

Class Struggle Heats Up in France

Since the legislative elections in early March, the French working class has returned to active mobilization in the streets and in the factories, putting an end to the bureaucratic truce imposed by the Communist Party and the CP-led labor federation (the CGT) during the campaign period. In a series of mass demonstrations, French youth have demanded the return of draft deferments for students and their extension to all youth, while immigrant workers at the key Renault-Billancourt plant struck for a reclassification of job categories to eliminate the systematic discrimination in pay directed against foreign workers.

In spite of the temporary reprieve won by Pompidou as a result of the ultra-respectable electoral campaign of the Union of the Left, the Pompidou regime is fundamentally unstable. At any time, a vigorous and determined leadership of strike and youth struggles could lead to a massive working-class mobilization. Evidence of this is provided by the massive 9 April Paris demonstration against militarization of the youth and by the 50,000 participants in a spirited May Day march in spite of driving rain.

Under these circumstances, the issue of a workers government is just as immediate as during the legislative elections. No partial struggle, whether strikes for a higher minimum wage and for equal pay for foreign workers, or demonstrations against the elimination of draft deferments, can hope to achieve lasting results without a perspective of overthrowing the reactionary bourgeois regime. The political struggle against the new popular front, the Union of the Left, and its Common Program must continue as a central focus of revolutionary activity.

The Renault Strike

Foreign workers are a major component of the industrial work force of most of the advanced European countries. In France today, roughly 20 percent of industrial workers are immigrants. The system of imported labor was made necessary by the labor shortage during the 1960's and provides certain conveniences for the capitalists. Immigrant workers are denied the vote, participate far less frequently in the workers parties and the trade unions, frequently cannot read French—



After March elections Pompidou regime remains unstable; 40,000 Renault workers strike, French workers must place no confidence in popular-front Union of the Left. Broaden strikes to demand workers government!

in other words, they are largely cut off from the political process. To this has recently been added the ability of employers to deport troublesome immigrant workers. This is one of the practical effects of the 1972 Fontanet-Marcellin regulations which replaced work permits with labor contracts.

Traditionally, the major labor unions and workers parties have largely ignored the foreign workers and in particular have not fought against discriminatory job classifications. While the Common Program of the Union of the Left makes some polite noises about improving the legal situation of immigrants, the Communist Party opposes giving the vote to immigrant workers, and when the Fontanet-Marcellin regulations were issued the CP commented that this would help reduce illegal immigration!

The question of immigrant workers was posed sharply beginning in late

March as roughly 400 semi-skilled workers in the stamping department of the Renault plant near Paris walked off the job demanding a reclassification of job ratings to provide equal pay for equal work. (Until then there had been three different scales for the same job in the same department.) Most of the workers in the stamping department are foreign, and they are concentrated in the lowest classifications. In the initial negotiations the CGT and Renault agreed on a wage increase, but maintained the discriminatory job classifications. When the workers refused to accept the CGT proposal, the company tried a different tack and locked out thousands of workers in "technical layoff," hoping, of course, that antagonisms would develop toward the immigrant workers. By 18 April 40,000 Renault workers had been locked out.

The result was quite the opposite;

Instead, the locked-out workers supported the strike of the semi-skilled workers (OS, for *ouvriers spécialisés*), adding the demand that all workers be paid for the time lost due to the lockout. In addition, the OS and immigrant workers from other factories joined in the 9 April demonstration for draft deferments and, for the first time in years, participated in the May Day march.

French workers must demonstrate their commitment to proletarian internationalism by fighting for full legal rights for immigrant workers, for their integration into the trade unions, for the elimination of the labor contract and work permit systems of police control and for equal pay for equal work. (To organize the foreign workers into the vanguard party and the unions would almost certainly require special organizational means, such as special

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PL Finds Road to Bureaucrats

The Spartacist League has said for some time that the campaign for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay being conducted by the Progressive Labor Party (PL) and its trade-union front group, the Workers Action Movement (WAM), is purely reformist and could be easily co-opted by left-talking bureaucrats. Now this has been confirmed by PL itself! But instead of seeing this as proof of the necessity for a programmatic struggle against the bureaucracy, PL WAM is unable to come up with anything except an apolitical "we fight harder" policy.

In the keynote address to the recent WAM convention (28 April), "30 for 40" is simply presented as the "super reform" which will solve everything:

"30, 40 is the single demand that WILL HELP US WIN ALL OTHER DEMANDS ... 30/40 will help us win higher wages and smash the wage freeze because... 30 hours work for 40 hours pay BY DEFINITION means a higher hourly wage....

"30 for 40 means better public services. ... Shorter hours means you'll be less tired and irritable, less likely to make mistakes, less likely to take your hostility toward the boss out on the worker you have to serve [in other words, the workers are responsible for poor public services and 30 for 40 will increase productivity]....

"30 for 40 will give us a lot more leisure time to spend with our families, train for better-paying jobs, or however else we want to spend that extra ten hours a week..." [emphasis in original]

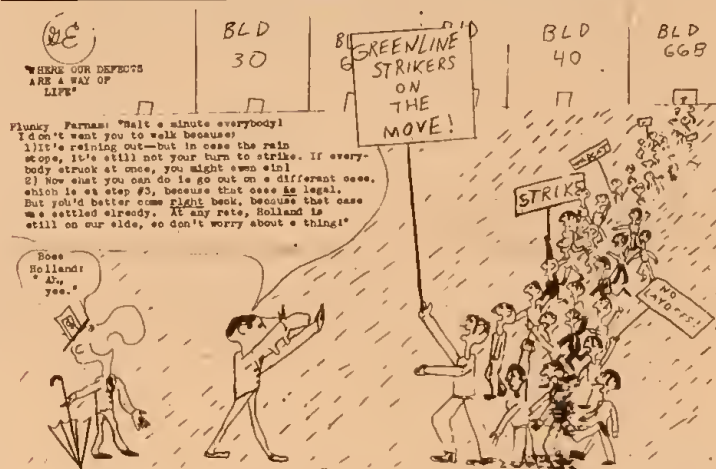
If ever a demand was presented in such a way as to foster simple trade-union consciousness, this it is! Raised in a revolutionary manner, "30 for 40" should be explained as a concretization of the demand for a sliding scale of wages and hours, a demand to end unemployment at the expense of the capitalists, which was first put forth in Leon Trotsky's "Transitional Program." Such a transitional demand serves the purpose of leading the fight against unemployment beyond simple reform demands (unemployment insurance) to a real answer, a fight against the capitalist system which causes unemployment. To accomplish this task "30 for 40" must be linked to the overall Transitional Program (including its slogans of workers control of produc-

tion, expropriation of key industries without compensation, and workers government, among others.

Enter the Bureaucrats

PL has never taken a hard line against the labor bureaucracy, nor does it follow Lenin in distinguishing between the trade-union consciousness of the militant workers and the socialist, class consciousness which is brought to the class by the vanguard party. Instead, PL speaks impressionistically of a "right," "left," and "center." This vague terminology allows it to slide up to liberal bureaucrats, as for example the building up of CWA and SSEU leaders in PL's 1972 election day "30 for 40" rally (see WV No. 16, February 1972). But in any bloc of this sort there is always the question of who is the horse and who is the rider.

As evidenced in the same keynote address, PL/WAM is now waking up to the danger of its campaign being co-opted by slick labor fakers, but lacks an answer to this problem:



WAM convention says the bureaucrats will try to take over shorter work-week movement; PL helps them do it. In 1971 CHALLENGE called IUE Local 201 (Lynn GE) President Farnham a "phony," "faker," "puppet," "hack," "burn" and "boss." Since he supported PL's "30 for 40" resolution at a union meeting a year ago CHALLENGE has not criticized him once!

"As more and more unions set up 30 for 40 committees—as more and more referendum campaigns develop, increasingly enemies of the workers will try to take over the 30 for 40 movement.... Even with a strong WAM organization, many will fall into the trap.... Then our task will be to fight for the leadership of that movement; to fight to see honest, sincere, militant workers, in the lead...."

This abstract possibility is already taking form in one of PL's key areas of concentration, the Lynn/Everett, Mass., GE plants, the one industrial complex where it has any visible support. There a small group has formed around a shop newspaper called *The Real News* led by two stewards who were fired last year for passing out a leaflet protesting GE's racism. PL/WAM has gone beyond the elementary duty of defending victimized workers unconditionally against the company to form a political bloc between itself and *The Real News*. The character of this bloc can be judged by the fact that Charlie Murray, one of *Real News*' leaders, frequently engages in red-baiting at meetings called by left groups in Boston. He constantly proclaims that he is a Democrat, a good friend of the IUE local president and a supporter of Lynn's former "reform" mayor. Despite his occasional militant activities,

Murray is essentially an aspiring bureaucrat, similar to the leaders of the United National Caucus in the UAW, which PL also supports.

From the Aspiring Bureaucrats to the Bureaucrats Themselves

Some Right forces may come over to a class-struggle position, says PL's Trade Union Program, noting that this is especially true at the "lower levels" (of what?—the bureaucracy, of course, although PL doesn't want to say this openly). Pregnant words, and now we see the offspring. In the 13 July 1972 issue of *Challenge*, we read:

"IUE Local 201 [Lynn/Everett, Mass., GE plants] members voted unanimously at the June 19th membership meetings in support of "30 for 40" resolutions introduced by a member of WAM at General Electric plants here. The resolutions mandated the live local delegates to the June IUE convention in Washington, D.C. to press for making "30 for 40" and "better pensions with earlier

criticism of Farnham, a not-so-liberal bureaucrat. Although before this there was severe criticism of Farnham in several issues of *Challenge*, there has not been a single word of criticism since then. And how could there be? By supporting the "30 for 40" resolution, Farnham supports the political basis for the existence of WAM. There is no reason why he, and the rest of the union bureaucracy (who apparently supported the resolution), could not join it. For all of PL's militant leaflets at Lynn GE, its successful campaign to rehire an open PLer and support for various local job actions, PL is now acting as a left cover for the bureaucracy!

Already Local 201 has acted as a springboard for one militant-talking bureaucrat to make it in the big time, namely Farnham's predecessor, Peter DiCicco, now an international vice-president of the IUE. PL's non-aggression pact with Murray and Farnham will aid them in doing the same.

Transitional Program

From the 1965 PLP Trade Union Program to WAM today, Progressive Labor has consistently called for a "center-left" coalition in the trade unions. In the most likely event that it is outmaneuvered by the bigger and more able Communist Party, this "fight the Right" policy means a lot of wasted energy; where successful it can lead only to outright betrayal of the rank and file.

As against the reformist policy of lesser evilism, the Trotskyists counterpose the struggle for the transitional program which leads from simple trade-union reform demands to the fight for socialism. In the words of the founding program of the Fourth International:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

—Leon Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*

Fighting in the unions through caucuses based on the transitional program, and helping to construct the Trotskyist vanguard party, class-conscious militants can avoid the trap of reformism and destroy the bureaucracy instead of acting as its left cover in the manner of PL/WAM. ■

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CWA Ranks Must Defeat Anti-Red Clause!

Stung by spreading rank-and-file opposition to their dictatorial rule, leading local bureaucrats in the Communications Workers of America (CWA) are pushing for the adoption of a vague and open-ended anti-"subversive" amendment to the union constitution at next month's national convention. Combined with the existing federal laws prohibiting anyone with "dangerous" political views from working for the phone company, this anti-red clause would be used by the Beirne bureaucracy to smash any serious opposition to its sellout policies. Every union militant has a vital interest in building a united campaign to smother this witch-hunt drive in the CWA.

As presented to the Constitution Committee by President Kirkpatrick of CWA Local 9410 (San Francisco), the amendment would make the following an offense against the union:

"Willfully supporting or assisting any and all corrupting influences of the undermining effects of Communist agencies or others who are opposed to the basic principles of our democracy and free and Democratic Unionism."

Such an amendment, which specifies no anti-union actions, would make any member of the CWA subject to prosecution and possible expulsion from the union for any anti-leadership opinion which the bureaucracy declares to be "subversive."

The proposed amendment was read by Kirkpatrick at the San Francisco local meeting on 15 May after a supporter of *Yellow Pages*, an opposition newsletter in the local, pointed out that for some reason Kirkpatrick had overlooked it in his report, despite the fact that he sponsored the amendment! In the discussion which followed, Kirkpatrick was accused of generally being against union democracy, as evidenced by his earlier statement that a proposal to have elected shop stewards would only be instituted "over my dead body." Kirkpatrick acknowledged having made the statement and refused a direct request for a straw poll of the local membership on his amendment.

The proposed amendment was also read at a Local 9415 meeting in Oakland, according to members of the Militant Action Caucus (MAC). Questions were not allowed on the report; however, it was learned that members of other local leaderships in California, including Local 9415, had "helped" Kirkpatrick with his amendment.

This comes as no surprise. The failure of the recent attempt to drive members of MAC out of Local 9415 by bringing them up on phony charges of bringing the union into "disrepute"—it was not the so-called "subversives" that brought the phony charges, but their opponents!—was well noted by other California local leaders. Because

members of MAC had stood for consistent struggle against the company, as well as for a comprehensive program for turning the entire union into a real weapon of class struggle rather than a conveyor for the company's labor discipline, discredited elements in the 9415 Local leadership could no longer tolerate MAC. Their lame effort to bring MAC members up on charges collapsed, however, as defense for the right of opposition to exist mounted in the ranks (see *WV* Nos. 16 and 17, February and March 1973). Through the new amendment, these elements and others like them hope to be able to destroy opposition and cling to office regardless of the destructive effects of their pro-company policies on the union.

Smash the Beirne Bureaucracy

The issue, however, is much broader than the presence of "radicals" in a few troublesome locals. Whenever the labor tops have been threatened by revolt in the ranks, their favorite weapon has been the witchhunt. But it is the union itself that suffers. In the space of ten years, during the 1920's and early 1930's, the reactionary AFL leadership managed to reduce union membership by a half, largely through mass expulsions of oppositionists, militant locals and "reds," as well as by refusing to fight the wage-cutting offensive of the

companies. With the beginning of the cold war in the late 1940's, similar anti-red clauses and the Talt-Hartley law were used to drive thousands of the most militant trade unionists out of the shops, smashing virtually every left-opposition caucus in the labor movement, splitting the once-powerful United Electrical Workers and securing the power of the existing CIO bureaucracies. Many of these petty dictators have by now maintained their stranglehold on the unions for more than a quarter of a century and their positions are again shaky as they become more and more isolated from the ranks, and as the increasingly sharp and frequent economic crises expose their refusal to defend the living standards of the working class.

In this situation the anti-red clause drive fits neatly into the concerted effort by top labor leaders to obtain a "moderate" wage-control program and the current campaign for "voluntary-compulsory arbitration." Together they add up to a program to insulate the bureaucracy from rank-and-file revolt by firmly integrating the unions with the corporations and the capitalist state. In this the pro-McGovern Beirne is no different from the conservative Abel or Meany. Beirne's entire policy is to endorse the basic interests of the companies, such as improving profits through automation and the consequent drastic cutbacks in jobs.

In defense of these sellout policies, the bureaucracy is forced to resort more and more to tactics of intimidation and open strikebreaking. When Beirne decreed the end of the 1968 nation-wide phone strike, locals were given 72 hours to ratify the contract and get the results into the CWA Washington headquarters. Locals which refused to comply and militantly attempted to continue the strike were broken up and their leaders blacklisted. In 1971, however, fearing that there would be even more resistance than in 1968 to acceptance of what were basically the company's original contract terms, Beirne and his executive board decreed the end of the strike and a return to work, with a phony "ratification" to follow by mail ballot. This amounted to a virtual fait accompli for the company, yet nevertheless, locals in 10 states attempted to stay out, and New

Letters

Chicago
April 9, 1973

Dear Comrades:

I thought the *WV* article on the French election results was flawed by a narrow parliamentary focus. I don't believe that Gaullism has been stabilized by the working class apathy engendered by the Union's campaign. To begin with, I think the French working class had a considerable subjective stake in a Union victory. But more fundamentally, the article implies the workers must tolerate a reactionary government until they get a parliamentary majority (and the Union did get 46% of the vote). Given the clear class polarization in the election, the French working class, I think a main theme of the article should have been a general attack on parliamentarianism. Why should the workers accept a political system which produces an oppressive regime, particularly when that regime has demonstrated that it is quite prepared to throw off the democratic rules-of-the-game when they work against it. Under the circumstances, I don't think that propaganda line would be ultimistic. The article should have ended with the demand to overthrow the Pompidou regime through industrial action, which is a real possibility. After all, in the last few weeks there have been major wildcats at Renault and nation-wide student strikes against the draft supported by the CGT.

Comradely,
J. Seymour

in the framework of the broader class struggle (see article this issue). A necessary part of a revolutionary policy during the campaign period was a determined struggle against parliamentary cretinism. The article should have indicated clearly that fundamental questions such as the class nature of the state will not be resolved in the peaceful confines of the voting booth, but by the direct action of the working class using its own methods, principally strikes and ultimately insurrection.

At the same time, during the election period the political life of the working class, including in the unions, was dominated by the question of the Union of the Left "alternative" to Pompidou. In this situation it was crucial to expose the Left Union as a popular front, agitating in the unions and approaching CP and SP workers with the slogan of a workers government, break with the bourgeoisie! Since the only conclusion of such a policy was either abstention or a vote for a revolutionary alternative to the popular front, a limited electoral intervention by the vanguard party was called for. To simply dismiss the elections, as did the Maoists, would have been anti-parliamentary cretinism, and would simply have left intact the workers' illusions in the Union of the Left.

Chicago
May 3, 1973

To the Editor
Workers Vanguard
New York

Dear Comrades:

In the article entitled "Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam" in *WV* No. 19, there is a rather unfortunate misformulation concerning the relationship of the vanguard party to non-proletarian classes. The sentence in question is as follows: "For Marxists, who seek to organize the workers' international, there could be no question of building

a peasants' international, that is, of organizing another class." While it is clear that organizing a peasants' international, or in fact any non-proletarian party, is totally alien to Marxism, it is not true that we do not organize other classes. We see the necessity for organizing the peasantry, especially the rural proletariat and poor peasants; in addition, it is necessary to organize sections of the petty bourgeoisie in the cities. The point that must be made is that we organize these people on the basis of a proletarian program, and thus in opposition to their petty bourgeois class interests.

We do seek to organize the peasantry, and draw its lowest layers into the proletarian party. When the peasantry is in struggle against their landlords, we seek to intervene in that struggle, and, if possible, lead it, even to the point of forming peasants organizations in order to further the anti-capitalist aspects of their struggle. The real question is not that of whether to organize non-proletarian sectors of the population, but of the program around which we organize. Always and everywhere we seek to organize all classes to accept and struggle for the class interests of the proletariat. And this is why we would not organize a non-proletarian party. A peasant party would necessarily have a program in the class interests of the peasantry. It would be a petty bourgeois program, hostile to the interests of the proletariat. Thus there is no possibility of Marxists organizing a peasant party. However, we will organize non-proletarian sectors of the population, organize them around our program, the program of the proletariat.

Comradely,
M. Frazier

WV REPLIES: the writer's point is well taken. The article should have said that Marxists do not organize another class as a class.

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York state locals defied Beirne for more than six months by continuing the strike (see *WV* No. 5, February 1972).

The anti-red clause must be seen as an attack on the entire membership of the union. It will be used by Beirne and Co. to control local leaders, ram through sellout strike settlements or no-strike agreements and to nip potential opposition in the bud with red-baiting smear campaigns and bureaucratic expulsions. All class-conscious CWA militants must join in a united campaign to smash the anti-red clause. An attack on one is an attack on all! ■

WV REPLIES: The article "French Elections: Gaullism Wins a Reprieve" in WV No. 18, April 1973, did suffer from a narrow focus on the parliamentary arena, failing to place the elections

In the 11 May issue of *Workers Vanguard*, in an article dealing with a centrist regroupment between the "Vanguard Newsletter" grouplet and the "Class Struggle League," we mentioned these opportunists' misrepresentations of the trade-union work of the Spartacist League and promised a fuller discussion of the totally counterposed approaches of petty-bourgeois workerism and revolutionary Marxism toward work among the proletariat. While the VNL/CSL conglomeration is not very significant in itself, its attempts to justify its opportunism over trade-union work and its consequent distortions of the Spartacist League's positions and practice provide an illuminating starting point for an examination of a key component of the SL's politics: our struggle to build a revolutionary leadership in the labor movement.

The SL's trade-union policies are totally counterposed to the petty-bourgeois workerism currently rampant among most of the U.S. left. The common denominator of the union line of Progressive Labor, International Socialists, Workers League, Revolutionary Union, etc. is support for any militant-talking "opposition" to the incumbent union bureaucrats and the formation of programless "rank-and-file" committees based on simple trade-union militancy. We have documented repeatedly how this "lesser evil" policy gives way to craven capitulation to the bureaucracy itself when the opportunity presents itself; in practice the union work of these fake lefts differs little from the more openly reformist policies of the Communist Party.

In contrast to the opportunists stands the Spartacist League with its Bolshevik policies of trade-union work, centered on the construction of caucuses based on the transitional program. Simultaneously an oppositional force aimed at defeating the labor bureaucracy and a vehicle for winning workers to the program of the vanguard party, the caucus represents an alternative leadership based on class struggle instead of grovelling class collaboration.

Predictably, the opportunists attack the SL's principled policy as "sectarianism" or "trade-union ultimatism" and seek accordingly to distort our trade-union work to justify their own practice. Thus, in a draft document entitled "Tasks and Perspectives of the International Communist League," the VNL/CSL wrote of the SL's union work:

"...they only organize on the basis of the entire transitional program. All caucuses are built around this program and only workers who agree with the SL's program may enter. Further the SL refuses to engage in work in other rank-and-file caucuses and abstains from every struggle by the ranks against the bureaucrats...."

Elsewhere, the VNL/CSL amplified:

"...without specifically denying it, SL rejects the tactic of critical support in trade union elections.... For example, it implies that intervention of the state, as in the UMW Arnold Miller campaign ["Miners for Democracy" in the United Mine Workers union], makes non-support a principled question...."

Can There Be a Partial Transitional Program?

The "Transitional Program," concretized by Trotsky in 1938 in the founding document of the Fourth International, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," begins with the concrete felt needs of the class (e.g., wages, working conditions, unemployment) and formulates an alternative which directly leads to an attack on the capitalist system itself (e.g., sliding scale of wages and hours, expropriation of industry without compensation, workers control of production, factory committees) linked explicitly to the struggle for proletarian power and the destruction of the capitalist state (e.g., labor party, workers militias, soviets, workers government).

The Transitional Program transcends the partial and sectional concerns of atomized layers of the class

through demands which unite the workers around their historic class interests. Demands such as the sliding scale of wages and hours to eliminate unemployment at the capitalists' expense, organization of the unemployed by the union movement and the struggle against all forms of national, racial and sexual oppression are therefore essential to overcome the pitting of sections of the class against one another and to unify them in the assault against capital.

The Transitional Program embodies the most urgent interests of the proletariat as an international class. The division of the workers along national lines—abetted by the union bureaucracy, which seeks to make the prole-

movement as a whole must adopt. As the caucus grows and becomes a real factor in the life of the union, this process necessarily involves tactical maneuvers—blocs and united fronts with other forces in the union, the possibility of short-term entries into other formations, etc.

But as Lenin pointed out, the ability to maneuver requires a foundation of granite hardness. Unlike those who justify opportunism by arguing that a hard independent stance will come "later" ("when we are stronger," "when the workers are more open"), the SL recognizes that principled maneuvers can be undertaken only from a position of some independent strength. Only

Trade Union Tactics and the Transitional Program

tariat of a particular country the junior partner of its "own" imperialism—must be transcended through demands for industrial union organization across national boundaries and for concrete international class solidarity. For example, a crucial component in the Bolsheviks' construction of antifeminist transitional organizations of oppressed women was the struggle against the first world imperialist war (see *WV* No. 11, September 1972). In the present situation of heightened inter-imperialist economic rivalry, which brings closer the menace of new world wars, the demands for solidarity with the Indochinese revolution and opposition to chauvinist economic protectionism are crucial.

The opportunist attempt to bowdlerize the Transitional Program into "relevant" and "ultimatic" elements is a gross capitulation to the class as it is and to the bourgeois ideology and backwardness which, refracted through the labor bureaucracy, dominates the class and blocks the development of revolutionary consciousness. As Lenin insisted, the massive spontaneous outbursts of proletarian militancy can by themselves lead only to trade-union consciousness. Socialist consciousness requires an intersection with the revolutionary vanguard through its cadre and program. *Thus, to pick and choose among the elements of the Transitional Program is to destroy its very purpose—the attempt to link the felt needs of the workers to the struggle for power.* To abjure crucial aspects of the transitional program as "too advanced" reveals the appetite for reformism and inevitably constitutes an adaptation to parochialism and national chauvinism.

In particular situations, certain aspects of the program acquire special urgency and immediacy, enabling the communists to involve and lead masses of workers in struggle. But while emphasizing particular demands in their propaganda and campaigns, communists seek always to link such demands to the full program. To do otherwise can only build new reformist roadblocks. There is no demand which retains an automatic revolutionary thrust in artificial isolation from the program as a whole, as demonstrated by the nakedly reformist content of the Progressive Labor "30 for 40" and the Workers League "Labor Party" campaigns.

The primary organizational vehicle for communist cadres in the unions is the caucus based on the transitional program. The caucus engages in a continual struggle for power in the union, demonstrating at first in an exemplary fashion the program which the labor

when the caucus has already established its identity and authority on the basis of its full program can it work with or bloc with other formations without blurring its positions or confusing its supporters. To bloc with or enter opportunist or bureaucratic formations before the programmatic lines are sharply drawn in the minds of the workers is merely to hand those who look to the caucus for leadership to the betrayers on a platter.

How Does a Caucus Mobilize the Ranks?

To characterize the trade-union practice of the SL as does the VNL/CSL ("All caucuses are built around [the full] program and only workers who agree with the SL's program may enter") reveals either deliberate cynicism or the total absence of experience in work among the proletariat.

The process of building real programmatic-based caucuses in the union movement depends upon a constant interaction between disciplined communist cadres in the unions and the militant ranks. The caucus both engages in agitation around its full program and seeks to provide leadership in particular workers' struggles, demonstrating in action that only the transitional program can consistently uphold the felt needs of the workers and safeguard gains already won in struggle. In fact, winning the advanced workers in a particular union situation to acceptance of the transitional program and the communist leadership offered by the caucus inseparably and inevitably involves the ability to mobilize less advanced sections of the ranks around the caucus in particular situations.

Whereas workerists view the class abstractly as a unitary mass (and gloss over the manifestations of backward and uneven consciousness in order to glorify the class in its totality as it exists, elevating it above the vanguard), communists recognize layers and polarizations among the workers. Thus we know very well that as the caucus develops a hard following of supporters committed to its full program, it also becomes a factor among workers who do not fully understand or accept its program or its goals but will, to a greater or lesser extent, follow its lead in particular struggles. Especially in the context of a corrupt and ossified conservative union bureaucracy, even a small caucus of communist militants finds itself frequently thrust into a position of leadership when the sellout policies of the union tops and the absence of alternative leadership-forces

create a temporary vacuum of authority.

For example, in the National Maritime Union the only force interested in and capable of launching a struggle against the job-trust "group system" (which relegates the younger NMU members to perennial unemployment and second-class union status) was the Militant-Solidarity Caucus, a grouping based on a principled transitional program, and not the liberal-backed out-bureaucrat James Morrissey. Similarly, it was the direct result of the prominent role played by the Militant Action Caucus of Communications Workers of America, Local 9415 (Oakland, Calif.) in a wildcat operators' walkout that a MAC supporter was elected to the Local 9415 executive board. Such militants who, through struggling for the caucus program, win authority as courageous, far-sighted and principled in particular campaigns or job actions, become recognized leaders among their fellow workers, many of whom still do not accept the program of the caucus.

Unlike aspiring careerists, who simply gloat over the extension of their influence, communist militants in the unions must view these situations as invaluable opportunities to mobilize in struggle workers who are not yet communists, while recognizing that they also can lead to disorientation: either the pressure to adapt the caucus program to vacillating elements or the temptation to overestimate the degree of its programmatic support among the ranks and give way to adventurism.

Vanguard Party Needed

To resist these dangers, militant proletarian leaders must be firmly grounded in the theory and history of the Marxist movement and linked as disciplined members to a vanguard organization whose analysis and program embody the interests of the international working class, transcending all partial and sectional concerns, and the experience of previous generations of working-class fighters. Unlike the syndicalists who exalt the class as it is above the party, we of the SL want communists in the unions, not trade unionists in the party.

An organization which does not persistently struggle, within the limitations of its forces, to begin and deepen its intervention into the struggles of the oppressed and exploited is not a revolutionary organization. But the colonization into the organizations of the working class of what Trotsky referred to as "your petty-bourgeois boys and girls" is only a precondition. Until they are tested in living struggle, until they have learned to fight for the program under the constant pressures of concrete work, they are neither recognized union militants nor proven communists. It is the responsibility of the party as a whole to guide and direct the work of its trade-union comrades and to assimilate their experiences as an integral part of its own world-view.

Thus, in particular the U.S. radical movement's impressionistic turn toward the recognition that the proletariat is indeed the only revolutionary class in society did not obviate the struggle against petty-bourgeois radicalism, but merely shifted the battleground. In a belated partial recognition of the lessons of the French general strike of May-June 1968, tendencies like the International Socialists (whose line has always been determined by the turns and twists of the petty-bourgeois radical mood) began to send their supporters into industrial jobs, armed however with a left-social-democratic program. The arena had shifted but the politics remained the same. All the workerism in the world cannot conceal the opportunist appetites of the IS and their left mini-reflection, the VNL/CSL.

When is Critical Support Principled?

The VNL/CSL document charges that the SL "insists that nobody but purists can belong to the caucus they

build, and will not build or participate in caucuses that have less than the full transitional program." In fact, the assertion is made that "without specifically denying it, SL rejects the tactic of critical support in trade union elections."

Now to begin with, building a caucus and participating in a caucus are not necessarily the same thing. It is hardly to be expected that a revolutionary organization claiming to stand on the Transitional Program should proclaim an intention to initiate caucuses based on a minimum program—a fundamentally defective program which limits the struggle in advance to reformism! But to deduce from this that the SL will never critically participate in partial formations thrown up in the course of struggle is quite another matter. (However, for those whose "critical support" is a figleaf of criticism as a cover for unprincipled support—and who in any case have pitifully little experience either in building union caucuses or participating in them!—this confusion may be understandable.)

The accusation that the SL has a de facto policy never to give critical support to qualitatively deficient forces is absurd. The SL does not have such a policy toward the unions—any more than we have toward contradictory formations in parliamentary elections, where we offer critical support ("as a rope supports a hanging man") to reformist working-class parties such as the British Labour Party, for example. What we do in fact insist on as the condition for critical support in union elections is merely that there must be in such a case a clear qualitative programmatic difference and not merely the attempt of an out-bureaucrat to pose as a good guy.

vanguard, not to refurbish the bankrupt reformists' authority!

Thus the communists cannot lend their weight to cynical attempts by bureaucratic aspirants to rope in the workers when the programs of the "oppositionalists" and the incumbents are virtually identical. No matter how popular Miller and Morrissey may be in the bourgeois press, no matter what illusions they may succeed in creating among the workers themselves, the task of communists in these unions is simply to expose them.

But the particular wretchedness of these fake "rank-and-file" movements—"movements" which consist only of court suits and liberal press acclamations—does not vitiate the applicability of the tactic of critical support! When an oppositionist is compelled to break from even one central aspect of the bureaucracy's policies of abject class collaborationism, and to place himself at the head of a real rank-and-file movement, then whatever the limitations of the rest of his program, revolutionists may offer such a candidacy critical support. For instance, the principle of industrial rather than craft unionism in the rise of the CIO was in itself grounds for critical support in particular instances. In the recent period, had an oppositionist—or even an aspiring bureaucrat—transcended empty rhetoric about "peace" and taken up the demand, raised by the Spartacist League, for strike action against the Vietnam war, such a campaign would have merited critical support. Similarly, the question of a clear break with the capitalist political parties and the call for a labor party might be an acceptable minimum condition—but this is something quite different

side the ranks while calling on them to rely on their own organized strength to win and extend the struggle which the oppositionist claims to represent. When the workers' own experience reveals to them the real character of the new bureaucrat, the revolutionists stand forth as the only force which is truly committed to this struggle and can regroup the workers around their own program.

The purpose of the tactic of critical support to programmatically defective or incomplete formations within the union movement is to sharpen the contradictions between the militant base and the reformist leadership, between the formally supportable programmatic element and the careerist appetite, to expose in the process of a common struggle for real but limited gains the vacillations and treachery of the bureaucracy and to counterpose the communist program as the consistent extension of the aspirations of the ranks. But when there is no contradiction to expose—as in the case of the Millers and Morrisseys, who offer merely a more "democratic" version of exactly the same program as the incumbents—"critical support" is nothing more than a left cover.

Trade-Union Independence

The VNL/CSL adduces as evidence that the SL forewears the tactic of critical support in practice the SL's vehement refusal to support the UMW "Miners for Democracy" (see *WV* No. 17, March 1973). Unlike its own approach of jumping eagerly on the bandwagon of Arnold Miller and his "Miners for Democracy," the VNL/CSL points out that the SL "implies that intervention of the state, as in the UMW Arnold Miller campaign, makes non-support a principled question."

Unhappily for the VNL, CSL opportunists, Trotsky in fact considered the intervention of the state the *key question* facing the unions. In his pamphlet "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," Trotsky begins his consideration of revolutionary policy in the unions by stating categorically that "There is one common feature in the development, or more correctly the degeneration, of modern trade union organizations in the entire world; it is their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power."

Trotsky went on to point to the increasing difficulty of work in the unions, for example in fascist countries and in what he termed "totalitarian and semi-totalitarian" unions. It was precisely in the context of the discussion of the increasing restrictions on trade-union democracy that he wrote:

"It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses not only against the bourgeoisie but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: *Complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state*. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy. The second slogan is: *trade union democracy*. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state." [our emphasis]

We do not think that Trotsky would have minced words in dealing with those professed "Trotskyists" of the VNL/CSL who preach critical support to formations like that of Miller, which use the pretext of "democracy" as the excuse for seeking to bring the capitalist government into the direct administration of the labor movement!

The shabby evasions of this opportunist clique of "Trotskyists" ("... But as the state intervenes more and more in trade union elections, what will SL do—refuse to run even its own candidate in a government supervised election? Trotsky said that we must learn how to operate in the unions 'even under fascism'...") will avail them nothing. The

SL—which has not flinched from intervening in some of the most right-wing, corrupt and openly gangsterist unions in this country, as the VNL/CSL knows perfectly well—will undertake communist work in the unions under whatever concrete conditions take shape, but that certainly does not lead us to warmly welcome with "critical support" precisely the dangers against which Trotsky warned us!

Class Struggle vs. Opportunist Diversions

The Millers and the Morrisseys are in fact the great white hope of the bourgeoisie for extending its intervention into the labor movement. But even setting aside for a moment the ominous precedent of these "oppositions" whose only real base is the Labor Department, the assumption of power by such forces (even if they were not government-backed) would not represent in any sense a gain for the working class and is in some ways a greater obstacle than the incumbents to the construction of truly class-conscious and programmatically-based rank-and-file movements.

As the Spartacist League has repeatedly pointed out in our propaganda, the existing labor bureaucracy is now deeply unstable and can be shattered. Profoundly ossified and corrupt, socially isolated, especially from the younger and minority-group workers, its rigid Cold War variant of anti-communism an impediment to the flexibility of the liberal imperialist bourgeoisie, the Meanyite bureaucracy is losing its grip on the allegiance of the working class. If the workers are mobilized to replace these traitors only with a slicker version of same—armed with the social-democratic rhetoric used to such advantage by their European counterparts and not tarnished by the particular betrayals of their predecessors—rather than with a communist leadership, then an opportunity will have been lost which will not quickly recur. The forces of bureaucratism and inertia in the trade unions are strong, particularly after an exhausting faction fight. The leaderships which rode in on the CIO revolt against the AFL—Murray, Bridges, Curran, Quill—remained in power for decades. If the current generation of militant workers invests its commitment and its aspirations in installing an equally treacherous replacement, then the enormous combativeness of the U.S. proletariat will have been diverted once more through the lack of an alternative revolutionary leadership.

It is to the construction of an authentic communist leadership in the union movement that the Spartacist League is committed, as we struggle to consummate our transformation into the nucleus of the vanguard party, U.S. section of a reborn Fourth International. ■

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Lewis defies Roosevelt, calling miners' strike in violation of the pro-war no-strike pledge during World War II. The top CIO leadership denounced the miners as "fascists," while the CP's DAILY WORKER called on miners to break the strike. The Trotskyists of the SWP, however, called for unconditional defense of the strike.

It is this insistence which infuriates the opportunists of the VNL, CSL ilk, who seek to cover over their own accommodation to the petty-bourgeois public opinion which acclaims the Millers and Morrisseys as just what the doctor ordered to keep the workers in line without offending liberal sensibilities. It is the VNL, CSL's own inability to demonstrate any principled arguments for critically supporting such fakers which prompts them to distort our position.

The Leninist tactic of critical support is an application of the tactic of the united front. We recognize that the masses do not desert their established leaderships on the basis of the abstract call to follow the communists, but rather through recognizing in the course of struggle that only the communists fight for the avowed common aim. The purpose of the united front is to regroup the workers around the leadership of the

from the vague "labor party" threats of those, like the Steelworkers' L.W. Abel, who hoped to pressure the Democratic Party into abandoning the "radical" McGovern in favor of a "mainstream" Democrat like Jackson. As an example, to call for a labor party during an election year in which most labor leaders were pushing one or another capitalist politician could lead to a real political struggle against the bureaucracy.

When a union office-seeker seriously campaigns on the basis of a program which, whatever its reformist limitations, offers the working class a real gain on even one such issue, revolutionaries can legitimately proclaim their support for that plank and offer the candidate critical support even as they seek to demonstrate that only their full program can win and safeguard this gain, even as they warn that the out-bureaucrat will betray his promises once in office. The caucus works along-

Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam

John Sharpe

Part III

"Socialism" in Half a Country

After repeatedly capitulating before the imperialist powers (Saigon, September 1945; the 6 March 1946 accords; Fontainebleau *modus vivendi*), the Viet Minh were finally forced to fight the French by a series of open provocations in late 1946. On 20 November, the French navy, which had blockaded the Haiphong port, seized a Chinese junk trying to run the blockade; in response, a Vietnamese shore battery shelled the French. Seizing on this incident as an excuse, three days later the French brutally attacked Haiphong with heavy artillery and aerial bombardment, killing roughly 20,000 Vietnamese. Early in December, the French demanded that the Vietnamese withdraw entirely from the city and the surrounding roads; in response, the Vietnamese commander, Vo Nguyen Giap, proposed a mixed commission to discuss the question! Subsequently, on 19 December the French demanded the disarming of the Viet Minh militia, and that night general fighting broke out in Hanoi. The fighting continues to this day. As it turned out, the Viet Minh were quickly driven out of the capital and did not return until after the 1954 Geneva settlement. Had the Stalinists resisted the French reoccupation from the beginning, when the imperialists were weakest, a quarter century of war and more than two million deaths would have been avoided.

The attitude of the French Communist Party in this conflict was an illustration of the lengths to which the Stalinists would go in attempting to ingratiate themselves with their respective bourgeoisies. Thus, while Ho Chi Minh was writing servile letters to the Americans, forming political blocs with the pro-Chinese bourgeois nationalists, dissolving the Indochinese Communist Party and agreeing to permit the entry of French troops into the north, his French comrades were busy explaining why the right of national self-determination did not apply to Vietnam and voting war credits to finance the French expeditionary force!

As early as September 1945, the Saigon committee of the French CP "warned [the Viet Minh] that any 'premature adventures' in Annamite independence might 'not be in line with Soviet perspectives.'"²⁰ That same month the French government (including several CP ministers) proposed a military budget of 193 billion francs, including 100 billion for the Expeditionary Force in Indochina; the CP voted for the bill.²¹ In July 1946, smelling a victory in the next elections, the Communists took up a virulent nationalist stance: "Are we, after having lost Syria and Lebanon yesterday, to lose Indochina tomorrow, North Africa the day after?" wrote *L'Humanité* (24 July 1946).²² Two days later the CP deputies voted for a constitutional definition of the French Union which made Vietnamese "independence" purely fictional!

But this obscene nationalism could not stop at mere generalities: On 20 December 1946, a month after the French bombardment of Haiphong, the CP voted in the French Assembly to send congratulations to General Leclerc and the Expeditionary Corps. On 23 December,

three days after the outbreak of hostilities in Hanoi, the CP deputies voted a special military budget made necessary "because of the resumption in hostilities in Indochina." As Vice-Premier in the government of Paul Ramadier in March 1947, Maurice Thorez, head of the French CP, signed the order for military action against the Vietnamese; at the same time, Ramadier stated that "on the question of Indochina, we have always noted the correctness of the government of the Soviet Union!"²³

Some have alleged that because of these nationalistic acts, the French CP during the late 1940's was opposed to the line of Ho Chi Minh in a fundamental sense, implying that Ho was essentially a centrist, as against the reformist Thorez. That the differences were essentially tactical is shown by Ho's repeated efforts to enlist American aid (at least eight letters to Truman in this period), his agreement to the March 1946 accords and the Fontainebleau agreement and the extremely conservative policies followed by the Viet Minh through most of the first Indochinese war. Ho and Thorez were simply capitulating to different bourgeoisies; qualitatively their policies were the same.

The Agrarian Question

As Leon Trotsky wrote in the "Transitional Program":

"The central task of the colonial and semi-colonial countries is the *agrarian revolution*, i.e., liquidation of feudal heritages, and *national independence*, i.e., the overthrow of the imperialist yoke. Both tasks are closely linked with each other."

From the very beginning, in 1941, the Viet Minh took only the most minimal reformist position on the agrarian question, favoring a 25 per cent reduction in rents. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam written in 1946 stated flatly: "The rights of property and possession of Vietnamese citizens are guaranteed."²⁴ In the period from 1945 to 1949 even this minimal program of rent reduction was only applied to five per cent of the land belonging to large landlords, while eight per cent (belonging to "unpatriotic" landowners) was redistributed—hardly a radical land reform, much less an agrarian revolution.²⁵ However, beginning with the agrarian decree of 12 April 1953, the picture changed as the stipulations calling for reduction of rent, elimination of debts and distribution of lands owned by colonists were put into effect by the local peasant unions. At the same time, the membership of the peasant unions doubled and the percentage of poor peasants in the Lao Dong [Workers] Party increased from 37 per cent to 53 per cent. The French commander at Dien Bien Phu commented that after the new agrarian legislation he wasn't dealing "with the same adversaries."²⁶

Yet even this change was merely tactical. With the beginning of the Cold War with the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the Soviet foreign policy had undergone a



Ta Thu Thau

shift to the left, embodied in the "Zhdanov line." The victory of the Chinese CP in the civil war with Chiang Kai-shek in 1949 meant that Ho was assured of supplies from the deformed workers states. Thus, soon after, the Vietnamese Communist Party was refounded as the Lao Dong [Workers] Party in 1951, and in 1953 the Viet Minh decided to launch a militant land reform campaign. This pattern was virtually identical to that followed by Mao in China, where even the simple democratic demand for land reform was put off until the final break-off of negotiations with Chiang in 1946! However, in both cases, the agrarian program which was implemented in the final stages of the civil war in no way called into question bourgeois property relations in the countryside. We have referred to Mao's policies in China as simply "reformism under the gun," a label which certainly applies with equal force to Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam.

1954 Geneva Settlement

As Stalinists, the Viet Minh leadership ultimately represented the interests of the bureaucratic clique running the deformed workers states. At the first opportunity after a stalemate was reached in the Korean War in 1953, the Russians began pressing for a peace settlement in Vietnam as well. Ho soon took up the refrain even though the Vietnamese were winning militarily. By the time the negotiations finally took place in spring of 1954, the Viet Minh controlled roughly 85 per cent of the country, according to Western estimates, and had decisively defeated the French expeditionary force at Dien Bien Phu. Commenting on the settlement, Douglas Pike, a U.S. official associated with the CIA, has written:

"Ironically the agreement written at Geneva benefitted all parties except the winners. . . . 'Only the Viet Minh, the winners, lost. Or were sold out. Ho Chi Minh somehow was persuaded—apparently by a joint Sino-Soviet effort—to settle for half the country on the grounds that the other half would be his as soon as elections were held. . . .'"²⁷

The role of the Soviet Union in pushing for this sellout "settlement" is well known. The equally

pernicious role of the more militant-talking Chinese was documented by the "Pentagon Papers." A key point in the negotiations came on 18 July 1954, when a Chinese official transmitted a message to U.S. negotiators at Geneva. According to a State Department cable:

"The informant said the Communists are pressing for the stamp of American approval on the armistice agreement—already okayed in principle by Britain and France—which would divide Vietnam between Communist leader Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh and Bao Dai's pro-Western regime....

"But the informant did not (repeat not) rule out the chance of an Indochina cease-fire even if the U.S. refuses to okay the armistice agreement."²⁶

As for Ho, despite rumors of secret dissatisfaction with the cease-fire, and opposition to Moscow and Peking, this is how he presented it to the Vietnamese people:

"At this conference, the struggle of our delegation and the assistance given by the delega-

"Support the national bourgeoisie in the reconstruction and development of crafts and industry" [our emphasis]³²

The NLF has subsequently called for protection of foreign investment and has never expropriated the French rubber plantations; thus in good old Stalinist fashion it distinguishes between the good and the bad imperialists.

As for the agrarian program, in the words of NLF Chairman Nguyen Huu Tho:

"Our program reflects the broad nature of the Front and the forces represented in it. We are in favor of land to the peasants for instance, but not systematic confiscation; we are for reduction of rents but for the maintenance of present property rights except in the case of traitors. Landlords who have not supported the U.S. puppets have nothing to fear."³³

The 1973 Paris Accords

Since April 1965, when Premier Pham Van Dong set out the DRV position on peace negotiations (the "Four Points"), the fundamental North Vietnamese demands have been for U.S. withdrawal and a coalition government in Saigon. The coalition government is clearly intended to be based on the existing state apparatus, which would make it a classical popular front regime. If realized it could spell outright defeat for the millions of Vietnamese who have fought for years with the NLF against U.S. im-

perialism and the feudal-bourgeois reactionary regime in the South. By preserving the property rights of "patriotic" landlords and the "national" bourgeoisie, by guaranteeing foreign investors against expropriation, such a regime would necessarily be unable to fulfill the fundamental aspirations of the working masses.

The actual Paris accords of January 1973 do not set up such a government, nor do they call for regroupment of North Vietnamese forces or disarmament. As a result, this "ceasefire in place" is not simply a sellout, as the 1946 and 1954 agreements clearly were; on the other hand, aside from the U.S. withdrawal, which itself could be reversed, it settles nothing. There is no peace; the civil war goes on. In the meantime the Stalinist leadership of the DRV/NLF has essentially abandoned the civilian political prisoners in the South, as it continues its fundamental strategy of betrayal, the search for a bloc with the non-existent "good" bourgeoisie.

No Support for the Robbers' Peace—U.S. Imperialism Out of S.E. Asia—Free All Political Prisoners in Saigon Government Jails!

Unconditional Military Defense of the DRV—Political Revolution in Hanoi!

Military Victory for the NLF—Viet Cong Take Saigon—No Coalition Government!

Part IV

Those Who Revile Our History

Vietnam in 1945 was a typical colonial country. The vast mass of the population was composed of poor peasants and landless laborers, who suffered from exploitation at the hands of feudal and bourgeois landowners, and from direct military oppression by various imperialist powers (France, Japan, China, Britain and the U.S.). Yet, as shown by centuries of unsuccessful peasant revolts, this heterogeneous popular mass was unable to lead a victorious social revolution. In the early years of this century the urban petty bourgeoisie threw up a series of nationalist sects which, however, were equally unable to achieve the unity or social force necessary to overthrow a developed colonial power. At the same time, the tiny bourgeoisie never advanced beyond the most timid reform demands and, faced with an awakened working class and peasantry, chose instead to cower behind the protection of its French, and later U.S., masters.

Thus the lot of emancipator of the oppressed Vietnamese masses fell to the young, small, but highly combative proletariat. In contrast to India or even China, the bourgeois nationalists were never more than a secondary (and at times minuscule) force in Vietnam after 1930, while the political scene was dominated by the two major currents of the workers movement, Trotskyism and Stalinism.

The Trotskyists stood on the historic Marxist program of permanent revolution, insisting that because of the combined feudal-capitalist character of Vietnamese society and the uneven development of the various class forces, the "national" and "democratic" tasks of the bourgeois revolution could be fulfilled only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, supporting itself on the peasantry. This program was represented in Vietnam by the International Communist League (ICL), which called for complete national independence, land to the peasants, nationalization of the factories under workers control and a workers and peasants government. At the height of the Saigon insurrection of 1945 this program was crystallized in the demand of all power to the People's Committees. While seeking to overthrow the bonapartist bourgeois Viet Minh regime in Saigon, they called for a military united front against the invading imperialist powers. Nevertheless, although at the high point of the uprising the ICL led tens of thousands of workers, it was militarily overwhelmed by the Stalinist Viet Minh, which brutally massacred hundreds of its militants, along with leaders and members of the centrist Struggle group (also supporters of the Fourth International) and various bourgeois nationalist leaders.

This heinous crime gave Ho Chi Minh and

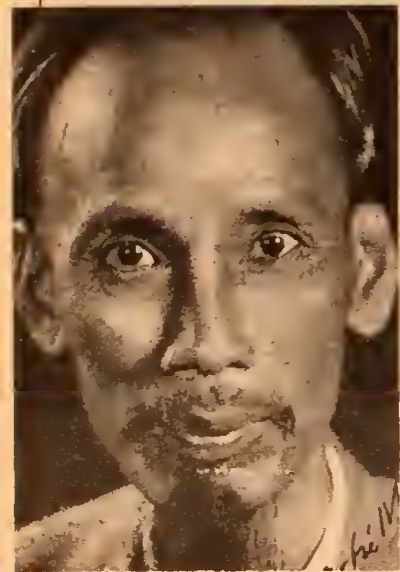
the Stalinists unchallenged hegemony in the Vietnamese political scene. However, despite this position they have consistently refused to mobilize the working class for socialist revolution. When faced with imperialist armies, their policies have amounted to a classic "bloc of four classes"—a purely national revolution in coalition with the "patriotic" bourgeoisie (and, in this case, the monarchy as well). In power, they have adhered to the policy of "socialism in one country" (more precisely in half a country), first sacrificing and then only reluctantly supporting their own comrades against U.S. imperialism and its puppet regimes in South Vietnam.

These are the counter-revolutionary policies of Stalinism, the political expression of a parasitic bureaucracy which acts as the agent of the bourgeoisie in the workers movement; this is the program of the "communist" Ho Chi Minh. It is also the program of his foreign mentors, in the first instance Stalin himself and the French Communist Party, but also of the more militant-posturing yet equally reformist Mao regime in China. The sorry results of this strategy of betrayal have been three successive robbers' peace settlements, in 1946, 1954 and 1973, each of which has left intact a bourgeois regime in Saigon.

Revolutionary Defenseism

What attitude are proletarian revolutionaries to take when faced with the actual struggles led by the Stalinist leadership, these butchers of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, betrayers of the peasants and workers, appeasers of French and U.S. imperialism—who, however, also base themselves on and, in a limited and distorted manner, defend the conquests of the working class? As Marxists we must begin with the fundamental question—what is the class character of the states involved? The Democratic Republic of Vietnam is a deformed workers state; that is, while it has socialist property relations, political power is in the hands of a parasitic bureaucracy rather than the working class. The struggle in South Vietnam is essentially a civil war, pitting the working class and exploited peasantry on the one hand against the local and foreign bourgeoisie on the other. Fundamentally, the NLF-controlled areas in the South are deformed workers states in embryo. Therefore, the only attitude that a party claiming to represent the historic interests of the proletariat can take in a conflict between the NLF/DRV and capitalist forces is one of revolutionary defenseism. Thus we unconditionally

continued on page 10



Ho Chi Minh

tions of the Soviet Union and China have ended in a great victory for us."²⁹

With victories like this, who needs defeats?

The Viet Cong

The whole struggle for the liberation of South Vietnam since the 1954 Geneva agreement reads like a replay of the earlier war against the French. The names are changed, but the play is the same. For six years Ho and the Hanoi leadership refused to organize a revolutionary movement in the south, believing instead in the miraculous powers of "peaceful coexistence." Meanwhile, the butcher Diem was hunting down southern resistance leaders, throwing peasants off their lands, murdering thousands. Ho's answer to this savagery summed up the position of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) leadership quite nicely: "Our policy is: to consolidate the North and to keep in mind the South."³⁰

As late as 1960, the DRV was still trying to hold down the struggle in the south, arguing:

"The Northern people will never neglect their task with regard to one half of their country which is not yet liberated. But in the present conjuncture, when the possibility exists to maintain a lasting peace in the world and create favorable conditions for the world movement of socialist revolution and national independence to go forward, we can and must guide and restrict within the South the solving of the contradiction between imperialism and the colonies of our country" [our emphasis]³¹

As in the first Indochinese war the agrarian program and political perspective of the National Liberation Front are clearly and precisely limited to "democratic" tasks. From the very beginning, the NLF called for a coalition government:

"The present South Vietnamese regime is a camouflaged colonial regime dominated by the Yankees.... Therefore, this regime must be overthrown and a government of national and democratic union put in its place composed of representatives of all social classes, of all nationalities, of the various political parties, or all religions....

Workers League Method Exposed: Phony "Dialectics" and Impotent Opportunism

In a desperate attempt to harden up his organization against the impact of Spartacist League criticism, Tim Wohlforth of the Workers League has been holding over the past two months a class series in New York centered almost exclusively on the SL. In an unprecedented reversal of WL policy, Wohlforth has permitted supporters of the SL to attend the public series and to speak during the discussion period, even in several instances granting SL spokesmen extended floor time to make brief presentations. SL supporters have actively intervened in the classes and have succeeded in turning them into sharp political confrontations—of course, on unequal terms, with Wohlforth making presentations of one to one and a half hours and having the only summary. The SL has continued to press for a real, equal-time debate between the two organizations, but without success.

If the WL had ever maintained even lip service to the principle of workers democracy, its observance of standard democratic discussion procedure in this class series would be unremarkable. But the WL has a long history of excluding opponent tendencies (especially the SL) from its "public" meetings; in fact, only the night before the fifth WL class was held in New York, the SL was excluded from a public meeting called by the WL in the Bay Area.

Even the temporary suspension of the WL's usual exclusionism in the New York classes proved too much for Wohlforth to sustain. At several of the sessions SL supporters were prevented from entering the building by a WL goon squad until all WLers had been admitted. Inside the hall the atmosphere resembled a miniature deformed workers state, with Wohlforth reveling in his total power. Any protest by SLers to even the most vicious slanders (such as the accusation at the fourth class that a former member of the SL was probably now working for the CIA) was met with threats of immediate forcible expulsion. At the end of every session SL supporters were instantly herded into the elevator and every conversation with WL supporters cut off by the goons. At one point Wohlforth called on his thugs to "sit down" a member of the audience who simply wished to go to the bathroom! Then, at the end of the sixth class, after refusing in typical fashion to answer the numerous criticisms raised by SLers during the discussion period, instead devoting most of his summary to reading aloud for a half hour from Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*, Wohlforth flew into a rage when two SL supporters were detected reading the *Bulletin* instead of respectfully paying attention to this force-feeding. He proclaimed that as punishment, these ingrates would be excluded from subsequent meetings, and when the SL supporters at that point indignantly rose in protest to leave the hall, they were physically prevented from doing so!

Is Workers Democracy "Stupid"?

Wohlforth's fundamental stand on the crucial question of workers democracy was made crystal clear at the fifth session of the New York class. He shrilly denounced the Bay Area SL comrades for picketing in protest of their exclusion from the WL San Francisco meeting, terming the action "anti-communist," and repeatedly made implicit but

unmistakable threats of physical violence any time our comrades again publicly protest the WL's exclusionism. Going so far as to allege that the SL's protest demonstration had been intended to get the WL barred from the future use of public meeting hall facilities, Wohlforth stated that the WL had also often been kept out of similar meetings called by other organizations and that exclusionism is to be expected. He then went on to make the astounding remark that "if the SWP is stupid enough to let us into a meeting, we will use the opportunity; if they are smart enough to keep us out we will never picket them." This revealing remark—delivered with appropriate pounding on the table—shows the real "method" of the Wohlforth tendency: sneering at Trotsky's fight for proletarian democracy, the WL considers exclusionism (like opportunism in general) "smart."

To the Workers League, principles are "stupid" because they get in the way of temporary organizational appetites. The entire history of the WL demonstrates that it has never been restrained in pursuing its shameless opportunist zigzags by any consideration of elementary Marxist principle. To revolutionaries, however, it is opportunism which is stupid because it subordinates the historic interests of the international proletariat to short-term parochialism. Proletarian morality is not based on bourgeois moralism but rather on the understanding that only a conscious working class can make the proletarian revolution. Opportunism may "build" an organization like the WL but it can never build an authentic working-class vanguard party. Thus the practice of exclusionism, preventing the open confrontation of different political programs, enables the misleaders to strengthen their hold over their followers and is inherently a weapon of the reformists and centrists against the revolutionists.

What has apparently prompted Wohlforth to permit even these limited and stacked debates with spokesmen of the Spartacist League has been the WL's inability to continue to seal off its mem-

bership from SL politics. Finally forced to confront the SL after years of relying solely on slander (such as his infamous "What is Spartacist?" pamphlet), Wohlforth wants to take his followers from naive acceptance of his characterizations to hardened cynicism—to weed out any who might be disturbed by the exposure of their organization's abandonment of Marxism and to make of the rest fully corrupted opportunists who do know what authentic Trotskyism is—and simply don't care.

Organizational Stalinism

The purpose of these carefully controlled political confrontations with the SL (a full discussion of the issues raised in the WL class series will follow in the next issue of *WV*) is to harden up the membership of the Workers League, Young Socialists at a time when the organizational stagnation of the WL, combined with the recent striking growth of the SL, has rendered the Wohlforth organization vulnerable despite its characteristic use of typically Stalinist organizational methods intended to quarantine its members from authentic Trotskyist criticism. Recently, several New York WL/YS members were castigated as "SL agents" and summarily expelled (naturally without a trial) almost before they had time to investigate whether the SL does indeed offer the answer to their developing programmatic criticisms of the WL.

Through the liberal use of gross falsification of the positions of opponent organizations and the total suppression of internal democracy in the WL, Wohlforth has in the past been quite successful in preventing the emergence of any serious political opposition within the organization. Members of the WL are in practice denied the right of factional communication with other members, and are virtually prohibited from familiarizing themselves with the literature of other political organizations. As is also common in the Stalinist movement, the WL is divided up into "locals" which typically consist of half a dozen or ten members, so that any

comrade with questions or differences can be effectively isolated and prevented from learning if there are other WL members elsewhere who might share his views.

In the WL there is no real provision for the circulation of critical, let alone factional, material to the general membership. Even members of the leading bodies of the organization have no real access to information, and their "rights" are mainly confined to the receipt of circulars which begin with pompous declarations of the ever-deepening crisis of capitalism and end with exhortations about fund-raising or circulation drives. WL members who have raised differences are immediately assigned to make "reports" on such items as Wohlforth's big-lie "What is Spartacist?" pamphlet or the WL's purported continuity with the Fourth International, knowing that they must reaffirm the line of the WL on precisely the questions on which they disagree, or be summarily expelled. The holding of oppositional or even merely critical views on any significant question is likely to lead to immediate expulsion without recourse to a trial.

Political education in the WL is systematically precluded by a frenzied level of deliberately mindless activity which leaves the members almost no time for a study even of the written materials of the WL, let alone a chance to read Lenin or *Workers Vanguard*. Wohlforth's elaborate falsifications are the only version available to WL members of their own history—the actual documents of the formation of the Wohlforth tendency in the 1962 split or of the policies pursued by this tendency inside the SWP, for example, are not accessible to WL members except through the Spartacist League's *Marxist Bulletin* series. Even back issues of the WL's own *Bulletin* are virtually unavailable—not an unimportant precaution, since they are the skeletons in the closet which demonstrate incontestably that the WL has at various points in its history pursued diametrically counterposed lines on virtually every significant political question.

The fruits of this years-long practice of undermining the creation of cadres were apparent in the classes. SL supporters were able to dominate the discussion period due to the simple fact that, despite glares and prodding from the meetings' chairman, only a handful of WL supporters raised their hands and attempted to defend the line of the organization. Those who did dare to take the floor responded only with vague denunciations of the SL speakers' exposures of the concrete opportunism of the WL over specific programmatic points. "SL hates the working class"; "SL shares the method of Shachtman"; "SL is Pablist"; "SL does not understand dialectical materialism"; "SL rejects internationalism"; "SL has no economic analysis"—this was the WL litany. What was missing from these interventions and from Wohlforth's summaries was any attempt to reply to any concrete programmatic points or to defend the WL's wretched opportunist history.

Phony "Dialectics"

The "method" which Wohlforth constantly invokes like a talisman to ward off evil is precisely this: the systematic denial of the importance of program. Simply to proclaim oneself an anti-revisionist or a dialectician does not make it so. Trotskyism and internationalism are fine words but the test is the concrete positions and practice of the organization and its consistency over time. Oh, Wohlforth will admit that the SL has "lots of positions" but he refuses to discuss those positions—or the WL's own positions.

The "method" of Wohlforth is completely counterposed to the method of Lenin and Trotsky, who struggled ceaselessly to draw the political lines over concrete programmatic issues. The basis for the foundation of the Communist International was not the vague protestations to solidarity with the Bolshevik revolution on the part of erstwhile revolutionists impressed by the accomplished fact, but the "Twenty-



Tim Wohlforth

WV PHOTO

One Points" by which Lenin attempted to separate the real communists from the centrists and reformists on the specific and overwhelming programmatic issues facing the working-class movement, in order to struggle concretely to overthrow the bourgeois order and to achieve socialism. And the founding document of the Fourth International was—the Transitional Program!

The WL's pervasive "method" of belittling program as a mere collation of unimportant "bits and pieces" having no relationship to the organization's purported revolutionary capacity is all that stands between Wohlforth and disaster. When confronted with the wretchedly opportunist history of his tendency, Wohlforth takes cover beneath a barrage of idealism masquerading as dialectical materialism. Wohlforth's ultimate dodge for every concrete programmatic question raised by SL speakers at the classes was that the SL refused to recognize the primacy of "Marxist philosophy" over program. An SL spokesman who was granted extended floor time to present a position on "the Marxist method" began by citing the SLL's own Cliff Slaughter, whose pamphlet "Lenin on Dialectics" explicitly attacks the view that Marxism can be considered a philosophy as such:

"The science of society founded by Marx has no room for philosophy as such, for the idea of independently moving thought, with a subject-matter and development of its own, independent of

reality but sometimes descending to impinge upon it."

The Slaughter pamphlet quotes Marx in *The German Ideology*: "When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of activity loses its medium of existence." And the pamphlet concludes that "we shall follow the path of Lenin in using theory as a guide to action, not as a system."

Wohlforth is compelled to caricature Marxism as a closed "philosophy" unconnected to reality precisely in order to prevent consideration of the WL's history and program. It is certainly true that a grasp of the living method of dialectical materialism is vital to an organization's ability to preserve and creatively extend Marxism; it is equally true that there must be a relationship between theory and practice. The writings of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky on dialectical materialism certainly demonstrate that Wohlforth is no more a philosopher than he is a Marxist. But an exploration simply of the WL's history on almost any political question would be sufficient to expose the Wohlforth leadership as cynically unprincipled political bandits.

Thus it does not require a knowledge of dialectics to understand that the WL's position on the 1971 New York police strike was a shameless betrayal of Marxism. The WL line that cops are in effect part of the working class (see *WL Bulletin*, 25 January and 15 February 1971) was an abandonment of the ele-

mentary Leninist position on the state, dictated by the WL's constant policy of sucking up to the labor bureaucrats (who, as usual, crossed the class line to hail the racist cops as their brothers). Every militant class-conscious worker should have been revolted by the WL's disgraceful capitulation. The purpose of Wohlforth's constant abstract appeals to "the Marxist method" is precisely to dodge the political questions and drown any inchoate class instinct among his membership in a sea of mystical obscurantism.

"Philosophical" obscurantism and organizational Stalinism may be sufficient to prevent the development of any hard, cohesive or extensive oppositions in the WL, but they are not sufficient to insulate the WL from its inherent contradictions. Far from being able to build a mass Trotskyist party with these deliberately anti-consciousness methods, the WL is not even able to stave off disaster for its own little sect. Over the past year the WL YS membership has been substantially contracting. The Potemkin Village WL continues to shrilly proclaim the expansion of its apparatus—the acquisition of a new national office and an \$88,000 press, the expansion to twice-weekly of its "mass" paper which (fortunately) is read by nobody and has no influence in the working class because the organization which it represents has none—but the reality behind the facade is becoming increasingly an empty shell.

The Old Shell Game

The WL has always pursued a policy deliberately counterposed to the creation of politically conscious cadre. Far from seeking to create a body of lifetime professional revolutionists who can acquire the theoretical knowledge and experience in struggle which enables them to develop authority among the workers as the carriers of the party's program, the WL has always pursued a burn-out policy which takes willing young revolutionaries and works them for a couple of years at fever pitch with promises that the revolution is around the corner, fully expecting that in a year or two they will drop out—politically uneducated, exhausted from the feverish make-work pace and demoralized by the empty promises of instant success—to become at best non-political and at worst cynical anti-communists, having however in the meantime recruited two or three others to take their places. Those who do last must learn to accept and even glorify the WL's shameless opportunist zigzags and finally become as cynical as the WL leadership.

The operational motto of the WL has always been, "nothing succeeds like success." The working class is presumed to be as cynical and non-political

than a sales and promotional apparatus for the *Bulletin*, and the *Bulletin* is nothing more than a radical rewrite of the bourgeois press. The WL's youth organization, currently named the "Young Socialists," makes no attempt to train young militants as Trotskyists and future communist workers, but simply seeks to draw in, through various youth-culture activities, undifferentiated radical youth suitable for photographing for the paper.

Political Bandits

Behind this organizational charade, however, lies a political method—the method of cynicism. Behind the WL's hysterical opportunist zigzags (which have included a nearly simultaneous chase after the Black Panthers and the New York City cops in 1971), certain features of the WL have remained constant: crisis-mongering to keep the members going for another month or two (Wohlforth seems unaware of the absurdity of proudly proclaiming in one recent article that, unlike the SL—which recognizes ebbs and flows within the context of a world system which has been fundamentally unstable at least since 1914—the WL has insisted that the final crisis of capitalism has been at hand since its inception as a tendency in 1962); crisis-mongering as the implicit excuse for the abandonment of the Trotskyist transitional program (the "logic" is that since the capitalist system has exhausted every option for maneuver and reform, therefore even the most purely reformist demands are revolutionary because they cannot be granted); an organizational practice which is a mockery of Leninist democratic centralism; the substitution of organizational apparatus for politics; the invocation of thoroughly phony "dialectics" to obscure political issues and explain away bizarre zigzags in line; the use of deliberately mystical appeals to "continuity" or "method" to substitute for the elementary Leninist understanding that the basis of the party is its program (thus Wohlforth's meaningless attack on the SL as "having lots of positions but no perspective" while dismissing crucial programmatic differences raised by SLers as "tertiary questions"); a subservience to the British Socialist Labour League of Gerry Healy, which has about as much in common with real internationalism as Browder's subordination to Stalin; gross capitulation to the Peking and especially the Hanoi wing of Stalinism, which reached its height (or depth) in an adulatory obituary for Ho Chi Minh, the murderer of the Vietnamese Trotskyists; the vilest trade-union opportunism, flowing out of appetites toward even the Meany wing of the racist and American-chauvinist trade-union bureaucracy, focused around endless empty campaigns for a "labor" party deliberately stripped of Trotskyist programmatic criteria; the systematic use and defense of physical gangsterism within the working-class movement, exemplified by constant exclusionist "public" WL forums and the employment of incredible slander in the WL press.

Were it not for the destruction of subjectively serious revolutionary militants drawn to the WL by its professed "Trotskyism" only to be plunged into a cynical anti-Trotskyist whirlpool of fake "mass" activity and then discarded, we would be tempted to hail the WL's mushrooming organizational expansion—"Forward to the daily *Bulletin*!"—based on a declining pool of human material as inevitably hastening the collapse of this fraudulent pretender to the continuity of the Fourth International. A house of cards can only be built so high before it must inevitably topple. But as serious Marxists we can only deplore the political fact that the necessary destruction of the Workers League and other obstacles to the construction of the U.S. section of a reborn Fourth International means that the dedication and self-sacrificing work of many who began as subjectively revolutionary militants has served only to build a hideously deformed diversion which can play no role in the principled combat of the world working class for socialism. ■

Workers League Taxi Cover-Up

The *Bulletin* (23 April) report on the 11 April meeting of the New York City Taxi Drivers' Union Local 3036 carries the Workers League "method" of slander, falsification and red-baiting to absurdity. Here we read that the Spartacist League is part of the "Rank and File Coalition," the main oppositional group within the union, which recently took the union to court—first to get the recent contract voided as unconstitutional, and then to guarantee its speaking rights at the recent union meeting. The WL knows that the only open, public denunciation of the Rank and File Coalition made at the union meeting was made by a supporter of the SL. This was further reported in the 27 April issue of *WV* which stated:

"The main recent activity of the RFC has been taking the union to court to get the contract thrown out as 'unconstitutional'. But the courts, like government 'mediators,' cops, taxi commissions—or prisons—are not 'impartial.' They are all coercive arms of the capitalist state. Bringing the courts into union affairs tends to integrate the union into the capitalist state apparatus, and can only make more difficult the struggle to transform the unions into organs of class struggle."

The WL-supported caucus, "Mechanics and Drivers for a Decent Contract" (MDDC), although it was able to get two speakers to address the meeting (not one speaker, as the *Bulletin* article mistakenly reports), did not even mention the RFC's taking the union to court. Further, as reported in the 27 April *WV*, the WL-supported caucus did not even raise the need for a labor party. In the safe seclusion of its press, where lies and slanders can go unchallenged, the WL can condemn taking unions to court and can call for a labor party, but before 1500 taxi drivers all the WL-supported caucus dares to mention is that workers need a raise.

The WL knows full well that supporters of the Spartacist League have never been in the RFC. Workers League supporters, however, were in the RFC themselves; and they supported the RFC in the recent union elections! The *Bulletin* claims that at the recent taxi union meeting:

"The complete anti-unionism of the

Rank and File Coalition could be seen when they opposed the Van Arsdale motion that unions do the hiring of all new drivers instead of the bosses."

In fact the Van Arsdale motion was not for a union hiring hall, but for allowing the union leadership the right to pick and choose which drivers can join the union, a procedure obviously aimed at keeping out militants and oppositionists. No WL-supported caucus has ever raised the need for a union hiring hall, either in the RFC or at union meetings, nor has the WL raised the need for a union hiring hall in its press. Only the Spartacist League has raised the demand that:

"The entire industry, gypsy and Yellow, must be unionized under a closed shop with a central union hiring and dispatch system, with union regulation of safety standards, working conditions, hack lines, etc."

A Spartacist supporter was the only speaker at the recent union meeting to demand a union hiring hall.

On the issue of taking the union to court the WL not only grossly lies when it claims the SL is part of the RFC, but its condemnation of the RFC is completely hypocritical. For the WL supports the campaigns of Miller in the United Mine Workers and Morrissey in the National Maritime Union, whose principal tactic is taking the unions to court. Furthermore, the WL has consistently supported bringing cops and prison guards into the union movement as members. The WL not only supports campaigns which serve to integrate the unions into the capitalist state, but calls for the coercive fist of the capitalist state, prison guards and cops, to enter the unions!

Finally, by referring to the presence of the Communist Party, International Socialists, Labor Committee and Spartacist League members in the RFC the *Bulletin* article is not only lying in terms of the SL, but is engaging in crass red-baiting. Of the WL we can only paraphrase what Trotsky said of the Stalinists: The Workers League takes no care to give its slander even an appearance of sense. No wonder if the advanced workers more and more turn their backs on the dishonest, ignorant and traitorous WL. ■

NEXT ISSUE:

"Wohlforth Embraces Pabloism"

In NY class series, Wohlforth elevates the WL's opportunist appetites into a "method," the dialectics of betrayal.

as the WL, to be won to "revolutionary" politics through admiration of a going concern and impressed by constant opportunist zigzags as "smart." Thus the apparatus for a mass party—dozens of branches, a daily paper—will be established and the masses will follow. Like any group of cynical advertising men, the WL leadership aspires to maintain a high profile at the expense of any real mass work. In 1968 the WL explicitly affirmed that there was no time to seek trade-union implantation and the consolidation of significant industrial fractions because the crisis of capitalism was imminent. Today the WL maintains virtually no trade-union presence with the exception of a couple of white-collar caucuses and a few scattered militants in industry whose sole purpose is to be featured in the newspaper. The organization is little more

...Vietnam

defend the NLF/DRV against the U.S. and the bourgeois regime in Saigon, while at the same time calling for a political revolution to overthrow the treacherous reformist leadership which is holding back the struggle.

This was the approach taken by the Vietnamese Internationalist Communist Group in France, which in 1947 declared:

"Our attitude vis-à-vis the Viet Minh can best be defined by Lenin's phrase 'march separately, strike together.' The Vietnamese internationalist communists are ready to join their blows against imperialism with those of the Viet Minh, but they must maintain complete programmatic independence and freedom of criticism, because in the face of the past capitulations of the Viet Minh, placing confidence in its policies would mean renouncing a revolutionary position."³⁴

Ho "Assimilates the Permanent Revolution"

In their rush to capitulate to the heroes of the petty-bourgeois radical milieu, the fake-Trotskyists of the "United Secretariat" and the "International Committee" must gloss over the real history of Stalinism in Vietnam.

The U.Sec. of Frank, Mandel and Hansen is the direct descendant of the Pabloist International Secretariat, which in the early 1950's formulated the "theory" that the world was divided into two camps, the imperialists and the Stalinists; because of the sharp character of the impending conflicts, the Stalinists would be forced against their will to defend the interests of the proletariat. Pablo's conclusion: The Trotskyists should dissolve their movement in favor of "deep entry" into the Stalinist parties.

In the early 1960's the U.S. Socialist Workers Party came over to Pabloism with its theory that Fidel Castro was an "unconscious Marxist" and thus the SWP's function was to be merely a cheering section for Castroism, recapitulating the European Pabloists' capitulation to the Algerian nationalists. The common thread of Pabloism is the belief that one or another non-proletarian force (the Stalinist bureaucracy, students, peasant guerrillas, etc.) will carry out the revolution, thereby rendering superfluous or at least secondary the leading role of the Trotskyist party.

What this means in the case of Vietnam can be seen from a recent book by Pierre Rousset, a leading member of the French U.Sec., on *Le Parti Communiste Vietnamien*. The book's central thesis is that:

"...the Vietnamese leadership as a whole has assimilated the decisive implications of the permanent revolution for colonial and semi-colonial countries." [emphasis in original]³⁵

As we have shown, Ho Chi Minh's policies of vacillation and betrayal were in direct counterposition to revolutionary Trotskyism and in fact required the massacre of thousands of supporters of the Fourth International. How does this revisionist explain the extermination of the Vietnamese Trotskyists?

"These assassinations, about which historians of the Indochinese CP don't speak, in their writings in French at least, show at least two things: the width of the political gulf which then separated the Trotskyist groups from the Indochinese CP [one would hope so!], the former probably underestimating the importance of the national question in the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, the latter profoundly underestimating the social question in the colonial revolution, including at the outset."³⁶

In short, for the Pabloists there is not only no need to be a Trotskyist in Vietnam, since the North Vietnamese and NLF leadership has absorbed the lessons of the permanent revolution; but in addition, the ideological conflict between Stalinism and Trotskyism in

Vietnam was entirely unnecessary, since there was a little bit of truth on both sides. The murders? Just an unfortunate mistake.

Healy and "People's War"

The position of the U.Sec. at least has the virtue of reflecting a consistent long-standing policy: the open abandonment of the Transitional Program and rejection of the essential lessons of Trotskyism. It is noteworthy that the Socialist Labour League (Britain) and its fake "International Committee," which claim to be fighting Pabloism, and which criticize sharply Hansen's phrase about Castro being an "unconscious Marxist," take precisely the same position regarding the Vietnamese Stalinists as the U.Sec. In their obituary of Ho we read:

"There can be no doubt that he [Ho Chi Minh] contained within himself and came to personify, all the anti-imperialist hatred and fighting spirit of the colonial peoples...."

"Like Mao Tse-tung, Ho instinctively yearned to do battle with imperialism and the internal forces of reaction within his native country."³⁷

Rather than an "unconscious Marxist" (à la U.Sec.), we find here Ho Chi Minh the "instinctive" Marxist. A distinction without a difference, if ever there was one.

Elsewhere the Healyites elaborated:

"It is indisputably true to say that, on the basis of the Vietnamese experience, guns combined with the courage and endurance of individual guerrillas would have meant little or nothing if Ho Chi Minh and other leaders were unable to analyse the principal and secondary conditions within Vietnam as well as between Vietnam and imperialism and on that basis outline a strategy for the conquest of power."³⁸

And just what was this strategy?

"It [Vietnam] demonstrates the transcendental power and resilience of a protracted peoples war led and organized by a party based on the working class and the poor peasantry and inspired by the example of the October revolution [!]."³⁹

And the Vietnamese Trotskyists, murdered by these "instinctive" Marxists—what of them? Well, here it seems that Ho was a little naughty, for which the SLL slaps his hand in reprobation:

"We do not forget these crimes committed against our movement by Ho Chi Minh, any more than we seek to play down his very real contribution to the struggle against world imperialism."

But at the very moment that Ho massacred the Trotskyists, he was according to the Healyites lined up against world Stalinism itself!

"Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh were on one side of the barricades, Thorez, Stalin and French imperialism on the other."⁴⁰

So you see, it is all here: The unconscious (or instinctive) Marxism, the assimilation of the lessons of the permanent revolution, the understanding attitude toward the murders of the Vietnamese Trotskyists. And it is no isolated case. Healy's famous "method" also allows him to support the Red Guards, Mao Tse-tung, the "Arab Revolution" and Indira Gandhi as supposed fighters against imperialism.

Although Healy uses "theory" and "method" primarily as a smokescreen to hide his abandonment of fundamental Marxist principles, there is in fact a method to the madness. The thread which unites these various positions is the same objectivism which is implicit in Pabloism: Since the sweep of the revolutionary wave (the objective forces) is so all-embracing, the struggle for the program of permanent revolution, the organization of the Trotskyist vanguard party, the struggle to rebuild the Fourth International—all this is secondary and ultimately expendable.

SL and the Vietnamese Trotskyists

In contrast, the Spartacist League continues to uphold the struggle and the memory of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, while recognizing and seeking to learn from their mistakes. This is no

secondary or sentimental question. We have seen how the scandalous abandonment of the theory of permanent revolution on the part of the IC and U.Sec. leads them to solidarize themselves with the Stalinists against the Trotskyists in Vietnam, going so far as to apologize for the murder of the latter. The practical consequences of Pabloism are liquidation of the revolution and annihilation of the revolutionaries.

The Spartacist League has consistently, throughout its history, called for military defense of the NLF/DRV, including in times or places where this has not been a popular demand. We have demanded that Russia and China provide adequate military aid to the Vietnamese. Alone of all the tendencies of the U.S. left we raise the question of the war in our trade-union work, calling for immediate U.S. withdrawal and labor strikes against the war. At the same time, as Trotskyists we hold high the banner of permanent revolution and expose the repeated betrayals of the Vietnamese Stalinists. Likewise we analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Vietnamese Trotskyists in order, in the words of the Transitional Program, "to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be." Only in this manner, by openly struggling for the program of revolutionary Marxism, can the Fourth International be reborn. ■

²⁹ Harold Isaacs, *No Peace for Asia*, pp. 173-174.

³¹ Bob Potter, "The Rape of Vietnam," *Solidarity* pamphlet, p. 9.

³² Quoted in Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

³³ Potter, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 198, 200.

³⁴ Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

³⁵ Chesneaux, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 297, 300.

³⁷ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 51-52.

³⁸ NY Times, *The Pentagon Papers*, New York, 1971, p. 48.

³⁹ Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, New York, 1967, p. 246.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

⁴¹ Le Duan, *On the Socialist Revolution in Vietnam*, Hanoi, 1965, Vol. I.

⁴² "Program of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (1960)," in Bernard Fall and Marcus Raskin, eds., *The Viet-Nam Reader*, New York, 1967, pp. 216-218.

⁴³ Quoted in Wilfred Burchett, *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerrilla War*, New York, 1965, p. 187.

⁴⁴ Comité central, Groupe communiste internationaliste vietnamien en France, "Nouvelle étape de la contre-révolution et de l'offensive impérialiste en Indochine," *Quatrième Internationale*, November-December 1947, p. 64.

⁴⁵ Rousset, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴⁷ Newsletter, 9 September 1969.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "The Vietnamese Revolution and the Fourth International," *Fourth International*, February 1968.

⁵⁰ Newsletter, 9 September 1969.

Correction

In Part II of this series (WV No. 20, 11 May, p. 4), in a paragraph dealing with the differing fortunes of the Vietnamese Stalinists and Trotskyists during World War II, we wrote:

"...the Stalinists supported the Allies in World War II (as did Chiang Kai-shek) and were willing to make an alliance with the Kuomintang against the Japanese. The Trotskyists, in contrast, took the Bolshevik position of revolutionary defeatism during the war, refusing to support any of the rival imperialist camps and their puppets."

While the paragraph is clearly talking of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, the sentences in question could be misinterpreted as implying that the Fourth International as a whole took a defeatist position in the war between China and Japan. While the FI took a revolutionary defeatist line in the struggle between the Allied and Axis imperialists, it did make a distinction in the Far East by supporting China against Japan. In WV No. 4, January 1972 ("War, Revolution and Self-Determination") we argue that this position was correct until 1942, when the Chinese were essentially subordinated to and integrated into the inter-imperialist war, thereafter necessitating a position of revolutionary defeatism, while continuing to

...Rubber Workers'

of the Goodyear settlement. The minimal wage increase (which in no way threatens the wage controls—what the ruling class is really concerned about at this point) is treated by the URW leadership as untouchable. Instead the union claims it is demanding improved pension benefits whose long-term or even immediate effect is impossible to measure. In addition, the bureaucracy is responding to the threat of layoffs due to plant closings by simply demanding that laid-off workers be permitted to transfer to the new plants with full seniority! Run-away shops are a major issue in the rubber industry; but the major attraction of southern locations is the wage differential, which the union does nothing about. Similarly the strike demands say nothing about the productivity drive, which has struck Akron rubber workers with particular ferociousness. Last spring Akron locals gave up the six-hour day, a historic achievement won in the 1930's, and were hit with a series of speed-up work-rules changes.

The Bommarito regime is keeping the Goodrich workers ignorant of exactly what they're striking for. Bommarito has graced the picket lines to dispel any rumors that he is selling the workers out and to announce that there are high stakes at the bargaining tables. As to what concretely these stakes are, Bommarito has been strangely mysterious. Thus far, the official union statements have been limited to ritually denouncing the company for not bargaining in good faith and have not indicated the specific union demands. A number of picketing workers told a *Workers Vanguard* reporter that they didn't know much about the union demands and what they knew of the contract talks came solely from the press.

In general, conservative bureaucrats like Bommarito do everything possible to suppress strikes. Strikes disrupt production, embitter union relations with the company and heighten class consciousness. However, at times, these same bureaucrats will manipulate strikes to demoralize militants and discredit the strike weapon. Thus, in its campaign to not fight speed-up in the auto shops, the Woodcock regime first let the Lordstown and Norwood wildcats starve themselves out by withholding outside support. Then it disorganized the ranks with a series of quickie strikes (the "Apache" strategy) which allowed General Motors to pro-

support the right of self-determination for China. This was the position taken by Lenin with regard to Serbian and Polish independence in the similar situation during World War I.

The position of the Vietnamese International Communist League gives added support to this policy. In the specific conditions of Vietnam, where both Japanese and Chinese sought to dominate Vietnam, a position of support for the Chinese could only have led to a new imperialist master, as in fact occurred in North Vietnam in 1945 and early 1946, with Ho Chi Minh acting in concert with the Kuomintang army instead of fighting against it.

In Part I (WV No. 19, 27 April) we referred to the Struggle group as the official section of the FI. It has since come to our attention that this is only partially correct. An article from Vietnam in the *Labor Action* of 27 October 1947 mentions that when the Struggle group was recognized as the official section of the FI in 1939, the ICL fused with it. In 1945 the two groups separated once more, over profound divergences concerning the attitude to be taken toward the Viet Minh. At that time (1945-47) the reports on Vietnam appearing in the official organ of the International Secretariat (*Quatrième Internationale*) treated both groups as Trotskyists. ■

duce more cars and money than ever before. With its present demands and scope, the Goodrich strike is a carefully contrived device to demoralize the ranks of the URW and provide a "horrible example" to the rest of the working class, to prevent an offensive against Phase III from getting off the ground.

For a National Rubber Strike to Smash the Wage Controls!

The URW leadership, as well as the rest of the labor bureaucracy, is engaged in an elaborate effort to enforce the Nixon wage guidelines in a show of "responsibility." While the bureaucrats have been forced to make a pretense of militancy in the Goodrich strike, it is simply in order to maintain their authority and force the Goodyear contract on the rubber workers. But at the same time, this controlled localized show of militancy is a dangerously double-edged tactic. While the ranks have not broken from the bureaucratically-imposed straitjacket of a strike limited to pension improvement and seniority rights, the workers do see it as a rejection of the Goodyear settlement (the national contract). The dynamic of the Goodrich strike could easily extend back to Goodyear and forward to the other rubber companies, Firestone and General. What the ruling class is worried about in the Goodrich strike is that it could sabotage the ever-so-sweet Goodyear settlement and set a pattern of industrial militancy. This fear is expressed in the *New York Times* (13 May 1973), "The Goodyear pact has already been ratified, but if the company reopens it to match the Goodrich settlement the shock-waves will be felt throughout the collective bargaining process."

Rubber workers must demand that the URW *reject the Goodyear contract* and turn the Goodrich strike into a *national rubber strike* against all the companies to *smash the wage controls*. Any rubber contract must have a substantial wage increase simply to make up for recent losses in real wages caused by inflation (consumer prices are up by 30 percent since 1969 alone), and a full cost-of-living escalator clause (sliding scale of wages) to protect against future losses.

Fight layoffs by a 30 hour week with no loss in pay, by strikes against layoffs, a campaign to organize the South and Puerto Rico and elimination of the wage differential. The capitalists' efforts to circumvent the strike with imports must be defeated through international strike solidarity, in particular by the members of the International Federation of Chemical Workers of which the URW is an affiliate. The speed-up productivity drive must be fought by the creation of factory committees to enforce workers control of production.

For a Class-Struggle Alternative to the Bureaucrats

Unlike the reformists of various stripes, we must have no illusions that rubber workers' needs will be met simply by a 20 per cent wage increase or some other panacea (why not 21 percent?). As long as the unions limit themselves to piecemeal reforms the bosses will take back with one hand what they give with the other: wage increases will be eliminated by inflation and speed-up, improvements in working conditions will be nullified by layoffs, and so on. Workers must fight against the whole profit system which is responsible for wage slavery. The unions must fight for necessary wage increases regardless of what the President of the United States wants. To do this, it is necessary to prepare the ranks to fight back when Nixon and the corporations attack.

Fundamentally the class struggle is a political process: Who shall rule, who is calling the shots? This is the issue in the Goodrich strike as in every other major class battle. For that reason it is necessary to raise a full political program to show the way forward toward the emancipation of the workers.

Instead of meekly accepting the dictates of the corporate monopolies, we must call for the expropriation without compensation under workers control of the key industrial and financial enterprises. As against dependence on the labor fakers and their friends in Congress, we must dump the bureaucrats and build a workers party based on the trade unions, to fight for a workers government.

At the same time we must counter-attack against the government-company-union campaign to enforce their wage guidelines. Limited to its present demands (or more precisely, lack of demands) and scope, the Goodrich strike can only lead to defeat. However, turned into a *national rubber strike against the wage controls* the strike could win the support of the entire working class, leading to major struggles by the teamsters, autoworkers and electrical workers as well. It could be one of the pivots to turn the defeat represented by Nixon's Phase III into a victory for the workers. Furthermore, rejection of state wage control *in principle* is a partial recognition of the class nature of the state and a beginning of revolutionary class consciousness. ■

Continued from page 1 ...France

sections, to deal above all with language problems.) This must be raised in the framework of an overall program for power calling for the formation of a workers government, to nationalize the key industrial and financial corporations under workers control, to dissolve the bourgeois army and police and replace them by a workers militia, etc. With the recent renewed activity of fascist bands and their attacks on student demonstrations and the Peugeot strike, the formation of workers self-defense guards is an additional urgent demand.

However, it appears that most French left groups are limiting themselves to one or another set of reform demands. Thus the "political group" of Renault workers which is supported by the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) calls simply for 1,500 francs minimum salary, equal pay scales, the 40 hour week, etc., and "all the demands included in the Common Program" (*Informations Ouvrières*, 21-28 March 1973). This is the same program that up to three weeks previously the OCI was polemizing against as totally inadequate and restricted to the framework of capitalism! But then, the Communist Party, which was itself until three weeks earlier pushing the Common Program, set the pace by calling on Pompidou to implement the program of the UDR (the government party)!

The Student Demonstrations

The student demonstrations against the elimination of draft deferments have been remarkable for their unexpectedly large size and the participation of the Communist Party. Apparently worried that a new "Spring of 1968" could break out, the CP has gone so far as to sign joint leaflets with the Ligue Communiste (French section of the "United Secretariat") and organize joint demonstrations with "the ultra-leftists," in order to retain control of the movement.

The demonstrations began on 22 March and escalated to the mammoth 9 April mobilization which drew over 150,000, including numerous trade-union contingents. The concrete demands centered on the Debré law which reforms the military system by eliminating student deferments. The main demands of the demonstrations have been for return of the deferments, although some groups have raised the demand for the extension of the deferments to all youth.

In France where the deferments affect primarily secondary and technical school students, a call for deferments does not have as pronounced a

Witchhunt in Jersey Auto

In a pre-strike political purge now underway at the Mahwah, N.J. assembly division, Ford has fired three leaders of oppositional caucuses in UAW Local 906 and given disciplinary layoffs to several more. The company is also cracking down on distribution of political literature, searching individuals and rifling lockers for "evidence" in the critical months before the contract expires on September 14.

The first victim in the recent rash of firings was Wilbur Haddock, a member of the United Black Workers (UBW) who had been the only remaining leader of the April 1969 Mahwah strike which shut down the night shift for several days. Next fired was Paul Levin, for

class-privilege aspect as in the United States where they have been limited to college students. However, in any case, the struggle against militarism must strike at the heart of the bourgeois army by calling for abolition of the draft. To call for "extending the deferments" is simply skirmishing when what is called for is an assault. The call for abolition of the draft, since it would have as a necessary corollary the disorganization of the armed forces, can be clearly linked to the struggle for a workers government. Linked to the call for workers militias, it likewise counterposed to petty-bourgeois pacifist ideology and leads toward an understanding of the class nature of the bourgeois state. ■

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which arose with the New Left's turn to Maoism, fails to call for united working-class struggle, instead proclaiming vaguely "People of the World Unite!" In the unions, instead of putting forward a definite class program, it calls for "practicing the mass line, that is, gathering the unsystematic and spontaneous ideas of the masses and formalizing them into demands, programs and actions" (*The Call*, January 1973). This vagueness has, however, a very specific purpose; namely it is a cover for teaming up with operators like the leadership of the Brotherhood Caucus, and through them with a section of the bureaucracy itself (the "Blue Slate").

Similarly, the Maoist Revolutionary Union also tails after the Brotherhood uncritically. Worried about having their rank opportunism exposed before the working class, RUers have taken to using the bureaucrats' own gangster tactics against *Workers Vanguard* salesmen outside the plant. The simple appearance of an apolitical opposition caucus, like the Brotherhood, seems to draw out the opportunists of every stripe, even sucking in the fake-Trotskyist Workers League. "The formation of the Brotherhood Caucus reflects the enormous anger of the ranks and their determination to build a new leadership in the UAW," wrote the *Bulletin* (11 December 1972). The WL has now withdrawn its enthusiastic endorsement of the Brotherhood only in order to push its own reformist auto program, whose central demand is a 20 percent wage increase.

Faced with an array of bureaucratic cliques and opportunist caucuses, militants in the UAW have only one choice: to unite in a class-struggle caucus basing itself on a program of working-class struggle against capitalism, the Trotskyist transitional program. ■

getting only verbal, not written, permission to skip work to serve on jury duty. He was followed by Ricky Eisenberg, suspended indefinitely for handing out unauthorized literature and subsequently fired for absenteeism. Levin and Eisenberg, both members of the Local's United Rank and File Committee, were fired shortly after a smear leaflet signed by a so-called "Mahwah branch of the Anti-Communist Coalition" had red-baited them.

URFC members Pedro Rentas and Harry Mullen received disciplinary layoffs after being accused of distributing "illegal" literature. The URFC is supported by El Comité (a Puerto Rican nationalist group), the International Socialists and the CP. The CP's *Daily World*, however, has not had a word to say about the victimizations. About the same time Larry Goldbetter was suspended after ten copies of a socialist paper and other pamphlets were found in his locker during a company search.

Most of the firings and suspensions followed a walkout three weeks ago in Commercial (the truck department) over speedup and overwork. Eighty-four participants received suspensions which the Local 906 Reilly leadership claims to have been unable to reverse. Dissatisfaction of the rank and file has also been building over the issues of the leadership's failure to fight the elimination of committeemen; of the joint union-company "harmony clause"; and the betrayal of a struggle to fire a foreman, who was caught undoing the work of a man on the line in order to frame him. (The foreman had received his promotion from the ranks when he made an efficiency suggestion which eliminated eight jobs.) After promising to get the foreman fired, the union settled to have him merely busted back to the line, and thus reinstated in the union!

While claiming they were unable to throw this company fink out of the union, the bureaucracy now is obviously stalling while Ford purges the plant of many of its militant fighters. Reilly, a Woodcock loyalist, is trying to ensure that the upcoming negotiations will come off without any annoying objections from the ranks.

The response to Ford's move to smash all potentially militant currents during the combustible pre-contract period is an acid test to separatethose in the unions who fight for the working class from those who reduce the slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all" to hollow demagoguery. Both wings of the Local 906 leadership, supporting President Joe Reilly or Vice President Dave Gardner respectively, are using the mishandling of the defense cases as a political football to attack each other. Gardner recently accused Reilly of playing politics with the firings and trying to bargain away Levin's job in exchange for other concessions. In recent leaflets the leadership has openly lent its support to the "anonymous" red-baiting campaign accompanying Ford's crackdown by blaming disunity in the union on "outside forces."

Despite this, apparently none of the fired workers, nor any of the oppositional caucuses under attack took the floor at the April union meeting to demand that the leadership fight to defend its members. All the caucuses have missed the glaring need for a united class defense against the witchhunt. A Workers' Action Movement leaflet recently distributed called only for the black worker to be rehired, ignoring the two fired whites! PL in typical sectarian fashion called only for defense of its own supporter, while stupidly fingering him by identifying him in a leaflet as a member of Progressive Labor. The UBW, which has criticized the bureaucracy in leaflets for failing to defend all those fired, has never in the union meetings called for defense of any but their own members.

At the May meeting, Reilly dodged a demand, which had been gaining momentum, for the union to go on record for a united defense of all those fired, saying it was unnecessary since he had already pledged himself to this goal in his oath of office. Thus an opportunity to confront the company with a strong statement of determination was missed. ■

Leaders Sabotage Rubber Workers' Strike

The Rubber Workers strike against B. F. Goodrich is the first national strike against a major industrial corporation since the beginning of Nixon's New Economic Policy. It is a critical test of whether Nixon's Phase III can maintain wage-control, as Phases I and II did. Yet the Bommarito bureaucracy of the United Rubber Workers (URW) has deliberately set this strike up to be defeated.

Faced with a major strike wave and worsening international competitive position, in August 1971 the American ruling class resorted to direct state wage control. With the active support of

the union bureaucracy, Nixon's anti-labor policies have been by and large successful. Total man-days on strike fell from 66.4 million in 1970 to 47.4 million in 1971 and again to 26.0 million in 1972 (*Monthly Labor Review*, February 1973).

Equally important as the overall decline in strikes was that virtually no strikes were called against the big manufacturing corporations, that is, against the heart of the capitalist class. The major strikes in the past few years have been among public employees, notably teachers; these, while disturbing social order, do not directly attack profits. Indeed, profits have been booming under Nixon's "wage-price controls," going up twice as fast as national income in the past two years and increasing an incredible 26 percent in the first quarter of 1973!

With national contracts in steel, trucking, auto, electrical equipment and rubber, 1973 is a critical year for continuation of the ruling class' highly profitable wage-control policy. Despite Nixon's attempts to hold down prices by cutting back the "frivolous" spending of the poor, workers are suffering under the highest rates of inflation in 22 years. With the Watergate scandal, the moral authority of the Nixon administration is reduced to zero. In this context, 1973 should be a year of explosive strikes, and given the high profit levels, of sizeable gains for the working class.

However, Nixon's anti-labor program has a powerful ally in the union bureaucracy. I. W. Abel of the Steelworkers started the year off right (for the bosses) by signing a no-strike

pledge with the steel industry and allowing the contract terms to be decided by an arbitration board. Nixon's closest labor comrade-in-arms, Frank Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters, began his contract preparations by disciplining the Chicago local, which had the disturbing habit of successfully wildcatting against the national contract. Donald Rogers, one of Nixon's key labor advisors, crowed that the government provided the structure for "an era of voluntary-compulsory arbitration" (*New York Times*, 2 April 1973).

Bommarito Joins Phase III

At the 1966 Miami URW convention, in the wake of widespread revolts and unrest in local unions, incumbent President George Burdon, accused of bureaucracy and personal corruption, withdrew his candidacy for renomination. Peter Bommarito rode into power and immediately became indistinguishable from the rest of the Meanyites, despite his previous pretensions of honest militancy. The "model" national contract he signed with Goodyear on 25 April is truly a disaster for the workers and a gift to the capitalists. At a time when prices are rising by 8.8 percent a year, the Goodyear contract calls for a wage increase of 6 percent this year and 16 percent over three years *without a cost-of-living adjustment!* With this contract the rubber workers will probably be earning less real wages in 1976 than they are earning now! The other major "improvement" was in the pension, which

leaves most retirees with smaller pensions than welfare gives to old people. A joint company-union statement triumphantly announced that the settlement stayed within Phase III guidelines. Indeed it had, and the ruling class was well pleased with the Goodyear contract. The *Wall Street Journal* said approvingly, "The chief cost they are watching is labor cost, and so far the signs have been encouraging. Last month, for instance, the Rubber Workers Union settled with Goodyear for increases amounting to about 6 percent a year..." (*Wall Street Journal*, 11 May 1973).

A settlement as bad as the Goodyear contract was not easy to sell to the ranks. Local 2 of Akron, the heart of industry and union, voted the contract down unanimously and three other locals also rejected it. The announcement of the Goodyear settlement produced wildcats in the firm's Union City, Tenn. facility and three Firestone plants. But the Bommarito regime smashed these wildcats and managed to push it through the other locals.

"Apache Strategy" Hits URW

Rather than openly pushing the unpopular Goodyear settlement on the workers in the other rubber companies, the URW bureaucrats tried a different tactic. They called a strike around small, easily winnable demands in order to evaporate militancy and restore the bureaucracy's authority. The demands of the Goodrich strike are *not fundamentally different* from the terms

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Out-Bureaucrats Seek to Co-opt Angry Ranks in Fremont UAW Elections

OAKLAND, Calif.—Election time in a local union often brings with it the sudden development of caucuses which are for militant struggle against the company and "membership control" of the union, and which are particularly good at denouncing each other's various crimes, especially the crimes of an incumbent leadership or ex-leadership. Such caucuses come and go very easily. Invariably, they serve only to install new leaders who pursue the same rotten policies and sellouts as the old leaders. The membership can only lose in such a contest.

This is the situation facing auto workers in UAW Local 1364 at the Fremont, Calif., GM plant in upcoming local elections in June. The popular "Brotherhood Caucus" has absolutely nothing more to offer than the rotten, incumbent "Unity" group led by John "Chief" Herrera. This point was strongly underlined by the recent endorsement of the Brotherhood by the "Blue Slate"—the caucus of the deservedly discredited *previous* local leadership! In a completely demagogic posture of militancy, these out-bureaucrats, who for years did nothing for the membership, put out a leaflet appropriately entitled "Time for a Change," saying "we (the Blue Slate) have decided to join the Brotherhood to eliminate the stranglehold on our local union.... With PEOPLE POWER we can overcome the dictatorial leadership that now exists."

New Skirmish, Old Feud

The feud between Herrera's "Unity" clique and the clique around Floyd Bueno and the "Blue Slate" goes back about a decade, when the present Local 1364 was formed by a fusion of Locals 333 and 1031, in response to GM's opening of the Fremont plant to replace the old Fisher Body and Chevy plants in Oakland. The two old bureaucracies of Bueno and Herrera have been fighting for control ever since, to the detriment of the membership.

After dumping Bueno and riding into power in 1969 on the back of the "Headlighter Caucus," Herrera immediately began to line up with the International leadership and adopt all the policies which had built up tremendous bitterness against Bueno's gang. He sat on overwork grievances, suppressed all discussion of the union's demands during the 1970 GM strike and even called the police to suppress an opposition-backed strike rally at the plant, blaming "outside agitators" (see *WV* No. 12, October 1972).

Now the Brotherhood has appeared, organized by, among others, one Earle Mays, who has been accused of conniving with company officials during the 1970 strike. Although the Brotherhood Caucus claims to have recruited 1500 local members since November 1972, there was no way for the membership to tell what the Brotherhood stood for until December, when the caucus finally issued a statement of purpose. This statement was based on generalities such as, "The Brotherhood Caucus is a coalition of other caucuses and concerned brothers and sisters uniting to stop the atrocious, and capricious crimes against the membership." Exactly *how* this was to be done was left unsaid.

Gradually the caucus has found issues to use against the corrupt incumbents: a Brotherhood leaflet in February boasted about exposing the "exploitation" of union funds and winning "the right to check the financial secretary's books or have the Federal Government do it." This threat to have the bosses' government intervene in a workers' organization, if carried out, is no different than Herrera's use of the cops against strike militants. The capitalist government intervenes in workers organizations only to weaken or destroy the workers' ability to struggle against the capitalists. Use of the police, courts, etc., within the labor movement is the method of bureaucrats or would be bureaucrats, whose power

rests largely on intimidation, graft and alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie.

Brotherhood Caucus Stalls on Company Firings

This issue has become important at Fremont, where in the past six months GM has launched a conscious drive to eliminate known militants, radicals and "communists" from the plant, in an attempt to intimidate the workers and prevent a strike at the contract expiration date in September. Especially after the recent witchhunt against the Maoist "Venceremos" group in the Bay Area, numerous people have been fired at Fremont for "falsification" of employment applications. One of those fired issued a leaflet documenting how he had managed to see his personnel file, which contained a report from the House Internal Security Committee identifying him as a member of the Revolutionary Union. When the issue of these obviously government-backed political firings was raised at the 25 February local meeting, the Herrera regime, backed by International Rep. Harold Dume, defended their current policy, which has allowed the firings to proceed.

On this important issue, the Brotherhood has stalled for months and has consistently shrunk from organizing united action to defend *all* those fired for alleged "falsification." On 10 May, the Brotherhood finally took the step of holding a rally (which was attended by less than one tenth of the caucus' claimed "membership") to announce the filing of a suit against GM with the NLRB. A Brotherhood leaflet to the workers explained that the action was to defend "any and every" person who was fired, but the press release to the bourgeois media (distributors refused to give it to a *WV* reporter!) stated that the purpose of the case was to stop GM's "attempt to obstruct the Brotherhood from organizing itself

as a union caucus." The Brotherhood's only concern is for the firing of their own organizers, such as Pat Klonsky; they do nothing for a united *class* defense of the victimized militants.

"Revolutionary" Cover for Opportunism

The so-called "revolutionary" groups who have uncritically cheered the Brotherhood in their press must themselves take responsibility for the lack of a determined, *unified* working-class defense against the capitalist repression and for the lack of a genuine working-class political alternative in the election. The October League (OL),

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