

## Murderous Nationalism and Stalinist Betrayal in Near East

The violence at the Olympics which resulted in the deaths of Israeli athletes and Arab terrorists, and the swift and savage military "response" of the Israeli state, catapulted the Near East once again into the front-page headlines. The indefensible petty-bourgeois terrorist frenzy manifested at Munich grows out of the evident Israeli consolidation of the victories carved out of the living body of the Arab peoples, respectable world bourgeois public opinion—such as that emanating from the current butcher of Vietnam, Nixon—against the Arab terrorist violence only obscures the fundamental violence of the continued denial of the rights of the Palestinian Arab population victimized by the State of Israel. Moreover, the bourgeois outcry passes lightly over the vastly bloodier retaliation by the Israeli state which, responding as if it were still a gang of Zionist terrorists, maimed and murdered Arab villagers, including children.

So long as bourgeois nationalism is pitted against bourgeois nationalism, no matter who had the last victory, the masses of the laboring population of the defeated will pay for that victory and be fertile objects for further nationalist manipulation. Thus the counterposing of Arab nationalism to Zionism in the absence of a decisive thrust for working-class power in the Near East leads inexorably to outbursts of the "Black September" type and to the inevitable fierce reprisals.

Somewhat less sensational than the events at the Olympics, but far more important in its implications, was the precipitous expulsion of Soviet military personnel from Egypt some weeks earlier. The Soviet Stalinists are reaping the fruit of their catastrophic alliances with the reactionary Arab military cliques, as part of the policy of great-power maneuvering and "peaceful coexistence."

### Soviet Arms Squandered

The Soviets' policies have been equally catastrophic since the 1967 Near East war and before. Strewn across the Sinai desert and Egyptian airfields, 550 immobilized and deserted tanks, the twisted burned-out wreckage of 365 jet fighters and 69 bombers, over a billion dollars in Soviet military aid squandered—these were the spoils of the Six Days' War for the USSR and its "progressive" ally, Egypt. The fate of North Vietnam may hang by a thread as it bears the full brunt of U.S. imperialism's assault, while the Commissars and Party secretaries in the Kremlin

dole out aid with an eyedropper. But for the bourgeois Arab military regimes nothing was too good. Since the 1967 war the Soviet Union has completely rebuilt the Egyptian armed forces, lavishing upon them the very finest and most advanced military hardware. Thus, by the end of last year Egypt had received 525 fighter bombers, including the latest model MiG-23's, 200 advanced MiG-21J interceptors and 110 SU-7 fighter bombers. Along the Suez Canal the Russians built 63 SAM batteries. For their "comrades" in North Vietnam the Soviets could spare only 10 bombers, 155 fighters (primarily MiG-19's, 17's and 15's) and 35 SAM batteries.

The recent North Vietnamese spring offensive gave dramatic evidence of the lack of sophisticated military equipment. In order to launch substantial troop movements into South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese were required to move *all* of their SAMs up to the DMZ to provide some protection from U.S. bombing. But this stripped their major cities of air cover and exposed them to heavy B-52 raids. Groups like Progressive Labor and the Maoists, who claim that sophisticated weaponry is unnecessary and the sheer will to fight "People's War" will defeat U.S. imperialism, only serve as apologists for the cowardly stinginess of the Soviet Union and China. Had the armaments which now rust on the desert sands or have been captured by Moshe Dayan gone instead to North Vietnam, U.S. imperialism would have been years ago plunged into a militarily untenable situation.

The Russian Stalinists' apparently unshakable determination to aid and abet anti-Soviet regimes in the Near East is not a policy of recent origin. Sadat's predecessor, Nasser, was second to none in anti-Soviet zeal. In a speech on 20 March 1959 he ranted:

"Through our unity which enabled us to destroy imperialism and its stooges, we will, God willing, destroy Communism and dependence. Using the same weapons which helped us defeat imperialism and imperialist stooges, we can defeat Communism, its agents and Communist parties."

Yet in a speech on 23 July 1968 Nasser was able to boast:

"In reality we have so far paid not one millieme for the arms we obtained from the Soviet Union to equip our armed forces.... I wish to tell you frankly and clearly that the Soviet Union has never tried, not even in our most crucial times, to dictate conditions to us or to ask anything of us."



Israeli soldiers gloat over captured Egyptian booty during June 1967 war. USSR kept tight control over its military hardware after Egyptians abandoned hundreds of Soviet tanks, other armour and missiles in the Sinai desert.

This policy of munificent military support to the reactionary Arab nationalist regimes led directly to the Russians' inglorious departure from Egypt.

For no doubt a variety of reasons, the dumping of military equipment into Egypt was resented among sections of Soviet society. Soviet workers, in particular, were disgruntled about seeing their productivity wasted on reactionary Arab regimes. In an article entitled "No Love for Freeloaders" (31 July 1972), *Newsweek* reported:

"Under the pressure of this discontent, the Kremlin has even taken to disguising its shipments to the Middle East—stamping special code words on packing crates instead of labeling them with destinations such as Latakia, Syria or Alexandria, Egypt."

While Stalinism is immune from learning the political lessons of its mistakes, the Soviet Union at least learned never to trust with sophisti-

cated weapons an army composed of corrupt officers and unskilled peasant soldiers. Along with the jet planes, SAMs and three armoured divisions came 12,000 Soviet soldiers to operate and man this equipment, and 4,000 Russian advisors to attempt to instruct the Egyptian army in its use. (Needless to say, not one Russian soldier or military cadre could be spared for North Vietnam.)

### Sadat Placates Military Clique

The presence of the Soviet troops, who had exclusive access to the Russian weaponry, and the advisors, who had, justifiably, nothing but contempt for the leadership capacity of the corrupt Egyptian officers and the fighting capacity of the Egyptian troops, undermined and incensed the Egyptian officer corps, whose xenophobia is exceeded

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## Speed-Up Pressures Mount in Auto

Auto workers across the country are reeling under the impact of incredible speed-ups, layoffs and deteriorating working conditions as the auto companies attempt to drive up production on the new models. Their United Auto Workers (UAW) union "leadership" however, continues its blatant betrayals and policy of class-collaboration unhindered by any effective opposition.

The pressure remains acute in General Motors, which, complaining about lack of worker "productivity," instituted its special Assembly Division (GMAD) management team to drive up exploitation of labor through layoffs and speed-ups to counter the effects the capitalist economic crisis is having on auto companies (see WV No. 9). This pressure has resulted in several bitter walkouts in the GM system in the period since the 1970 GM strike, such as at the new "model" plant at Lordstown, and the longest GM strike in history at Norwood, Ohio for which the leadership had accepted a settlement at press time.

In the Reutherite tradition, the UAW bureaucracy under Leonard Woodcock is keeping the lid on rank-and-file unrest by isolating local walkouts rather than mobilizing a nationwide defense. The Lordstown strikers were allowed to burn themselves out before being railroaded back to work, and the International is doing its best to forget the Norwood strike. The September issue of the International's paper, *UAW Solidarity*, buries news of the strike on its back pages, referring to it vaguely as a "job description issue," with no mention of the special GMAD "productivity" measures and similar pressures throughout the auto industry

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only by its anti-communism. This officer caste is the bulwark of such "progressive" regimes as Sadat's Egypt, Numeiry's Sudan, Baathist Syria and Iraq, which are *bonapartist*. Their "progressive" nature consists in the fact that, having been turned down by the World Pawnbroker for bankrupt bourgeois regimes—U.S. imperialism—they trudge shamefaced to Moscow to do their begging. As readily as a derelict "discovers Christ" to get his bowl of soup, these tinpot "revolutionary" colonels mouth the proper "anti-imperialist" phrases to get their hands on MIGs and SAMs. And just as readily on the morrow as the derelict finds his way back to the road of sin for a bottle of wine, so all these "progressive Third World leaders" will throw out Soviet advisors, butcher the local "reds" and denounce "Soviet imperialism" at the slightest beckoning from the American bourgeoisie. Meanwhile the North Vietnamese, despite their Stalinist leadership, are locked in a struggle with American imperialism and thus do not have the threat of a warm welcome from the imperialists to enhance their bargaining position with the Soviets.

Sadat's generals put up with the Russians only to get their hands on those fancy weapons, hoping to bluster the Israelis out of occupied territories, and perhaps even dreaming of someday taking the offensive. But the Soviets were determined to see no repetition of the 1967 war: the Russians and not the Egyptians were going to control the weapons and no offensive armaments would even be brought into Egypt. And the Israelis would not budge, secure in the knowledge that the Russian presence was a check on Egyptian military ambitions. Following the exodus of the Russians from Egypt, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir told the Israeli Parliament:

"If the Egyptians are right in claiming that the Soviets did not respond to demands which, if met, would have caused and made possible renewal of the war—if that really was so, it should not be charged to the discredit of the Soviet Union."

Both the Soviet Union and Israel had an interest in maintaining the status quo in the Near East. For Israel, it meant that it could consolidate its hold over the territories seized in 1967. For the Russians, it meant they could stay in Egypt, keeping the U.S. out while blocking a renewal of the war with Israel which would mean not only the squandering of Soviet equipment but the danger of a direct military confrontation with the U.S. Further, as long as the USSR stayed in Egypt it was permitted to use Egyptian airbases for surveillance of the U.S. Sixth Fleet and to use Egyptian port facilities to build up its own naval power in the Mediterranean.

Anwar Sadat, the colorless President of Egypt who creeps so gingerly in the shadow of his predecessor, knows full well that his real base of support is the privileged officer caste. The endless demonstrations of fanatic, xenophobic university students, who take Radio Cairo's anti-Israeli propaganda almost as seriously as they take the Koran, could be either ignored or disciplined by the army, but the officer corps must be kept contented if Sadat is to stay in power. The 6,000,000-member Arab Socialist Union, like the Baathist parties, is simply the political expression of bonapartism which hides the rule by decree behind the "democratic" facade of referendums and rallies. Further, a strike wave had broken out in the textile factories and unrest was spreading to the peasantry. In Egypt as in all "Third World" capitalist countries, the bonapartist regime must feed the restless, hungry masses a steady diet of chauvinist demagoguery.

the expulsion of "the foreigners"—whether they be Russian military personnel in Egypt, Indian merchants in Uganda or Indian workers on the Ceylon tea plantations—is always a popular sop. But what motivated Sadat to give the Russians the boot was first and foremost keeping the loyalty of the officer caste.

## Sadat Keeps the Peace

Like the Soviets, Sadat learned his lesson from the Six Day's War. Any mass army must reflect the society of which it is the product. The Egyptian army is no exception; it reflects the



Brezhnev greets Sadat in Moscow—friendly reception failed to prevent break-up of unholy alliance.

backwardness of Egyptian society as a whole. No matter how well equipped, the Egyptian army could not stand up to the better trained army across the Nile. Sadat does not want a renewal of the war with Israel although he may be forced into it by the logic of his own demagoguery.

In this context it is easier to understand why Sadat has apparently been reluctant to jump at a marriage which on the surface offers so many advantages—the merger with Libya. The merger would provide Egypt with two things it desperately lacks: foreign exchange and *lebensraum*. With the Suez Canal (which once provided nearly half of Egypt's foreign exchange) still closed, Libya's \$2.5 billion a year in oil revenues would be a spectacular acquisition. Further, Egypt with a land area of 386,000 square miles and a population of 34 million is terribly overpopulated; Libya with 680,000 square miles and 2 million people is underpopulated. But along with cash and land the proposed marriage brings with it the suitor—the fanatical, tumultuous Libyan President Colonel Qaddafi, the most virulent anti-communist among Arab leaders and the one most dedicated to resuming the war with Zionism. Thus while Sadat was willing to throw the Russians out to get the engagement going, he seems reluctant to consummate the marriage.

Finally, Sadat recognizes that, along with the Soviet's blind eye to the mining and bombing of North Vietnam, a free hand for the U.S. in the Near East was part of the door prize used to lure Cold Warrior Nixon to the Kremlin. The Moscow Summit redrew the "spheres of influence," with the Soviets at least partially ceding Southeast Asia north of the 17th parallel and the Nile valley to U.S. imperialism in exchange for promises of American investment, jointly-sponsored outer space spectaculars and ecological ventures. Thus, the road for Egypt to regain the Israeli-occupied territories no longer passes through Moscow but through Washington, and no longer consists in escalating the military pressure

through Russian weapons but through undermining U.S. support for Israel. By expelling the Russians, Sadat has eliminated at least one of the U.S. rationales for supporting Israel: as a bulwark against Communism. Sadat would like to return to the fold of U.S. imperialism, but as both Nixon and the Democratic Pretender are in mad pursuit of the "Jewish vote" Sadat knows he will have to wait until after the elections to see if throwing out the Russians carries enough weight in Washington.

Of course, the doubletalk Soviet press, which turns every defeat into a victory, claims that the Russians were not expelled but that, "Their mission completed, the servicemen returned home and the Egyptian leaders thanked them for their conscientious, selfless efforts to help the Egyptian army heighten its military skills and capability to stand up to the enemy" (Moscow *New Times*, No. 34, 1972).

In the Russian Near East experience there lurks a message regarding the Middle East, i.e., Soviet policy in the Indian subcontinent. But the Soviet bureaucracy cannot comprehend the message because it is trapped within the strait jacket imposed upon it of attempting to defend the Russian workers state internationally by either great power militaristic sabre-rattling or grovelling capitulation to the powerful American imperialists. The Soviets' great and good friend, capitalist India, victorious in ripping East Bengal from Pakistan, will repeat the Egyptian conduct. The present Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has made this very clear.

The Russian bureaucrats outsmart themselves. They hope their massive arms aid will be used by an Egypt or an Indonesia or an India against clients of the Americans or the Chinese (or best of all against the Americans or Chinese directly as in the India-China border war). And to the Russian Stalinists it is but an incidental price that the arms will also be used against the masses. Since Stalin's rise the Russian bureaucracy by virtue of its social position has been incapable of recognizing the organic link between revolutionary upheaval abroad and defense of the Russian workers state. They are therefore endlessly surprised when their arms end up being used directly against Russian state interests, not "just" against the mass movement.

## Nationalism and Stalinism

An examination of Soviet policy in the "Third World" provides striking vindication of the Trotskyist analysis that the Kremlin bureaucracy, which subordinates everything to the "defense" of so-called "socialism in one country," is incapable of really defending the Russian degenerated workers state. Even in terms of the narrowest national interests, Stalinist diplomacy among the underdeveloped countries—from Ben Bella's Algeria, to Sukarno's Indonesia, to Nkrumah's Ghana, to Sadat's Egypt—has been a history of defeats.

A characteristic example of the peridy of Soviet diplomacy can be found in Iran. The Shah's regime is thoroughly despised by virtually the entire population of Iran, from the fledgling proletariat, poor peasants and left-wing students on the one hand to the fanatical mullahs and separatist tribes on the other. In 1964, confronted with acute social unrest and trying to reduce internal tensions to a minimum, the Teheran government announced it would not permit the establishment of rocket bases in Iran. In the myopic eyes of the Russian bureaucrats this immediately transformed the Shah's regime from a reactionary monarchical tyranny to a "progressive," "anti-imperialist" regime. The Shah was subsequently invited to Moscow and Eastern Europe where he was effusively praised. In the meantime members of the Tudeh (Iranian Communist Party) were being viciously hunted down by the Shah's police and army. Considering the relative popularity of the Tudeh party, and the widespread disgust with the Shah, the Tudeh might have led a revolution in the 1964-65 period, had

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that been the wish of either the Moscow or Persian Stalinists. Instead they contributed to the stabilization of the Shah's regime.

In underdeveloped, bonapartist-led countries, Soviet diplomacy operates on the proposition that it is possible to split the army into reactionary and "anti-imperialist" components and win over the latter. The Russians themselves provided an exquisite picture of these regimes in a description of Baathist Syria in 1963 after it had been through eight coups in eighteen months:

"While this political merry-go-round continued, Syria presented an extraordinary spectacle: ministers and senior officials appointed to their posts exclusively on the principle of 'reliability' but often having no idea of the real situation and its economic problems, and interested only in political cabals; officers each of them thinking that his hour would come at any moment, and that a battalion of soldiers or a dozen armed cars would be enough to seize power; journalists trying to guess who in fact would carry out the next coup. Plots, rumors of plots, denials of rumors of plots, suspicious troop movements. No one trusts his neighbor, everyone tries to outsmart his partner, superiors look searchingly at their subordinates: who will be the next to strike?"

—*New Times* No. 34, 1963

What the *New Times* report omits is that the Soviets are usually in the thick of the political cabals and palace coups. While their nimble zig-zags in switching their support to whomever comes out on top has won them cabinet posts in Syria, in countries like the Sudan and Indonesia it has resulted in disaster. In both Indonesia and the Sudan, large, well-organized Communist Parties

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## SPARTACIST LOCAL DIRECTORY

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Libyan President Qaddafi, Sadat's new ally.



Shah of Iran.

were wiped out by Russian-equipped armies. And this scenario has been repeated in nearly every "progressive" country, though on a lesser scale.

Soviet support to these reactionary bonapartist regimes is always rationalized under the guise of support for "national liberation." But precisely because these regimes are intensely nationalist, they are almost invariably built through the suppression of other nations. (The creation of the state of Israel is itself a prime example.) By underwriting nationalism in Egypt the Soviets paved the way for their own expulsion. Numeiry too is a "progressive nationalist" who in the name of Arab nationalism, and using his Russian-equipped army, massacred half a million South Sudanese blacks and then wiped out the Sudan Communist Party. And it is under the banner of pan-African nationalism that Nigeria's Gowon massacred the Ibos and 100,000 Hutu tribesmen in Birundi are wiped out.

### "Progressive" Nationalism?

The national question is a legacy of the imperialist dictum "divide and rule." Thus the British brought Indians to Uganda during the 1890's to build the East Africa Railroad just as they brought Tamil-speaking Indians to work the tea plantations of Ceylon during the 1840's and 1850's. The Indians in Uganda prospered and were subsequently used by the British as merchants and middlemen; the Indian-derived Tamil population of Ceylon became the most exploited section of the Ceylon proletariat. The ethnic antagonisms resulting from imperialism's transfer of populations is now used to buttress the nationalist regimes: the self-styled Fuhrer of Uganda, General Amin, turns the Asians in Uganda into displaced persons, while Mrs. Bandaranaike's so-called "socialist" regime in Ceylon continues to whip up anti-Tamil chauvinism among



NY Times, 24 July 1972

Nasser (left) stands above symbol of "progressive" Egypt's National Guard.

the dominant ethnic group, the Sinhalese.

Nor is the nationalism of the oppressed any more noble. Let it not be forgotten that the Palestinian Arabs are victims of the nationalism of the oppressed turned oppressor. In Birundi, had the Hutu's coup against the ruling minority Tutsi been successful, the tribalism of the oppressed would have translated itself into the genocidal nationalism of the oppressor. All nationalism is reactionary, for successful nationalism equals genocide. Under British colonialism the nationalism of the Nasserists and the Numeiry is the nationalism of the oppressed. Today, in victory, it is the instrument for the subjugation of other nationalities and the block to revolutionary class consciousness.

In the mythology of the petty-bourgeois nationalists and Stalinists, the particular conjunctural posture of various states is transmuted into morally categorizing the nationalities presided over by these state powers. We see the creation of the categories "reactionary peoples" and "progressive peoples." At least until lately, Arabs are "progressive peoples," even while the Sudanese Arabs were exterminating half a million black Africans. At the time of the partition of India, the Hindus were deemed progressive and all the Moslems were "reactionary." But today the Moslem East Bengalis have been re-awarded the merit badge of "progressive," while the millions of Bihari Moslems, now double refugees—having fled in 1948 from the Indian state of Bihar to throw themselves on the mercy of the West Pakistani government, now in a completely untenable position in the new Bangladesh and refused readmission to Indian Bihar and with no place else to turn—are deemed so reactionary as to have become complete unpersons, in distinction for example to the somewhat less numerous, internationally maintained (however miserably), "super-progressive" Palestinian refugees.

The classic model for the transmutation of a people in the eyes of those who cannot see beyond "national character" was the Armenians, who were deemed very progressive indeed following the terrible brutalities visited upon them by the Ottoman empire. One British statesman was moved to declare, "He who defends Armenia defends civilization." The Armenian Dashnag Party, a petty-bourgeois formation much akin to the pre-World War II Zionists (and so similar ideologically to their contemporary radical nationalist Arab counterparts), gained ascendancy in the Armenian population, and as the Ottoman empire fell to pieces

the Armenians exhibited their "progressive" character by fighting ardently to continue the first World War, resisting the Russian Revolution and then launching an abortive drive for a "greater Armenia" by seeking to butcher every last Turk in large areas of Eastern Anatolia. The point is that the criterion of erstwhile progressive or reactionary national character is fundamentally wrong when not simply demagogically dishonest, and that the real underlying irrepressible axis in the condition of peoples is the class question: the class question within nations and the class question between nations. To believe otherwise is to open the door to the simple and frequently recurring inability to tell a progressive from a fascist, especially since the one so often becomes the other (Mussolini, Pilsudski, Chiang Kai-shek).

### 20th Century Nationalism

Why is nationalism the political expression of the petty-bourgeoisie? It is the ideological envelope, i.e., the program, expressing the appetite for the transformation of the (perhaps even poverty-stricken) upper strata of the downtrodden nation to become a full-blown bourgeoisie in its own right.

Out of the consolidation of West European nations in the 17th and 18th centuries (and elsewhere in the 19th) emerged the great world imperialist powers. The consolidation of the first great national states had profoundly reactionary sides and it was only in the balance that Marx characterized the economic core, the development of industrial capitalism, as progressive. As the Marxists since have noted (one of the essential implications of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution), the attempt to mechanically repeat the process everywhere is reactionary and utopian.

Hence the negative features of attempted national consolidations loom large in this century, in particular the process of national compacting. Unlike the developed imperialists, who undertake the far-flung exploitation of many peoples in utter contemptuous indifference to the national character of their spheres of influence, the emerging nationalists, as a pre-condition for becoming would-be imperialist powers, must center their historic sights on the "purification of their own nation"—i.e., the creation of a nationally homogeneous population. The predominant mechanism of former centuries was the assimilation of differing populations, partly forcible but largely through automatic economic means. The English relied upon both toward the Welsh and the Scots.

But the "new nations" do not have economic power at their disposal; it has been pre-empted by those dominant in the world market. The Hebrew nation in Palestine exemplifies the contradictions of new nations in the 20th century. The crux of Zionist social policy was the exact opposite of the appetite to exploit the Arab population—rather, the aim was to exclude the Arabs from all economic life to create a clear-cut national enclave. The expulsion of Indians from Burma, cynically projected as nationalization to achieve Burman socialism, was a similar example. The Stalinists' and petty-bourgeois radicals' counterposition of new 20th century nationalism to imperialism is not only partial and at bottom false; it also denies and thereby conceals imperialist elements within all 20th century nationalism and the oppressive and even genocidal consequences for the objects of its revanchist and expansionist appetites.

### For the Permanent Revolution!

The masses' resistance to national oppression can be mobilized on the side of the class-conscious proletariat in the struggle to end all oppression and exploitation by the overthrow of capitalism. But nationalism is a re-

actionary ideology whose precise function is to prevent a class solution to oppression. The national antagonisms which the imperialists fostered to maintain their rule are now manipulated by the bonapartists to prevent the working masses from turning their anger against their main enemies and uniting to overthrow the privileged military cliques.

Thus the Marxists, in confronting the sequence of Near Eastern wars, have had to carefully distinguish the element of national emancipation from that of national aggrandizement. In the 1948-49 first round, when the main contenders were the Haganah and British imperialism's Arab Legion commanded by General Glubb, the issue was at bottom the national survival of the Jewish people, although naturally enough the Zionist consolidation of that victory at the expense of the Palestinian Arab population created the preconditions for ensuing decades of nationalist antagonisms. The attitude of the Marxists should have been one of revolutionary defensism to shatter the hold of the Zionists ideologically, as an aspect of overthrowing the Zionist bourgeoisie and thus turning the Hebrew portion of Palestine into a springboard for revolution in the region. Instead, it has been conveniently employed as a counterrevolutionary lightning rod ever since by the rulers in the surrounding states.

In 1956 the second round of warfare was very simple. Israel was used as a cat's paw in British and French imperialism's feeble effort to maintain a Near East presence through retention of their Suez Canal holding. Critical support, i.e., a revolutionary defensist policy toward the Egyptians, was indicated. By 1967 in the third round, the secondary great power considerations aside, the core of the conflict centered on straight-out territorial confrontation between the Egyptian and Israeli rulers. Revolutionary defeatism—i.e., the position that proletarian aims could be won only by the overthrow of both the ruling classes and their respective war aims—was the only principled orientation.

It is not up to us to seek to specify the exact form of solution to the national question in the Near East in the outcome of victorious proletarian revolution. Certainly the content must be a regional socialist federation. Whether or not separate national entities, with territorial adjustments, or bi-national state formations emerge initially will depend on the particular course of the struggles leading to revolution in the face of accumulated national insecurities and distrust among the populations involved. But one thing is sure: only the dictatorship of the proletariat can have real authority on the national question, stemming from its real interest in an equitable reconstruction in the interests of all the working people. At the other pole, in the heart of every nationalist lurks the appetite for genocide of other peoples.

Nasser was quite right when he stated time and time again that "nationalism and communism are incompatible." What he failed to mention was that nationalism and genuine national liberation are also incompatible. The Nassers and Numeiry, no matter how virulent their anti-imperialist rhetoric, are linked ever more closely to world imperialism than to any abstract national sovereignty. In the epoch of imperialist decay the nation has outlived its usefulness and become a reactionary institution. The struggle for national emancipation must be a struggle against imperialism, capitalism and nationalism—a struggle for internationalism, for communism through the building of a revolutionary workers party whose understanding of the Permanent Revolution alone permits it to project a concrete internationalist program capable of transcending in theory and action the nationalist impasse and the consequent manipulation of the aspirations of the peoples of the region by the great foreign powers—imperialist or Stalinist. ■



# Docks Crisis Provokes Near General Strike in Britain

## *Vicious Assault Launched on Working Class to Save British Capitalism*

### *Labor Bureaucrats Cooperate*

The recent British dock strike sharply highlights the British capitalists' attempts to "solve" their economic difficulties by passing them on to the working class, in the form of a sharp attack on the standard of living of the union dockers. Great Britain, dependent on exports for the survival of its economy, has become engaged in a bitter trade war. British exports remain well below the 1971 level in money terms and dropped 5% in volume from June 1971 to June 1972, while imports of manufactures have risen at an annual rate of 20%. In a desperate attempt to recapture foreign trade, Britain seeks entry, planned for January 1973, into the Common Market (EEC) where it will receive the benefits of reduced tariffs.

To prepare for entry into the EEC, the Tory government has launched a campaign intended to revamp British industry to a level of competition with its future EEC partners. British exports to the Continent have experienced a minute growth rate, while imports from that source have grown nine times as fast. Investment in home industry is being encouraged by the restoration of stock options and reduction of taxes on investment income. Incentives to expansion are being given to British firms by allowing them to set the entire cost of new plants and machinery against yearly profits before tax. British industry is pursuing a relentless program of modernization and automation to increase productivity for its projected expanded market. Most recently, the Heath government announced a decision to float the pound in order to lower the price of British goods in terms of the currencies of Britain's rivals.

### *Assault on Working Class*

The policies employed to increase the competitiveness of British exports have meant a vicious assault on Britain's working class. Increased productivity through capital intensification has been bought only at the price of massive layoffs. The country's largest exporting industry, engineering, sought to drive wage costs down last year by laying off 114,000 workers or 9% of its entire labor force. The British Steel Corporation, ruthlessly modernizing its facilities, announced closure of all its open-hearth furnaces in Scotland which directly involves at least 7,000 jobs. In the mining industry 400,000 jobs have been lost through automation. Floating the pound will cause price increases of imported foods and consumer goods and an overall rise in the cost-of-living of 2-3%. While the British bourgeoisie screams of "wage inflation" it has been estimated that the combined effect of entry into the EEC, increased consumer taxes, and rent increases incorporated in the "Fair Rents Bill" which goes into effect October 1, will up inflation to an annual rate of 10-13% in 6 months' time. In view of the likely increase and to make up for the 7% rise in the cost-of-living last year, trade unionists will need pay raises of 18% simply to main-

tain their current real wages. To make sure that they don't get them the Tory government (in connivance with the Trades Union Congress) proposes an "incomes policy" which will link pay raises with the cost-of-living through "threshold agreements." The government will fix a norm (8% has been suggested) as the maximum increase in a given year. On top of this increase there will be an agreement that if the cost-of-living rises by more than a certain figure over and above the norm, then there would be another raise to compensate (4% has been suggested). This "voluntary" wage freeze means that wages will always lag behind prices.

Anticipating the response of the trade union movement to its economic policies, the Heath government introduced early this year its Industrial Relations Act (the equivalent of the American Taft-Hartley Law) to break strikes and tame the unions. The Act's provisions include a cooling-off period, prohibition of secondary boycotts, use of troops against strikers, and a government ballot among strikers to determine whether they backed a strike. A National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC) was set up to enforce the Act.

The government's attacks were met by the biggest strike wave in Great Britain since 1926. In the past few months there have been strikes by the miners, railwaymen, building workers, printers, engineers, and most recently a national strike by the dockworkers organized in the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU).

### *Dockworkers Under Attack*

British longshoremen have suffered drastically from Britain's drive for increased productivity through automation and modernization. British shipowners are turning to the use of container ships at a rate faster than any other country in Europe. Container facilities are being developed inland where cargo is handled by fewer men at wages £12 to £16 less than registered dockers working a shorter work week in the ports. Containerization got its first big spurt in 1965 after a report of the "National Development Committee on Exports" which officially recognized and encouraged the growth of container depots. Tim O'Leary, national docks secretary of the T&GWU and a member of the committee, made no mention of the effect containerization would have on dockworkers' jobs. In the succeeding two years the Labour government introduced successive legislation to change customs clearance and transport regulations to aid the development of container depots, while failing to carry out its pledge to nationalize the docks. Recruitment of unregistered labor at the container depots was officially sanctioned by the T&GWU. Since then 20,000 dockers have been forced out of the industry.

Dockers won an important victory in 1947 when they forced the Labour government to introduce the National Dock Labour Scheme, a plan which deprived the employers of the right to hire and fire. The Scheme provided legal guarantees of job security by setting up a register of dockers and forbidding the employment of men not on this register. Dockers were ensured certain regular payments whether there was work for them or not. Following the 1967 Devlin Report, the Scheme was retained, but men were allocated to particular employers. Any surplus went on the "Temporary Unattached Register" (TUR)

where the men received minimum compensation each week.

The partial erosion of the Scheme combined with the drive for containerization provide the background for the recent struggle. Despite the guarantee of job security provided for in the National Dock Labour Scheme, employers were able to induce large numbers of men to leave the industry with the bribe of a high severance pay. The price the port employers have had to pay for a smaller and vastly more productive labor force in the form of high severance and compensation to men on the TUR created a threat to the retention of the Scheme. In September-October 1970 Tim O'Leary and Jack Jones, General Secretary of the T&GWU, held secret talks with shipping employers on subjects including the eventual abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The National Port Shop Stewards Committee (NPSSC), the militant dockworkers' group heavily influenced by the Communist Party, led a picketing and boycotting campaign against the container ships and depots for the past several months, despite exhortations from the T&GWU bureaucrats to "obey the law of the land." (Secondary boy-

maneuver managed to deflect the rising wave of unrest.

### *T&GWU Sellout*

The joint union-management committee headed by Jack Jones and Lord Aldington, head of the London Port Authority, chose the same day to try to ram through its proposals for the dockworkers, hoping that they had been satisfied by their victory in getting the five released. But the dock delegates voted to reject the Jones-Aldington proposals—which gave only vague promises of job security—and pledged to continue the dock strike until all four points of the NPSSC's program were won: no reduction in the current dockworkers' register, an end to the Temporary Unattached Register, inclusion of all ports in the National Dock Labour Scheme, and all stuffing and stripping of containers to be carried out by registered dockers.

When Jones-Aldington returned on August 16 with a revised set of proposals, the delegates voted to accept them, ending the three-week-old strike. The votes of delegates from the smaller ports where pressure on jobs is not so great and from the growing non-



Challenge, 7 September 1972

Jack Jones, head of T&GWU, is besieged by militant dockers protesting proposed strike settlement which was later passed by delegate conference.

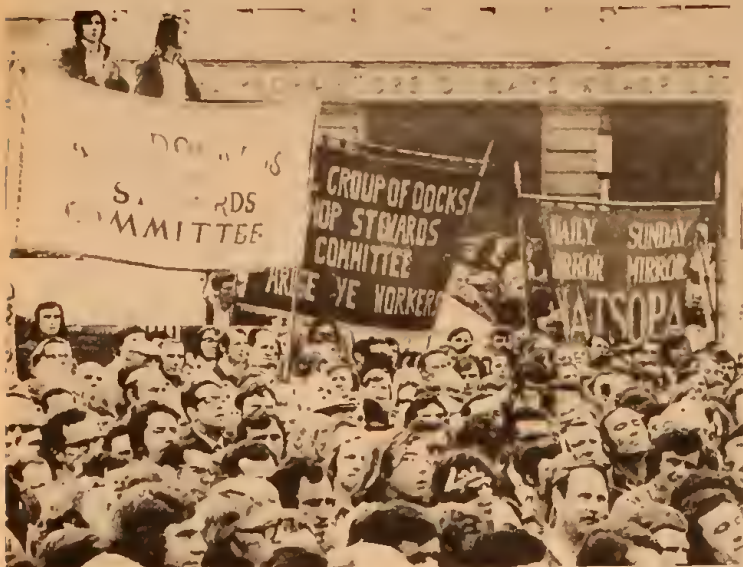
cotts are outlawed by the Industrial Relations Act.) The campaign culminated in the imprisonment on July 22 of five dockers who continued their picket of the Midland Cold Stores container depot in East London after an NIRC court injunction was obtained against them. This first jailing at the hands of the hated National Industrial Relations Court led to widespread unofficial strikes. Miners, printers, truck-drivers, airport workers, and auto workers joined the dockers in sympathy strikes against the union-smashing Industrial Relations Act. Faced with growing rank-and-file pressure the TUC officials finally got together and scheduled a one-day strike the following Monday, which would have been Britain's first general strike since 1926. The Tory government, in a hasty attempt to avert the strike, which called the continuation of its own power into question, ruled that the T&GWU was responsible for the illegal picketing and released the five dockers on July 27. The general strike was called off. Thus the government through a quick court

Scheme ports were decisive in swinging the vote. These delegates had abstained on the original proposals. The vote was met with hostility from rank-and-filers who clashed with delegates and stormed into the building where the meeting was held and roughed up Jack Jones. The T&GWU's response to the incident was to set up an official inquiry into the "violence".

On the surface, the Jones-Aldington proposals do contain some gains for the dockworkers. The National Dock Labour Scheme was retained and the TUR abolished. Every worker now registered will be assigned to an employer and given full pay whether there is work for him or not. The settlement included programs to redevelop unused dock areas and create new jobs in the ports. But the question of who will stuff and strip the containers remains in the realm of promises: "Every attempt will be made by the port authorities to attract container groupage firms into the docks, or if not, to get operators to agree to employ dockers." Failing that,

*continued on next page*





Workers Press, 19 August 1972

Mass march of British dockers, printers and other workers in London protesting the first jailing of strikers by the National Industrial Relations Court.

### Continued...

there are "suggestions that a special levy should be charged on containers which have passed through groupage depots manned by other than registered dockworkers" (*Journal of Commerce*, 21 August 1972). It is very unlikely that the drive to enforce the proposals will be successful. Some men now working the container depots receive less than half the weekly wage of registered dockers, and employers will fight tooth and nail to maintain this wage differential. Jones has already agreed that depots that employ men at equal pay with dockers do not have to pay the levy on containers. Employers are left with the same out for paying an oversized labor force: an increased severance pay of \$10,000 for the "unfit" and over 55 as an inducement for these men to leave the industry. Employers hope that the normal \$5,700 and the \$7,000 offered to men currently on the TUR will convince others to leave as well. The Jones-Aldington proposals completely abandon the fight to include non-registered ports in the National Dock Labour Scheme, only promising "further study" of the problem.

The program put forward by the National Port Shop Stewards Committee, which seeks to squeeze reforms out of the existing government, provides no real solution for the dockworkers. The port employers will be seeking at every turn for ways to smash the National Dock Labour Scheme in order to maintain a low-wage, non-militant industry. The number of jobs available to registered dockers will continue to decline as container depots proliferate while employers seek to rid themselves of the support of unemployed registered dockers by bribing them with high severance pay. The severance pay arrangement only worsens the unemployment, the highest in 33 years, which the ex-dockers will face. A fight must be made for new hiring at no loss to those working.

### Break With Class Treason!

The NPSCC abandoned its pretensions to militancy in the middle of the fight. The stewards refused to concede defeat after the delegates' vote to end the strike, recommending that the strike continue until all four points were won. But four days later they were willing to forget about inclusion of the unregistered ports in the National Dock Labour Scheme and told the dockers to go back to work. The advice came after a meeting with Bernie Steer, secretary of the London Stewards' Committee and a leading Communist Party spokesman. The CP no doubt sees the shop stewards' struggle as somewhat of an embarrassment in view of the official party position of uncritical support to Jack Jones.

The British CP holds much more authority within the working class than

does its counterpart in the U.S. The CPUSA remains indistinguishable from the "progressive" labor bureaucracy; in Britain the CP is more distinct from the bureaucrats through its participation in the shop stewards' movement. But its politics are essentially the same as those of the reformist trade union bureaucracy. Though more militant, it sees its role as securing minimal gains for the workers through "left" pressure on the government. By serving as a fake "Marxist" alternative to the treachery of union bureaucrats and Labour Party tops, the British Communist Party is an obstacle to revolutionary consciousness among the British working class. Its failure to expose the real nature of class relations preserves the illusion that workers can achieve lasting gains through piecemeal reforms granted by a capitalist government and holds the workers back in the struggle for their revolutionary class interests.

The aim of both the British Labour Party and the trade union bureaucrats is to keep the workers ideologically tied to capitalism. After having set the stage for the current crisis in the ports through his legislation encouraging the development of containerization, Labour Party head Harold Wilson claimed that the Jones-Aldington proposals were "first-class" and "should be put into effect immediately." The Labour Party bureaucrats hope they will be able to ride the current wave of unrest into office, but this appetite remains subordinated to their need to block the unleashing of the full power of the working class, which would sweep them from their own privileged positions.

The Labour Party retains its stranglehold over the British working class and is a mainstay in the maintenance of the Tory bourgeois system, crawling before the bourgeoisie to plead for reforms on behalf of partial and sectional interests of British workers, limiting its pleas to forms acceptable to the ruling class and savagely acting as its agents to destroy those who would go beyond these limits.

The Labour Party will never be shattered until its dual role is exposed by its own actions in power and under the continuous scathing criticism of the revolutionary Marxists. It is toward this end that revolutionists call upon the Labour Party to carry out its proclaimed fight to place the working class in power. It is in this sense and this sense only that critical support—"as a rope supports a hanging man"—can have any meaning other than the cynical strengthening of illusions among the working masses. The polarization of the Labour Party, splitting away its working-class base on a revolutionary class program, will open the road to the construction by the workers of their own organs of power—a mass revolutionary party and workers' councils. ■

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# ...Auto

which make Norwood the focus of problems facing all auto workers. Basic solidarity and militancy requires an immediate strike throughout General Motors in support of the Norwood workers and for the reversal of the entire intensification-of-exploitation drive spearheaded by GMAD.

### Unrest Builds at Fremont

A typical example is the Fremont, California GMAD plant, traditionally a center of militancy, employing over 4,000 workers. The plant has been smoldering under the pressure of speed-up since the model change-over, and is just building up its passenger-car line speed to full production, from 22 jobs per hour in August to about 36. The union leadership reports it will go up to 44 before the end of the year. At such a time, the company always tries to acclimatize the workers to faster work with fewer workers per job. The workers individually try to resist, in the knowledge that they are setting the pace for full production, so "Paragraph 78" grievances mushroom. This refers to Paragraph 78 of the contract, under which a strikeable grievance protesting too much work and demanding more manpower can be filed. This year the older workers say that the pressure has never been so intense, and "78's" are snowballing as jobs are consolidated, giving each worker more work.

The Local 1364 leadership, headed by John "Chief" Herrera, local Shop Committee Chairman, has been delaying action on the accumulating "78's," ostensibly waiting for full production in November before cracking down on the company. This practice, which is well established by International guidance and the previous local leadership, serves the company by allowing it to stockpile cars and break down workers' resistance to the full production speed, thus making a strike on these issues more difficult to mobilize and win.

This treachery is true to the Reutherite tradition, which views an increase in workers' exploitation as a benefit to both company and worker by making the company more "competitive." In the May 1972 Shop Chairman's report Herrera stated, "We don't mean to sound like management, but, when all your jobs are at stake, it becomes important to build an automobile which can compete with the many other competitors." The report went on to scold the workers for unnecessary absenteeism. The acceptance of the capitalist profit motive and unplanned, competitive production leads the bureaucrats to become disciplinarians for the company, and this is immediately obvious at all levels. At one recent plant-district meeting, a committeeman (shop steward) chided the workers for cursing on the line!

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The unusually heavy intensity of speed-up pressure throughout the auto industry—due to the general production upturn so far this year—combined with an increasing component in the plants of militant young workers willing to struggle, promises to build into an explosive force before the industry-wide contracts expire in 1973. Ford is rumored to be the next "target" company for a possible strike in the "one at a time" strategy laid down by Reuther and his heirs.

Ford plants in San Jose and Milpitas, California, Mahwah, N.J., and the giant River Rouge complex in Detroit, as well as elsewhere, have been the scene of local strikes or partial walkouts over such issues as safety, ventilation and excessive heat. Layoffs coupled with extensive compulsory overtime—12 hours a day for 7 days a week in some cases—are common at some Ford plants. At Mahwah there have been three departmental walkouts over unbearable heat and heavy overtime. Such "quickie" local walkouts, however, although sometimes achieving some specific demands, are completely unable to reverse general trends or prevent the company from recouping its losses through later speed-ups, layoffs, or both. Local isolation, combined with management tricks, often leads to demoralization and cynicism.

### Treachery at the Top

What is required is a concerted, militant struggle led throughout auto by a national leadership firmly rooted in the ranks and implacably committed to a full, anti-capitalist program. The UAW leadership not only ignores this need but exists to prevent such a leadership and struggle from arising. With deceit and hypocrisy, the auto union bureaucrats try to disguise their total complicity and collaboration with all the basic aims of capital: foreign expansion, increased efficiency and profits, and the very speed-up and "productivity" drive which is forcing auto workers to rebel out of desperation. UAW Solidarity still boasts of Woodcock's "fight" for labor's interests on Nixon's Pay Board prior to his withdrawal, but nowhere is it mentioned why Woodcock still sits on Nixon's Productivity Commission together with Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters and I. W. Abel of the Steelworkers and despite the departure of Meany, Beirne (CWA), Smith (IAM) and other labor leaders in conjunction with Meany's resignation from the Pay Board.

The Productivity Commission was created by Nixon in 1970 to advise, systematize and excuse the big business drive to raise output per man-hour in order to increase the rate of profit and sharpen the competitive position of U.S. capitalism internationally. Its activities were expanded when the wage freeze went into effect under the Wage Stabilization Act, which provided for the freeze. The role of the labor bureaucrats on this little-mentioned commission has been to provide legitimacy for the commission's programs, which depend, as its reports make clear, on the success of joint labor-management efforts to cram key contract provisions and other decisions down the throats of the resisting workers through intimidation, trickery and Taft-Hartley injunctions. These provisions include the slashing of work crews and destruction of job categories in longshore contracts, planned attrition on the railroads and labor-management joint boards to control absenteeism, such as the UAW participates in auto (see Labor Department Bulletin 1715 and Report of the Commission on Productivity, March 1972).

### Labor Off All Government Boards!

Woodcock's presence on this government board is part of the reformist trade union bureaucracy's policy of collaboration with capitalism—the only policy possible when the continued existence of capitalism is accepted as inevitable, necessary or desirable. To

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# ...Auto

survive, each capitalist must strive to exploit labor more efficiently and with greater profits than his competitors, while the worker, also in order to survive, must struggle to lower the rate of exploitation through higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions. Caught between the two sides, the reformist union leaders, hating and fearing the consequences of a full mobilization of the power of labor, accept the basic capitalist needs and agree to settle for crumbs from one capitalist as against another, with slogans such as, "save 'our' industry," and "buy American," and with massive betrayals which allow "their" capitalists to increase profits and productivity. In the stage of imperialist decline, this leads to an increasing growing together of the trade union bureaucracy with the capitalist state itself. If unopposed by workers, wage boards, productivity commissions, war-time collaboration, etc., will lead to incorporation of the unions into an arm of the state, as occurs most fully under fascism.

The fight to throw out the bureaucracy and launch a working-class counter-offensive can only be accomplished by building on the basis of a

**Headlighter Caucus** In 1969, which bitterly attacked Reuther's betrayals, espoused militancy on plant questions and advocated the formation of a nationwide opposition group in the UAW. Completely lacking a systematic, political program, however, the caucus was a typical hodge-podge of opportunists and personal careerists. One of the primary issues of the 1969 election was the failure of the International and local leaderships to process Paragraph 78 grievances! In a long campaign leaflet signed by Herrera, the Headlighter Caucus emphasized the speed-up problem:

"We should speed-up the settlement of these (Paragraph 78) cases and not wait until 7 or 8 months have gone by. This type of grievance should only be settled with the complete agreement of the brother who has the complaint.... We object strongly to the wholesale withdrawal of... Par. 78 cases.... We will not tolerate this kind of Hanky Panky."

Fed up with the incumbent leadership, the ranks noted in Herrera, who, naturally, immediately forgot all his campaign leaflets and proved himself to be no better than his predecessors. During the 1970-71 strike, Herrera suppressed all discussion of the union's demands, with the help of Regional Director Paul Schrade, and dropped all his talk of "opposition" to the International leadership. Not satisfied with this, he blamed "left-wing agitators" for rank-and-file militancy during the strike and even called in the local riot police to suppress a strike rally outside the plant called by the newly-formed United Action Caucus. He thus



Detroit auto workers begin 1970 GM strike.

Workers' Power, 25 September-8 October 1970

## SL/RCY Eastern Regional Educational Conference

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- "The Struggle for a Workers Party" by Joseph Seymour, Spartacist League Central Committee. (College of Liberal Arts, Room 522, 8 p. m.)

## The Struggle for Revolutionary Leadership in the Labor Movement

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full class-struggle program. Despite the influx of militant, young workers, especially blacks and other minorities (and now including women), there has never been a greater lack of interest in the union or of politically serious and honest opposition. The UAW bureaucracy's blatant policy of collaboration with capital in the drive for profits through intensified exploitation has led many of the young workers, in the absence of a militant class-conscious alternative, to consider the union as simply part of the conservative "establishment." The quick succession of caucuses, followed by their disappearance after election time, and by the defection of many of their leaders to the bureaucracy, has created cynicism about the possibility of internal union struggle.

### Herrera's Hypocrisy

The present Herrera regime at Fremont, for instance, gained power on the basis of the loosely-formed

sealed himself fully into the ranks of the labor lieutenants of capitalism. This development was the absolutely inevitable result of personal careerism and the lack of disciplined alternative leadership based on a consistent proletarian program. The United Action Caucus, which picked up at least some of the support of the old Headlighter Caucus, has the same lack of consistent politics and is doomed to travel the same road.

### UNC Degenerates

The paucity of real opposition politics at the national level is even greater, if that is possible. The only organized opposition at the last convention was the United National Caucus of Fox, Kelly and Sims. The UNC, which contains several supportable demands in its formal program, opportunistically limited its main effort at the convention to the demand for referendum vote election of officers, a traditional "democratic" demand in the UAW. The only payoff of this policy was that the

UNC got even less support for this demand than was obtained at the previous convention. This demand, which is also supported by many local groups, such as the United Action Caucus at Fremont, would actually make the union less democratic in the long run by placing the international leadership out of reach of the delegated conventions where the political issues are still decided. The leadership's control of the national publications and apparatus would make its position virtually impregnable. Given the lack of a powerful, working-class alternative leadership, it is easy enough for the bureaucracy to control either the convention or a referendum, but the only way such a leadership can be built is plant by plant, on the basis of political units able to convince the workers to vote for their delegates, not on the basis of nationwide campaigns for well-known personal careerists.

Disappointed with its poor showing, the UNC has further degenerated since the convention, dropping most of its militant-sounding program to concentrate on a campaign through the bourgeois courts to prevent retirees (generally a conservative section of the union) from voting in union elections. This is being done on the basis of a reactionary court decision restricting union control over pensions. This again confirms the character of the UNC as just another collection of would-be bureaucrats. Resorting to the legal authority of the class enemy to settle disputes within the labor movement is completely antithetical to the interests of the rank and file. This cowardly tactic, based on frustration and unwillingness to do the hard, patient organizing of caucuses within the labor movement, can benefit only bureaucrats and careerists who hope government intervention will install them in power. The government, of course, will do this only to increase its own control over the labor movement, backing the power plays of whatever faction seems more "responsible" or less discredited in the eyes of the ranks.

### Black Caucuses

The recent history of black caucuses in the UAW is also a dismal parade of the same errors endlessly repeated,

because militant black leaderships, while partially motivated by working-class aspirations, have failed to completely break with nationalist and separatist concepts and have degenerated into reformism and separatist pressure within the bureaucracy.

The only union work done by the Black Panthers was the Black Panther Caucus at Fremont begun by Kenny Horston in 1969. The original program of the Panther caucus contained several standard transitional demands, such as "30 for 40," and concluded, "We must rebuild a militant trade union movement by combatting these [class-collaborationist, cold war and racist] policies through the formation of rank-and-file caucuses and the fight for class consciousness." The perspective came into conflict with the Panther's nationalism and was dropped. The August 1970 issue of *Focus*, the caucus paper, defended black dual unionism and the Panthers' perspective toward the lumpenproletariat. Although it had declared its intention to become integrated, the Panther caucus failed to go beyond the concept of itself as a primarily black pressure group unable to overcome the racist barriers to the development of an integrated revolutionary leadership. An ethnically-based caucus which remains defined by race rather than program must degenerate, since the aspirations of one section of the workers cannot substitute for, or gain the authority of, the class struggle-oriented workers as a whole. The Panthers' ambivalent attitude toward the working class and their turn toward reformist social work has dissipated their union work at Fremont.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which flourished in 1970, based on DRUM and other caucuses in Detroit, has all but disappeared. It split three ways under the pressure of suppression by Chrysler with passive UAW support. One faction joined James Forman to found the Black Workers Congress (BWC), which has since virtually disappeared from the Detroit scene.

Although claiming to be the socialist and pro-working class remnant of the League, the BWC shows the same weak-

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# ... NMU

ing for help. There not only is room in our Union for those unorganized but it is our duty to organize the unorganized."

In the past the NMU shoreside members in so-called "related industries"—taxi drivers, hospital workers, cafeteria workers—who have no history or tradition in common with the seamen and whose needs are dictated by their own industries, have been used as a bureaucratic weight against the seamen. In the late 1960's the bureaucrats rammed through a dues increase—33% for seamen and a token amount for the shoreside workers—by limiting the voting period to thirty days, thus ensuring that the majority of seamen would be out at sea and unable to vote.

Curran's hypocritical concern for "organizing the unorganized" is given the lie by the job-trust group system which denies jobs and full union rights even within the NMU. What is urgently needed is not an NMU which manipulates shoreside workers as voting cattle, but an aggressive drive to organize all workers in the maritime-related industries (seamen, tugboats, long-shore, canal workers, etc.) into one united militant international maritime union.

## Fake Lefts View NMU

Commenting on the NMU in their newspapers, some organizations which

call themselves revolutionary socialist have exposed themselves as the politically bankrupt, opportunist elements that they are. The Workers League, characteristically operating as crude political pirates, orients toward the lowest level of thinking among the seamen, switching their emphasis according to what seems most popular. In their lying, garbage paper, the *Bulletin*, the Workers League uncritically reported Morrissey's reformist policies, vacillating on the question of using the courts in internal union affairs, and catered to

social-patriotism, lamenting the loss of "American flag" shipping. Only after the Militant-Solidarity Caucus emerged with a militant class program did the Workers League adopt a more socialist-sounding front. But the *Bulletin*'s leftist rhetoric is only a thin veneer of mechanical pat formulas, reflecting total ignorance of the maritime trades—as with any trade union situation the WL writes about. The *Bulletin* has ignored the crucial issue of job rotation (to combat job trusting which degenerates the contract and reinforces the Curran

regime) and simply calls for creating more jobs. The 10 April 1972 *Bulletin* advanced the most barbaric, conservative program for job security including calling for reversing modern industrial innovations—in this case containerization. The Militant-Solidarity Caucus correctly advocates the defiant strategy, not of opposing modern technology, but of demanding that workers be the ones to benefit from the innovations which their productivity made possible. The Workers League is not interested in providing real leadership, but prefers to rely on its dishonest and sensationalist ploys to pressure the existing labor bureaucracy.

Communist Party coverage of the seamen's unions in the 16 June 1972 *Daily World* reflects a surprisingly candid attitude toward the class-collaborationist methods the CP itself has relied on since the 1930's. The only political sentence, concluding a dry, factual report, states that "workers are beginning to see the need for developing a fight for jobs, pensions, and manning scales that no amount of 'labor statesmanship' and class collaboration can save." But Curran himself was schooled in his practices of class-collaboration as part of the CP apparatus which controlled the NMU until 1949? Continuing its devious collaborationist policies today, the CP runs candidates for public office in the party's name as a sop to militant youth and blacks under its influence, while recommending to the working masses through its front group, Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy (TUAD), that they vote for capitalist politicians like McGovern. The CP, of course, does not outline a specific program or course of action for the workers' struggle, in its tradition of always tailing after sections of the bureaucracy and trying to head off working-class struggles. In its own waterfront paper, *The Portliffe*, the CP dishonestly brochures such "innocent" questions as "Should we nationalize the maritime industry?" without posing any answers!

The only way out of the desperate situation confronting NMU seamen is the struggle for a revolutionary working-class program. The NMU Militant-Solidarity Caucus represents the kind of leadership which must develop in the trade unions today, for the working class to free itself from the quagmire of bureaucratic betrayals. Such a leadership must consciously carry forward the international, revolutionary working-class program of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky in order to transform rank-and-file militancy into a struggle for working-class power. Only through the overthrow of the capitalist order and the establishment of a workers government can the needs of seamen—and of the whole working class—be definitively secured. ■



NMU and the other maritime unions are fighting for laws that will build the U.S. merchant marine. We support the election of congressmen and other public officials who will support our program.

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Patriotic propaganda in NMU Pilot (July 1972): Curran recruits seamen for U.S. imperialism, attempting to "solve" job crisis by convincing the government that its imperialist aims abroad depend on "loyal" U.S. merchant marine.

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# ...Auto

nesses. It speaks of the unions and companies in the same terms ("exploiters"), advocates dual unionism and white-baits other tendencies instead of analyzing their politics (see WV No. 10). The first two issues of its paper reveal a marked trend toward Third Worldism and away from the labor movement. Caucuses supported by the BWC in the unions lack programs that would distinguish them from a section of the bureaucracy. One such caucus, the United Black Workers at Mahwah, recently scored a "victory" when most of the black and Spanish-speaking candidates it had uncritically supported got elected in a mass rejection of the previous leadership. This did not, however, prevent the integrated new local leadership team from condemning an unauthorized walkout as "against our contract," despite the admission that the company had violated the contract in the first place, causing the walkout!

Most of the ostensibly revolutionary organizations claim some supporters

in auto. The Communist Party/Young Workers Liberation League (CP/YWLL) boasts of heavy involvement in auto, although most of its activities are limited to the lowest level, such as distributing free copies of its paper, the *Daily World*, and pro-Democratic Party buttons saying, "Phase III—Dump Nixon." The recruiting activity of the younger YWLL members only serves to buttress the deeply compromised position of the CP, which is barely to the left of the Woodcock bureaucracy itself. To the CP, a "progressive" bureaucracy is one which, like the UAW, verbally supports "peace" and backs liberal capitalist politicians like McGovern against conservatives. The fact that the Woodcock regime is just as fundamentally class-collaborationist as the reactionary Meany is unimportant as far as the CP is concerned.

The CP's class-collaborationist "dump Nixon" line dovetails with Woodcock's drive to replace Meany as "labor" political spokesman. This effort has included the heaviest backing of any union for the liberal "Labor for Peace" conference, publicity over Woodcock's "almost" being picked as McGovern's running mate, and support to various other pro-McGovern unions, including a "unity program to aid McGovern" with the Machinists Union, which may involve a merger plan.

Such a merger would create the largest and most powerful union in the U.S. and greatly enhance Woodcock's position among the buzzards in the halls of labor.

## For a Working-Class Program

If a caucus is to serve the interests of the working class rather than the careers of bureaucrats, it must be firmly rooted in a working-class program. There is no room for personal cliques or hot-shot adventurers in a serious caucus.

A critical element in such a caucus program must be to break the ties between the labor movement and the two capitalist parties. The caucus must agitate for a workers party, based on the trade unions and armed with the transitional program, to fight for a workers government. Other vital elements of the program for auto include a shorter work week at no loss in pay with restrictions on overtime; elimination of all discrimination in hiring, job assignment, etc., against blacks, other minorities and women; for workers control of production and nationalization of basic industry without compensation; for solidarity with the Vietnamese Revolution and strike action against layoffs, speed-ups, runaway plants, the Pay Board and the war in Vietnam. ■

## SL FORUM

### Labor and the Elections

Speaker: TWEET CARTER, SL political chairman, L.A. Organizing Committee  
Guest Speaker: KEITH DODDS, chairman, Militant Caucus of AFSCME Local 2070, shop steward and delegate to Central Labor Council from Local 2070

Thursday, 12 October  
7:30 p.m.  
Ackerman Union  
UCLA Campus

Friday, 20 October  
7:30 p.m.  
Room 201, Embassy Auditorium  
843 So. Grand Ave., L.A.

## SL/RCY CLASS

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The series will seek to provide a basic understanding of Marxism, the development of Trotskyism, as the continuation of Leninism, and finally an analysis of certain major currents in the post-war international communist movement. The classes will run for ten weeks, beginning on 9 October.

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WORKERS VANGUARD



# Survival Is the Issue for NMU Seamen

Seamen in the National Maritime Union (NMU) face a desperate job crisis as American shipping capitalists seek to drive wage costs down through hiring lower-paid foreign crews and reducing manning scales on American ships. "Runaway shipping"—foreign registration of American-owned ships and American investment in foreign companies—coupled with the increased use of automated container and LASH (barge-carrying) ships, has resulted in the loss of 7,000-10,000 NMU jobs since the previous contract was signed in 1969. Last year a union vice-president made the statement that there are 25,000 NMU seamen for under 8,000 jobs. Those who do have jobs face low wages and worsening conditions.

The response of Joe Curran, first and only president of the NMU, to this crisis has been to step up his patriotic appeals to the government and propose liquidating the NMU into a multi-industrial union, thereby "protecting jobs"—his job! His program is entirely tied to the interests of the shipping conglomerates and the rest of the capitalist class. Besides spouting patriotic rhetoric, Curran subordinates the needs of seamen to "building the American merchant marine," and restricts all official union "struggles" to lobbying within bourgeois institutions for the most humble requests. The upcoming NMU convention in October could be an important test of strength, since the deteriorating conditions have created an increasingly rebellious mood in the ranks, but the ranks' discontent will not manifest itself at the convention without determined efforts on the part of the militants to organize consistent opposition.

## Curran Eases Shippers' Minds

Curran went into negotiations for the 1972 contract assuring the shipping companies that there would be no strike or even the threat of a strike, telling the membership that this was necessary in order to "ease the minds of those who have cargoes to ship." He guaranteed that there would be no struggle over the contract by signing it and springing it on the membership *three months ahead* of the common contract expiration date of the other maritime unions, thus giving the lie to his phony talk about the need for unity among the maritime unions.

Curran boasts that despite the "extremely critical condition of the industry," the NMU bureaucracy was able to "negotiate an agreement for deep sea members with substantial gains well before the expiration of our current agreement." The "substantial gains" included wage increases of 5% per year—below the vicious anti-labor pay board controls—and an erosion of the pension plan, despite official reassurances about pension security. In addition to spending more than 200 days at sea each year for 20 years, men must now be 55 years old to qualify for a pension. Curran excuses this setback by saying that the pension plan was never meant to "provide a supplemental income for people who stop

sailing at a relatively early age and go into another industry."

## Bureaucratic Super-Patriotism

To deal with the job crisis, the bureaucracy makes patriotic appeals to the government through the class-collaborationist National Maritime Council, a joint company-government-union agency. The April 1972 *Pilot*, official organ of the NMU, explains that, "the aim of the NMC is to work aggressively to get importers and exporters to ship a bigger share of their cargoes on U.S. flag vessels. We can appeal to their patriotism and economic self-interest but most of all we have to convince them that the best, most reliable and most economical service

or twice this year. His "Committee" now consists of only one or two semi-active supporters, Morrissey himself, whose strategy was primarily limited to waging his personal opposition struggle through the courts and the capitalist-controlled news media, has been out at sea on one ship for most of the past two years.

## Militant-Solidarity Caucus

The only opposition group in the NMU actively struggling against the union bureaucracy is the Militant-Solidarity Caucus (MSC), which publishes the *Beacon*. The caucus is based on a program which includes points covering the contract, the constitution and political issues. It calls for more jobs by short-



In a direct confrontation with class-conscious foreign seamen, NMU bureaucrats organized a picket to "spotlight" the refusal of a foreign crew to sail for Vietnam (from *On a True Course, the Story of the NMU*).

is provided by U.S. ships." In his speech to a National Maritime Council unity dinner in Chicago, Curran described the foreign-registered, American-owned ships as those "manned by crews that owe *our* country no loyalty and, in many cases are hostile to *us* (emphasis added)." The *Pilot* reported that Curran's speech "was well received by over 300 shippers who attended..." And why not, with the president of the largest U.S. seamen's union sounding like a grovelling office boy?

Instead of struggling for an international union which would fight for the interests of all seamen and raise foreign shipping standards to U.S. levels, Curran vilifies the foreign seamen. U.S. seamen must reject all appeals in the name of patriotism in favor of unity with all seamen and all workers in the international struggle of labor.

## Early Militancy Destroyed

Curran and his cohorts have been keeping the NMU seamen in line for over a quarter of a century. Once one of the most militant unions, the membership became disoriented by the betrayals of the Stalinist Communist Party which formerly controlled the union and manipulated the membership to fit the needs of Soviet foreign policy, which frequently ran counter to the seamen's interests. In their demoralization, seamen succumbed to the red-baiting tactics of Curran's break with the CP and the capitalists' purge of all militants from the waterfront. Union meetings and conventions became simple rubber stamps for bureaucratic decisions as the Curran regime exercised its crude methods of manipulation of the ranks and suppression of all opposition. Now, after 25 years of terror, bureaucratic control and sellouts, and caught between the loss of jobs and a risky pension, NMU members have demonstrated an intensifying dissatisfaction with the Curran regime.

The several opposition groupings and plethora of individual oppositionists which emerged in the NMU during the lay-up of the passenger ships and union elections two years ago has dwindled, however. James Morrissey and his "Committee for NMU Democracy" have all but ceased activity in the union. His paper, the *Call*, which was strictly limited to immediate bread-and-butter demands and superficial union democracy issues, has appeared only once

ening hours and time at sea (a 4-watch system and alternating crews on each ship, receiving continuous pay) while increasing and adjusting wages and pensions to the cost-of-living, expropriation of shipping companies under seamen's control, organizing an international seamen's union to fight runaway shipping, and the formation of an independent workers' party based on the trade unions. The program also includes positions against the Vietnam war, racial and sexual oppression and the use of the courts (or any government involvement) in the internal union affairs.

The MSC has emphasized the need to eliminate the "group system" which has been used by the bureaucrats to divide the workers, by threatening the higher seniority Group I members who complain about bad job conditions with loss of their jobs to Group II men. Until just last year seamen with Group II status were not permitted to join the NMU or even attend union meetings. A partial victory was won when the ruling was changed to permit Group II's to join the union and have full union rights as soon as they had sailed 30 days. But in terms of shipping rights their Group II status was maintained. A Group II seaman can take a job only if there are no Group I's who want it; it takes 800 days of sea time during a five-year period to achieve Group I status. The MSC calls for complete elimination of the group system with full shipping and membership rights for everyone after 30 days of sea time.

The Militant-Solidarity Caucus has a genuine transitional approach, broadening the immediate felt needs of the NMU seamen and putting them in the context of the international class struggle. The caucus program clearly characterizes the class nature of the bourgeois state, calls for workers' defense and indicates the need for a society run by the workers. Through literature, the union meetings and its own demonstrations and open meetings, the caucus has continually and forthrightly presented its full program, even at times when some positions were unpopular among many workers.

## Bureaucratic Pandemonium

MSC supporters told WORKERS VANGUARD that at the 22 May New York union meeting, the bureaucrats put forth a proposal for a "union employees' pension plan" which would cover top-level, non-elected union officials, trying to

sneak the proposal in as part of the port agent's "report." A spokesman for the MSC called for rejection of the phony report and received heavy applause from the membership. A vote was taken with about 60-70 voting for acceptance of the report and 200-300 against. When the bureaucrats announced a vote of 300 for and 200 against, pandemonium broke out in the hall. A patrolman (appointed union official) quickly made a motion to adjourn (which couldn't even be heard above the jeers of the membership) and the chairman abruptly adjourned the meeting without a vote. The MSC spokesman, kept away from the microphone by a circle of goons, jumped on a chair and urged everyone to keep his seat and keep the meeting in order. The

membership did stay seated for several minutes although patrolmen were running around the hall banging on the backs of chairs and declaring the meeting adjourned. In the confusion the seamen began standing up and their chairs were immediately whisked away. The pension plan stood approved.

At a special meeting on 31 May, the officers trooped in with a national office letter concerning the number of convention delegates which would be coming from each port. The letter was simply read and the seamen asked to vote out with no discussion. A member of the MSC demanded discussion and called for rejection of the letter, pointing out that this was the first time NMU members had an opportunity to discuss the question of inclusion of shoreside workers in the union. To counter the bureaucracy's use of shoreside workers in completely unrelated industries as voting cattle to control the seamen, he correctly demanded that the shoreside workers have their own convention with their own elected delegates, at which they should decide whether to become independent, an autonomous union affiliated with the NMU, or an affiliate of other appropriate unions. Almost to a man, the membership voted against the letter amid catcalls to the bureaucrats, daring them to try to falsify the obvious landslide. For the first time in almost 25 years the Curran regime was forced to concede defeat, if only on a seemingly procedural issue.

This rebellious mood will lead only to sporadic upsurges followed by demoralization among the mass of the seamen, and bureaucratic reprisals against the most outspoken, unless a clear alternative is posed which organizes the rank-and-file revolt into a solid movement based on a full program. Curran is already gearing up for the attack with a new scheme designed to head off militancy and tighten his almost tyrannical control of union affairs. Despite the membership's rejection of his abuse of shoreside workers in the NMU, Curran announced in the September issue of the *Pilot* his intention to propose to the upcoming national convention in October that the NMU be liquidated into a multi-industrial union:

"We must also take into consideration that because of the complexities of our industry we can no longer afford to be just a seamen's union. We must continue reaching out to those in related industries yet unorganized who are ask-

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