrumah in its pantheon of "revolutionary thinkers" means that despite formal commitment to socialism, the BWC actually straddles class lines. Ultimately, a workers' organization must accept the ideology of the bourgeoisie or the revolutionary proletariat. A great gift to the bourgeoisie from Stalinism, social-democracy and pseudo-socialist nationalism is ideology enabling opportunists in the workers movement to tie their supporters to continued bourgeois class rule under a rubric of professed socialist goals.

Conspicuously absent from Forman's list is Leon Trotsky or anyone else associated with the Left Opposition to the bureaucratic degeneration of the world communist movement. Instead we are treated to a series of national reformisms based on the theory of "socialism in one country." It is the profound hostility to internationalism that forms the unifying conception which brings Mao, Nkrumah and others under one umbrella, with Lenin as mere window dressing.

The BWC's hostility to white tail-ending (or, we might add, years of manipulation and betrayal by the CP and others) is understandable and in itself correct, but the BWC fixes on the color of (most of) the malefactors rather than their opportunist politics. The BWC's own conception of the role revolutionary whites can play in fact necessitates tailism by definition. If a white worker wishes to support the BWC—and it does seek white support—he is given no choice but to submerge his own political views, since the BWC is not interested in hearing "white" opinions.

The BWC's conclusion is "blacks lead blacks, whites lead whites"—a perspective fraught with the deadly danger of offering racist whites a vista of a segregated "socialism." The "left" nationalists have never been able to solve the problem of the link-up or eventual union of the workers of different national or racial groups somewhere along the road to revolution. The reason is simple: if it is clearly posed that the two groups of workers have long-term common interests and

will need one another's support, then attempts at common struggle should begin immediately, since as the Biblical parable goes "you reap what you sow." Unwilling to sow even the first scattered seeds of a perspective of united class struggle today, nationalists must necessarily be vague on the type of crop they expect or whether in fact it will ever sprout.

### Dual Unionism

The strategic thrust of BWC propaganda is in the direction of a breakaway of black and other "Third World" workers into separate unions. Point 8 of the Manifesto calls for

"The creation in the labor movement of revolutionary Black caucuses, Chicano and Puerto Rican revolutionary caucuses, Third World labor alliances, independent revolutionary union movements and other forms of revolutionary labor association that will seek to break the strangle-hold of the reactionary labor bureaucrats and the capitalistic class collaborators that help to prevent working-class people from understanding their historic role in controlling the means of production."

The dual union perspective becomes clearer in the position paper "Conditions Facing Black and Third World Workers," a speech by John Watson to the founding conference of the BWC, reprinted in the first issue of Siege, an organ of the BWC. Watson repeatedly refers to the companies and the unions in the same breath without distinction:

"...in reality we are still the victims of the virulent racism of both the companies and the unions, "...Black and other Third World workers often are forced to struggle for survival against both the unions and the companies.

"...These [black] groups are challenging both companies and unions on the issues of their racism, exploitation, and their generally class-collaborationist policies on health, safety, etc."

A recent issue of Telrum, published by the Telephone Revolutionary Union Movement, the telephone workers' section of the BWC, also strongly implies a dual unionist perspective, as well as the confusion in social role of union and employer.

"There is little difference between the International and Local Unions. The objective of both is to get money. Suppression through race, sex and class in that order, is their means of getting it. We the working people are being exploited by huge money making animals, the union has become one of those animals." [Emphasis ours]

The union bureaucracy is of course highly concerned about maintaining the flow of the membership's money in the form of dues—upon that money depends its existence as a parasitic stratum of the working class, identifying its fortunes with those of the capitalist system. But the union bureaucracy does not exploit labor as do the capitalists. Its higher social and economic standing relative to the working class depends upon its ability to persuade the working class, through maintaining bourgeois consciousness but also by waging a limited fight for its class, that it is the legitimate representative of the class. Understanding the role of the bureaucratic union leadership requires understanding of the distinction between class enemy—the capitalists—and the betrayers of the class who now control the workers organizations.

The dual unionist perspective flows in part from confusion:

"I think as workers of the Phone Company we should give a lot of thought to our five Unions. We know that the Unions are full of B.S. They serve no purpose in our Struggle because we are never represented properly. We must unite, fight and form our own Union. One, that will speak for the workers and not for the company."

—Telrum

It is not clear in the above passage whether the author really means by "our own union" a revitalized CWA under new leadership or a separate union structure. In either case, what is notably missing is a program concrete enough to promise qualitatively different union leadership from that now endured by telephone workers.

The confusion of the union with the bureaucratic

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