



Strikers at Mack Stamping plant try to stop supply trucks during wildcat.



Auto workers arguing with Local Pres. Ghant (right), who opposed Mack strike.

Solidarity House Runs Amok as Wildcats Explode in Detroit Auto

An upsurge of wildcat strikes in Detroit, culminating in the second sit-down strike in three weeks, has upset the normal pattern of contract bargaining in the auto industry and caused the UAW tops to reveal themselves as virtual shock troops for the companies, preserving labor-force discipline by mobilizing goon squads of functionaries against strikers and radicals. The strikes also revealed the extreme isolation of the union bureaucracy from the ranks. These developments have demonstrated more sharply than at any time since the red purges of the late forties and fifties both the degeneration of existing working-class "leadership" and the need for a new, revolutionary leadership of the unions and for a vanguard party.

Since the dramatic victory of a one-day sit-down strike at Chrysler's Jefferson Ave. assembly plant (see *WV* No. 26, 3 August 1973), two more strikes have erupted, prompting vicious re-baiting and strikebreaking by UAW goons. On 8 August a strike at the Detroit Forge plant, part of Chrysler's Lynch Road complex, was spearheaded by workers on the third shift who refused to go into work and began mass picketing which kept the plant shut down for five days. Since this forge plant is the largest of only two such plants in the Chrysler system making axles, crankshafts, torsion bars, gears and other parts, the strike threatened to shut down the entire system in a matter of days.

Both Chrysler management and UAW officials panicked, called off the negotiations then in progress and began a frantic drive to get the workers back to work. While the company raced to court to get an injunction against picketing and denounced the UAW for not being able to control its members (i.e., not doing its job), the union leadership, hypocritically complaining about safety and clean-up in the plants, went all out to force the strikers back to work with nothing gained except meaningless promises about future "improvements."

The strike was sparked by arbitrary

firings of 13 workers over the past few months, which the workers said were a conscious company ploy to raise the stakes at the bargaining table, putting the union on the defensive and perhaps forcing it, in the interest of getting the workers rehired, to abandon demands (such as a denial plan) which it might otherwise have won. The workers were angered by open company hypocrisy. Thus while the company was arbitrarily firing workers, it reinstated (after only a one month's suspension) a foreman who had been caught stealing.

In addition to the firings, hazardous working conditions and a backlog of grievances which had been building up for years (since the last wildcat strike two years ago) drove the workers to strike. UAW officials revealed how inadequate and ponderous is their "representation" of the auto workers when they declared they were "stunned" by the strike, since there were "only 17 grievances in process in the plant" (*Detroit Free Press*, 9 August 1973). It is hardly surprising that the workers decided to represent themselves, electing a rank-and-file strike committee, which presented three demands (reinstatement of the fired men, settlement of the backlog of grievances, no reprisals), and hiring lawyers themselves to fight the company's anti-picketing injunction in the courts.

Sit-Down Strike

No sooner had UAW Chrysler department head Fraser managed to talk the Forge workers back to work with promises of an official strike vote to be held in a few days than a sit-down strike broke out at Chrysler's Mack Ave. Stamping Plant, which has a reputation as the dirtiest and most dangerous plant in the Chrysler system. Accidents are frequent, as workers are tempted to dispense with the use of safety tools in order to speed up their handling of the pieces in the giant presses so as to meet hourly quotas. Failure to meet the quotas results in loss of break time.

The sit-down was started by one

worker, William Gilbreth, who had been fired for participation in an earlier work stoppage and had returned to the plant to seek reinstatement. In a planned action, Gilbreth sat down on the line. Chrysler sent the bulk of the workers home immediately, but a dwindling crew of militants continued to occupy the plant. The strike was ended the following day as police entered the plant and led out 15 workers under arrest. Of these, Gilbreth and another worker were charged with assaulting plant guards the previous day.

The Mack Ave. strike sparked a panic reaction in the Detroit ruling class and UAW bureaucracy both because it followed immediately on the heels of the Jefferson Ave. and Detroit Forge strikes and because Gilbreth was identified as a member of Workers Action Movement (WAM) and Progressive Labor Party. WAM spokesmen made no secret of this—their claim to have planned the sit-down in advance was splashed across the front pages of the bourgeois press. Mentioned also were the Sparracist League and such ostensibly revolutionary organizations as the Labor Committee and the International Socialists.

Panic in the ruling class—prompting the immediate police mobilization against the Mack strike—quickly had its reflection in the UAW bureaucracy. Until this point, Fraser and other bureaucrats, while working to end the strikes without settlement of the issues, had been using the wildcats to "warn" Chrysler of possible strikes over health and safety and of other retribution (i.e., more wildcats) if the intolerable plant conditions were not improved. Thus the UAW bureaucrats were simply advising their friends in the ruling class that a few piecemeal "reforms" were necessary if the bureaucracy's job of keeping the workers in line were not to become impossible.

With the eruption at Mack Ave., however, the bureaucracy dropped all pretense of being on the side of the workers and led a drive against "reds" which threatened in one city to take on

the proportions of the purges of the McCarthy era. Fraser denounced radicals and chastised the company for having given in to the Jefferson Ave. strikers. "If you surrender to this type of black-mail, there is no end to it," said Fraser, who then mobilized 1,000 UAW functionaries, mostly from other plants, to show up at Mack to make sure no "radicals" would keep out workers who wanted to work! Working hand-in-glove with the police, this giant goon squad, which was obscenely likened in the bourgeois press to the historic "flying squads" of strikers that helped build the CIO in the thirties, was the union leadership's strike-breaking answer to the Mack workers' grievances. While the bureaucracy was able to temporarily halt the snowballing wildcat movement by such tactics, it is significant that in order to do this it was forced to rely on bureaucrats, largely from other plants. The return to work had been prepared for the previous night by hourly UAW-sponsored media announcements ordering the workers back, on the grounds that the strike wasn't official.

In the following days Fraser mobilized his bureaucratic goons to attack left-wing paper salesmen in front of the plants. Members of the *Spark* group, a small pseudo-Trotskyist grouping which sponsors factory bulletins in some plants, were told not to sell their paper in front of the Dodge Main plant and were physically assaulted. The Revolutionary Socialist League, a left-Shachtmanite grouping which recently got itself expelled from the International Socialists, was also chased away from Dodge Main. And "union" goons, armed with clubs, were seen looking for "radicals" in front of a Dodge truck plant.

United Front to Defend the Left

These incidents have tapered off, but they represent a dangerous trend. In defiance of the most basic principles of workers democracy, not to mention bourgeois legality, the UAW bureau-

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Stalinists Sabotage Australian Ford Strike

The ten-week strike of auto workers at the Broadmeadows Ford plant in Melbourne, Australia, which ended on July 23, clearly demonstrated the limitations of militant reformism and the treachery of the Stalinist Communist Party of Australia (CPA). Despite the combativity of the workers, the trade-union bureaucrats, both Stalinist and right-wing, were able to divert the strike into isolated impotence in the absence of an alternative revolutionary leadership.

The automobile industry in Australia employs a high percentage of immigrant workers (about 75 percent of the strikers at Broadmeadows were immigrants), mainly Southern European, Turkish and Lebanese, who have recently arrived in Australia. Many production workers take home only 64 Australian dollars

vociferous exponent of this approach of isolated and fragmentary struggles was Laurie Carmichael, assistant federal secretary of the 180,000 member AMWU and National Committee member of the CPA. Only last year Carmichael played a major role in defeating the oil workers' strike, and despite his and his party's militant posturing, he again fulfilled his job as a labor lieutenant of capitalism.

General Motors' refusal to negotiate on the log of claims (union bargaining demands) initiated a series of rolling strikes in early May at GMH plants in three states. Mass meetings endorsed the union leaderships' proposal for guerrilla strikes if GMH did not act on the demands for negotiations. In an attempt to stem the workers' militancy and to undermine the union

for Carmichael, its chief industrial strategist, the CPA paper, *Tribune* (12-18 June), cited language difficulties, industrial inexperience and relative insecurity as newcomers as explanations why the largely migrant workers at Ford Broadmeadows had rejected the union proposal for guerrilla tactics and had opted for an all-out strike. This was to be only the first of several "explanations" of "General" Carmichael's strikebreaking antics.

The shop stewards put forward a series of demands for improved conditions, mainly relating to line speed and manning ratios. At the same time the union leadership was having trouble trying to control rank-and-file militancy. When in late May the Broadmeadows workers voted to continue their

return swayed "what was probably a majority of workers at the Broadmeadows plant as a whole, but most of those in the car assembly plant did not want to return" (*Tribune*, 19-25 June).

The following Wednesday when a return-to-work attempt was made, dissident workers gathered outside the plant and a mass picket line was soon established. The anger of the workers exploded as fire hoses were turned on those who tried to cross the picket line and on the plant itself. A truck laden with fruit was wrecked and its contents used as ammunition. The windows of the plant and its office block were smashed, a decorative brick wall pushed over and cyclone fences flattened. Over 100 police and mounted troopers were rushed to the scene, but kept their distance until the storm had abated. The head shop steward Ron Gent was quoted in the *Melbourne Age* as saying that "We don't want the union officials here, they'd get killed." The Ford management complained that the "hooligans" had done \$10,000 worth of damage and soon after began publishing full page advertisements in the local press full of pious statements about "violence" and "majority rule."

At this stage the union bureaucracy was completely isolated from the Ford workers, and the shop stewards (a number of whom were close to the CPA) had been unable to control the workers. Thus the situation was very tense on Friday morning at the mass meeting held in the plant car park. Carmichael, Townsend and the shop stewards addressed the workers from the back of a truck, while contingents of police waited out of sight but not too far away. Carmichael's words are now famous: "I made a mistake," he said. "The workers taught me a lesson. We had a plan, but we did not listen sufficiently to the workers and change that plan in accordance with your wishes" (*Tribune*, 31 July-6 August).

And indeed Carmichael had made a mistake: he had allowed himself to become isolated from his base. But neither he nor the other bureaucrats, nor the CPA, which assiduously sought to explain away his treachery, for one moment questioned their fundamental strategy of betrayal. For them all, the mistakes were simply matters of poor communications between the rank and file and the union leadership, the failure of the "master plan" to take adequate account of the emotions of the workers (in particular the immigrants) and the failure to place enough emphasis on the CPA's elixir of "workers control." In the absence of an alternative revolutionary leadership, "honest" Laurie Carmichael and the other bureaucrats were able to soothe the workers and with few modifications continue their capitulatory policies. Carmichael's "new plan" included a proposal to broaden the negotiating committee to take in "your representatives from the shop floor."

Nevertheless the Stalinists required new explanations for what had happened, so that whereas before the failure to accept the "guerrilla campaign" had been due to the company's pressure on the poor migrant workers, the *Tribune* now "discovered" in a front-page headline that "Ford Men Reject the System!" (*Tribune*, 19-25 June). Carmichael himself, however, was still a little out of step with his party's cover-up. In a letter to *The Australian*, Carmichael insisted that it was Ford's fault that the men did not return to work. Ford had vindicated those who had voted against accepting the five percent offer by closing its gates, because this was "treating all those who had returned to work the same as those who had not" (*The Australian*, 28 June). If only the Ford company had not been so irresponsible, the Ford workers might not have been so thoughtless as to "reject the system!"

In keeping with their original strategy the bureaucrats refused to extend the strike. Other plants were not kept fully informed of developments at Broadmeadows, and the union officials made no effort to call them out. The bureaucrats claimed that the Geelong plant remained at work at the request

Australian auto workers at Broadmeadows Ford plant on June 13 protesting effort by Stalinist bureaucrats to force them back to work. Workers turned fire hoses on scabs, smashed plant windows, knocked over wall and flattened cyclone fence. Led by militant immigrants, the wildcat strike lasted ten weeks.



THE AGE

(roughly \$80 in U.S. currency) a week. In the recent period they have been faced with speed-up, deterioration of working conditions and a 15 percent annual inflation rate. However, the buoyant market for automobiles and a shortage of cheap labor caused by immigration restrictions meanwhile tended to strengthen the workers' position and thus encouraged militant resistance to the companies.

Last November the federal leaderships of the four unions in the auto industry, the Vehicle Building Employees Federation (VBEF), the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union (AMWU), Australian Society of Engineers (ASE) and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) agreed to a common national campaign. They called for an "overaward rate" (i.e., wages above the industry-wide rate) of 45 percent, the removal of all penalties from the overaward wage and vacation pay totaling 17 1/2 percent of the total annual wage earned.

The union leadership decided that a strategy of "guerrilla action" would be most appropriate and that General Motors-Holden (GMH) should be singled out "for treatment first as the most arrogant and possibly the most vulnerable due to market considerations" (*Tribune*, 19-25 June). The most

strategy GMH threatened to dock the entire weekly overaward payments of those workers participating in any stop-work meeting.

This attempt to divide the workers from the union leadership produced a sharp reaction in the plants, shifting the initiative away from the union bureaucracy to the shop floor. Workers at General Motors' plant at Pagewood, South Australia, for example, voted to continue their half-day stoppage for an extended six-day period. GMH, apparently more attuned to the volatile situation that existed on the shop floors than was the union bureaucracy, backed off from its threat of penalties in order to ensure continued production.

The bureaucracy's schemes really began to fall apart when a lunch-time mass meeting on May 18 at the Ford Broadmeadows plant erupted into an indefinite strike of 3,000 workers. Such actions had not been conceived as part of the master plan, and the union bureaucracy immediately sought to contain this unwanted militancy by refusing to extend the strike, in particular by refusing to call out the 2,000 workers at the Ford Geelong plant who VBEF assistant secretary Townsend boasted were ready to respond to the call for industrial action. Attempting to cover

strike, Ford made the "final" offer of a five percent increase in overaward payments and a reduction in penalties.

But the union leadership was still intent upon playing guerrilla warfare with the companies and in the face of the threat of a lockout of workers at Ford Geelong thought it might maneuver by recommending a return to work at Broadmeadows. Townsend appealed to the companies on behalf of the "responsible" officials: "We have had to hold them back, and they are accusing us of being weak for not encouraging stronger action earlier. There is no doubt that there will be very strong action taken if there is no agreement reached on Monday. But I certainly hope we can work something out" (*Melbourne Age*, 9 June).

At a mass meeting of the Broadmeadows workers on Monday, June 11, union officials tried to get the workers to return to work on the basis of the company's terms. The meeting ended in uproar when Carmichael declared that a small majority had voted to return to work. Carmichael and other officials were attacked and roughed up by angry workers who had a very different opinion on the outcome of the vote. Subsequently, the *Tribune* claimed that the union recommendation in favor of a

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of the Broadmeadows workers, that they were the most ready source of strike support funds and that workers at other plants did not want to strike anyway. Rather than fighting to win the strike by extending it, Carmichael and the other bureaucrats prolonged and ultimately defeated the struggle by effectively isolating it.

In the meantime the Australian Labor Party government was demagogically putting on a nationalist left face against the "foreign octopus." Minister of Labour Clyde Cameron remarked from London:

"I don't like a situation in which Australian workers have to fight an industrial contest against somebody whose decisions are being made in the boardrooms of New York.

"This is something that is very bad—it is a foreign company, it is owned by foreigners, its policy is being made by foreigners, and Australian workers have become the meat in the sandwich."

—Labour Press, 2 July

Meanwhile his colleagues back home were trying to force the rebellious workers to accept company terms!

The CPA for its part was making efforts to explain how especially alienated and frustrated the auto workers were and thereby promote its reformist version of "workers control." While originally GMH was the most arrogant company, now Ford Broadmeadows was declared "one of the worst, if not the worst example in Australia of an inhuman production line" (*Tribune*, 17-23 July). For several weeks the *Tribune* excelled itself explaining how undignified, inhuman, wasteful and inefficient the assembly line "monster" was. This reached a peak in an article entitled "Production Line Blues," which argued that better cars could be produced and that the system would be more efficient if there were no speedup. "Even in the

U.S., line workers are not pushed to the same extent. All this proves that the Ford-GMH system is not a reasoned attempt to extract the greatest profit, but an outcome of the limited thinking of men to whom swinging the lash has become a way of life." Thus, you see, it was a particularly bad employer and CPA union leader Carmichael could perhaps be excused for not realizing just how angry the Broadmeadows workers had become. Similarly, if only Ford would compromise by becoming just an "average" exploiter, by raising the minimum wage, then "everybody will gain" (*Tribune*, 3-9 July).

After ten weeks the strikers voted to return to work at a mass meeting on July 23. They agreed to end the strike on the basis that Justice Moore of the Arbitration Court would conduct an inquiry into wage rates and arbitrate on any further increases. The workers had made no gains on wages and only minor concessions on conditions (a six-minute afternoon tea break, increased spaces between cars, an improved system of relief on the line and the repair of leaking roofs and the closing of doors which permitted cold winds in). After trying to sabotage the strike for the past ten weeks the Stalinists now put on a false face of militancy and voted against the terms that Carmichael himself had negotiated. Even the *Tribune* had to admit that virtually nothing had been gained from the ten-week strike, but no matter, for "the real significance here is that the workers have at last staked a claim on what has been considered to be the sacred soil of the boss—the company's exclusive 'right' to determine the speed of the line, its organization, and the manning scale" (*Tribune*, 31 July-6 August). Who needs a socialist revolution when the CPA is capable of such mighty steps toward making capitalism more humane?!!

The CPA's role as agent of capitalism in the workers movement was clear and unequivocal during the strike, despite the *Tribune's* hypocritical sermonizing about the workers' no longer "submit[ting] meekly to being treated as dumb cattle by capitalist bosses, or accept[ing] manipulation by union officials"—pious words which simply serve as a cover for CPA union leader Carmichael's sellout policies.

Instead of the CPA's vague references to "human dignity" the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand called concretely for the formation of rank-and-file opposition caucuses in the unions to fight the bureaucracy with a revolutionary program. In a leaflet distributed at the Broadmeadows plant, the SL/ANZ called for extending the strike to all car assembly plants, for no state interference in the workers movement, for the establishment of workers' vigilance committees, for opening company books, for 30 for 40 with automatic cost-of-living increases, for equal opportunity and equal pay for women and for nationalization of the car industry under workers' management.

In contrast, both of the groups

supporting the "United [!] Secretariat" in Australia, the pro-SWP Socialist Workers League and the pro-Mandel Communist League, simply tailed after the spontaneous militancy of the auto workers. For the CL this meant claiming that "Ford workers are showing the way forward" without providing a revolutionary programmatic alternative to the present union misleaders. The SWL abstractly noted that demands "need to point the way towards" workers control of line speed and nationalization of the car industry (*Direct Action*, 29 June), but failed to indicate a concrete means (such as a programmatically-based caucus) for struggling for such policies in the unions.

The Healyite Socialist Labour League not surprisingly saw the strike as another of its endless "decisive turning points," and consequently raised the urgent need to... force the reformist Whitlam government to act "in the interests of the working class" by implementing "a socialist pro-

gramme of nationalizing the basic industries, implementing a 35-hour week for all workers, and giving full support to all wage struggles" (*Labour Press*, 2 July). The SLL reinforces the stranglehold of social-democratic and Stalinist bureaucrats by promoting the illusion that the struggle for socialism is simply a matter of pressuring reformist union leaders and Labor Party parliamentarians.

The initial euphoria of the early weeks of the Labor government has worn off as auto workers, as well as brewery, electrical power, steel and aluminum processing workers have struck in defense of their living standards. But (as was amply demonstrated in the Ford strike) between the ranks and victory stands a crucial obstacle, the labor bureaucracy, which will continue to betray the struggle until it is swept aside by a new leadership dedicated to a program of class struggle. It is to the solution of this crisis of proletarian leadership that the Spartacist League dedicates its efforts. ■

Do We Call on the Bourgeoisie to Outlaw Fascism?

In the last issue (*WV* No. 26, 3 August 1973) there were two errors of considerable political importance. The first was typographical and rather humorous: in the article on "The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited, Part 4: The Popular Front" the Leninist slogan for the workers united front is given as "march together, strike separately." It should, of course, have read "march separately, strike together."

The second is more serious. In the article "Rightest Coup Falls in Chile" (p. 4) a call is made for "the outlawing and disarming of all fascist organizations." The general political line of the article is clearly one of uncompromising class struggle, calling for the distribution of arms to the workers; the formation of workers militias based on the trade unions; the abolition of the standing army and the officer corps and the organization of the troops into soldiers committees allied with the trade unions; the formation of a central committee of workers militias, soldiers councils and workers organizations (unions and parties). Nevertheless, even in this context to call on the bourgeoisie state (even with a popular-front government such as Allende's) to outlaw and disarm fascists is to awaken illusions in the masses. Only the working class can smash fascism, through making a proletarian revolution. Fascism is another form of capitalist rule, to which the bourgeoisie may have to resort if more democratic forms prove incapable of repressing the workers movement. Therefore the decisive sectors of the capitalist class cannot permit their government to eliminate this potentially crucial weapon.

Although the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party concentrated during recent demonstrations in defense of the Ligue Communiste on the slogan of "jail the fascists, not the Ligue," Trotsky himself decisively rejected such slogans which were raised by the Stalin-

ists in France. When Cachin, a CP leader, called for a bloc with Daladier's Radical Socialists in 1934, one of his arguments was that the Radicals had called for disarming the fascists. Trotsky replied:

"Certainly, the Radicals declared themselves for the disarmament of everyone—workers' organizations included. Certainly, in the hands of a Bonapartist state, such a measure would be directed especially against the workers. Certainly, the 'disarmed' fascists would receive on the morrow double their arms, not without the aid of the police."

—"Whither France?", November 1934

Trotsky counterposed the disarming of the fascists by workers militias. In a programmatic sense he dealt with the question in the theses on "War and the Fourth International" (1934), which stated:

"To turn to the state, that is, to capital, with the demand to disarm the fascists means to sow the worst democratic illusions, to lull the vigilance of the proletariat, to demoralize its will."

In a more immediate sense, to call on the bourgeois state to disarm and outlaw the fascists is an invitation to the bourgeoisie to pass laws outlawing "extra-legal armed groups of both left and right." Such a law was passed in France during the 1936-38 popular front and was used exclusively against the Trotskyists. Allende is pushing a similar decree today, and while the language sounds impartial, if effectively implemented it would place guns only in the hands of the bourgeois army, leaving the working class totally disarmed; and in practice it is being used exclusively against unions and workers organizations, while fascist organizations such as Patria y Libertad continue to amass huge arms stockpiles. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

SL/RCY Summer Camp Report

During August 11-18, over 250 members and friends of the Spartacist League and its youth section, the Revolutionary Communist Youth, attended a summer camp in northern Illinois. In addition to a full schedule of recreational activities and educational classes on the theory and practice of revolutionary Marxism, plenary sessions of the SL Central Committee and RCY National Committee were held at the camp.

The recent split in the International Socialists intersected the week's activities in a major way. The SL plenum agreed to fuse with the Leninist Tendency, a grouping of some 8 comrades emerging from the IS split. (A subsequent issue of *Workers Vanguard* will treat the evolution of the Leninist Tendency and its role in the IS factional struggle.) The culminating event of this intensely political week was a debate in Chicago's old Wobly Hall between spokesmen for the SL and Leninist Tendency and the newly formed left-Shachtmanite Revolutionary Socialist League.

The RCY plenum voted to change the name of the youth paper from *RCY Newsletter* to *Young Spartacus* in recognition of the stabilization of an eight page bi-monthly and in anticipation of a more frequent press.

A discussion of international perspectives at the SL plenum was quite optimistic. The 1971 split in the "International Committee" and imminent rupture in the "United Secretariat" have discredited these groups' claims to be the Fourth International. The resulting greater openness and motion in the world movement combined with a deepening of the SL's international involvement raises the possibility of breakthrough in building an international Spartacist tendency. The plenum also engaged in a lively discussion of various aspects of trade-union work. Much of the business of the plenum focused on strengthening the SL's regional and industrial centers, as well as building new locals. Specific commitments were also made to assist fraternal national organizations in other countries and to bolster the international work of the SL.

The Struggle for the Fourth International

Three talks were given on the history of the Trotskyist movement from the Russian Opposition of 1923 to the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948. In the wake of the failure of the widely anticipated German Revolution in 1923, the Stalinist bureaucracy achieved a decisive victory in 1924 with the destruction of inner-party democracy and the adoption of an openly nationalist program around the slogan, "socialism in one country."

Most of the discussion centered on the correctness of Trotsky's tactics in the 1920's. Trotsky's failure to play an active role in inner-party life and the struggle against bureaucracy before late 1923 was noted, as was his failure to form a bloc with the 1925 Zinoviev Opposition against the pro-peasant economic policy and Stalin's ideology of "socialism in one country." However, the speaker affirmed Trotsky's policy of remaining in the Russian CP as the only arena to recruit and organize a communist cadre. He dismissed the possibility of a Trotskyist-Bukharinite bloc by noting that the Stalin faction would not have pursued policies which allowed all of its enemies to unite on a principled basis.

The reporter began the second talk by emphasizing the parallelism of Trotsky's tasks in the 1929-34 period with the SL's tasks today in creating an international tendency. By 1929 numerous groups had split or been expelled from the Third International, subsequently gravitating toward all points on the political compass. Trotsky was faced with the difficult task of sorting out the genuine Bolsheviks from the myriad "anti-Stalinist communists." To do this Trotsky put forth the need

for programmatic agreement on key historic events of the recent period—the Chinese Revolution of 1926-27, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack. The speaker also stressed the great objective problems in building the international Trotskyist movement—Stalinist agents, bourgeois persecution and petty-bourgeois dilettantism in a movement drawn largely from the intelligentsia.

Focusing on the latter problem, he reviewed the 1931-32 Cannon-Shachtman fight in the Communist League of America as a genuine foreshadowing of the cataclysmic 1940 split. The historic defeat for the Trotskyists in the failure to prevent Andrés Nin's descent into centrism during the Spanish Revolution was also emphasized. As a successful precondition for the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, the speaker pointed to the molding of a thin but homogeneous cadre through factional struggle and the manifest bankruptcy of those non-Trotskyist tendencies claiming to be to the left of Stalinism (e.g., the German Brandlerites and Urbahns group, the Lovestonites in the U.S., the Spanish POUM and British ILP).

In the final talk, great stress was laid on the physical liquidation of the Trotskyist cadre during World War II, including courageous and experienced leaders such as Lesoll (Belgium), Sneevliet (Netherlands), Blasco (Italy) and countless others. Thus Michel Pablo and his peers who took over the leadership of the international movement after the war had to learn their Trotskyism solely from books. Further disorienting the post-war international movement was a foreshortened view of the death agony of capitalism, partly arising from Trotsky's pre-war projections. The Trotskyist movement believed the outcome of World War II would finally decide the epochal question of socialism or barbarism. However, with the Stalinist betrayal of the

post-war revolutionary wave in Western Europe, most of the essential conditions of the inter-war period were re-created. While strengthened through geographical expansion, Stalinism continued to be decisively shaped by imperialist encirclement and capitalist world hegemony. Despite numerical growth, by the end of the 1940's the Trotskyists were effectively isolated from the labor movement and working under manifestly non-revolutionary conditions. In these circumstances Pabloism emerged as a liquidationist tendency denying the capacity of the Trotskyist movement to lead the proletariat to socialism, and relying instead on various petty-bourgeois forces, in the first instance the Stalinist bureaucracies.

The Strategic Importance of the Black Question

The second class series consisted of three talks on the black question centering on the special oppression of blacks and the necessary tasks which flow from that fact for the proletarian vanguard—the need to combine a program of militant class struggle against this special oppression with determined opposition to all forms of black separatism.

The first class was devoted to tracing the material foundations for the special oppression of blacks in the U.S., from chattel slavery to their role as a reserve army of the unemployed in the epoch of capitalist decay. The success of the Knights of Labor in organizing blacks was contrasted to the Jim Crow policies of the American Federation of Labor and the Socialist Party. From the Civil War to World War II, blacks were periodically drawn off southern farms into northern industry during periods of expansion, only to be thrown out of work during periods of crisis and depression. They were used by the capitalists as strikebreakers and as a reserve industrial army to hold down

wages. Nonetheless, a black industrial proletariat was formed. However, at the same time the unemployment rate for blacks, particularly urban ghetto youth, has increased dramatically compared to the working class as a whole, thereby accentuating the special oppression of blacks and giving special importance to the sections of the Transitional Program dealing with unemployment: sliding scale of hours, struggle against Jim Crowism in the unions and industry.

The second class dealt with the early efforts of the U.S. Communist Party, prodded into action by the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, to recruit black cadre. This included the CP's successful work in the African Blood Brotherhood, its not-so-successful work in the Garvey movement and the formation of the American Negro Labor Congress in 1925. The latter was the first attempt to organize a transitional black organization. The reporter also discussed the work of the Stalinist CP among blacks during the CP's "Third Period," centering upon the theory of a supposed black nation in the South. Trotsky's discussions with the SWP on the black question were examined, noting that his early conditional support for some variant of "black-belt" self-determination was dropped in the later discussions in Mexico when Trotsky was more familiar with the black question in the U.S. Trotsky's main emphasis throughout was the need for the SWP to reach the black masses. Blacks in the U.S. are not a nation, but a race-color caste whose special oppression consists of their simultaneous integration into the political economy and forcible segregation at the bottom of society.

The third class was devoted to the development of the Spartacist tendency and its uniquely revolutionary approach to the black question. As a minority in the Socialist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Tendency opposed the adaptation to black nationalism and called

SL/RSL DEBATE:



Sy Landy

RSL Gives "Critical Support" to Trotskyism

On Saturday August 18, Chicago's former IWW meeting hall witnessed a debate between the Spartacist League and the Revolutionary Socialist League, a left-Shachtmanite organization which was recently expelled from the IS. More than 200 SL/RCY supporters attended the event, as well as roughly 10 RSLers. And although the debate centered on the question, "What is the RSL?," at the conclusion of four hours of discussion the consensus was that the question remained unanswered—even to the RSL itself.

The debate had a broader significance for the Spartacist League, which issued the challenge. In recent years there have been a number of left splits from Pabloist and Shachtmanite organizations resulting in various centrist groupings which, upon emerging from their respective swamps (SWP, IS, United Secretariat), proclaim that they are the first Trotskyists since Trotsky himself. Examples are the former Communist Tendency of the SWP, the Class Struggle League, Spartacus-BL in Germany and now the RSL, with the Internationalist Tendency of the SWP still in the pipeline. In order to deny the existence of the continuity of the Marxist movement, and thus validate their own immaculate conception, these groups find it necessary to repudiate the banner of the Fourth International (in the case of the Fifth Internationalists in the CSL), the "Cannonite faction of Trotskyism" (in the case of the RSL)

and above all the politics and history of the Spartacist League.

The SL has consistently attempted to engage such contradictory and incomplete leftward-moving tendencies in programmatic political discussion as a part of the perspective of revolutionary regroupment. But, as the SL reporter remarked during the debate, with the IT we have an *unprincipled* group (rejecting the SWP because it ignores the proletariat, and then linking up with the USec majority whose "new mass vanguard" theories and student-oriented practice are hardly more proletarian); in the CSL we have a *multi-principled* group (democratic centralism or freedom of criticism? Fourth International or Fifth International? single-issue caucuses or trade-union organizing on the Transitional Program? —who cares, because in the CSL anything goes!); but with the RSL we have something really rare—a *non-principled* group! This was amply confirmed in the debate, as the RSL reporter and speakers either avoided or gave contradictory responses to *all* the programmatic questions raised by the SL.

Main SL reporter James Robertson opened the debate by raising the two key issues over which Shachtman broke with Trotskyism in 1940—the class nature of the Russian state and the organizational question. The RSL claims to have fully rejected Shachtmanism and to have embraced Trotskyism; yet the RSL is ag-



Class session at first SL/RCY summer camp.

for communist intervention in the civil rights movement. Following its expulsion from the SWP in 1963 the Spartacist group immediately plunged into the civil rights movement, both in the South and in the northern ghettos, and within the limits of its forces carried out exemplary work until being frozen out by the rise of black nationalism in the mid-sixties. The 1968 New York City teachers' strike was emphasized as an acid test of the American left: those currents which adapted to black nationalism supported scabbing while currents adapting to the labor bureaucracy became apologists for the racist Shanker leadership of the teachers union.

Trotskyist Work in the Trade Unions

A class on "Trotskyist Work in the Trade Unions," provided an historical overview and critical assessment. The SL does not reject out-of-hand the revolutionary tradition of James P. Cannon and the American Socialist Workers Party from which it emerged,

as do the cynical Workers League and Class Struggle League; nor does it claim to have emerged fully grown, as if by magic, from the scattered remains of a non-revolutionary tradition, as does the left-Shachtmanite Revolutionary Socialist League (which claims to be the first Trotskyist organization since Trotsky). Rather, Marxists seek to deepen their understanding of, and continuity with, their revolutionary tradition not in order to idolize it, but to learn from it and correct its errors.

Developing correct revolutionary trade-union tactics in the present period depends on avoiding the serious pitfalls into which the Trotskyists fell in the 1930's and 1940's, and the speaker concentrated on summing up the criticisms. The Trotskyists relied chiefly on broad united-front tactics which made for brilliant organizing-drive victories such as the Minneapolis strikes of 1934.

After the rise of the CIO, however, these united fronts, combined with a tendency on the part of the Trotskyists to view the Stalinists as the main enemy, led to an over-identification of the

Trotskyists with "progressive" trade unionists. The Trotskyists lacked flexibility in their tactics, and neglected the development of caucus formations based on a revolutionary, transitional program. They thereby deprived themselves of an organizational form for distinguishing themselves politically from, and consolidating militant opposition to, the "progressive" bureaucracy in the unions. These errors were deepened rather than reversed after the Second World War, and were partially responsible for the demoralization and departure from revolutionary politics of the bulk of the SWP's trade-union cadre in the Cochran-Clarke split in 1953.

Labor and Imperialist Conflict Under Post-War Capitalism

A set of two talks on the post-war capitalist economy began with the empirical demonstration of the absence of a generalized and qualitatively different boom period during the 1950's, a fiction maintained by both the "International Committee" and the "United Secretariat." The speaker asserted that such theories as "neo-capitalism" and the "post-war economic boom" are an objectivist projection of the weakness of the Trotskyist movement, akin to Pablo's re-evaluation of Stalinism. Not structural reform (government intervention, "artificial inflation," "permanent arms economy," etc.), but the extreme weakness of the labor movement in Japan and France and the aggressive class collaborationism of the social-democratic unions in Germany account for the relative success of these economies in the post-war period. The necessity of direct state control of wages in contemporary capitalism was also stressed. Reviewing the experiences of Britain and Germany in the 1960's, the speaker pointed out the double-edged aspect of state control—effectively holding down wages, but tending to set the ranks against the openly class-collaborationist labor bureaucracy. The first class concluded on the strategic importance of the black ghetto population in the U.S. and immigrant labor drawn from the Mediterranean basin peasantry in Western Europe as the contemporary reserve army of the unemployed—a necessary element of capitalism.

In the second talk, the reporter pointed out that imperialist conflict arises from the intersection of foreign trade and investment as a counteracting factor to the falling rate of profit, given the nationally-limited character of the bourgeoisie. In contrast to the view of the IC, international financial chaos must be seen as the product of conflicting national states. The speaker traced the history of American imperialism in the post-war period from one of granting economic concessions to Japan and West Europe to the present intense struggles for immediate competitive advantage. The talk was concluded with a discussion of the impact of the increased presence of capitalist firms in the Soviet Union as a source

of bureaucratic corruption and a strengthening of restorationist forces. To this increased imperialist pressure, the speaker counterposed the establishment of workers democracy through political revolution leading to the economic, military and political unification of the Sino-Soviet states.

Toward the International Spartacist Tendency

One of the highlights of the camp was an international symposium featuring speakers from the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand (SL/ANZ) and from the Austrian Bolshevik-Leninists. A comrade of the SL/ANZ presented a critical history of Ceylonese Trotskyism, pointing out the pervasive tendency toward Sinhalese nationalism and parliamentarianism. The former is particularly reactionary given the importance of Tamil-speaking plantation workers in linking the Ceylonese revolutionary movement to the rest of the subcontinent. The SL/ANZ comrade traced the evolution of the Samarakody tendency from its opposition to incipient popular frontism by the LSSP in 1956 to the split from the Usec in 1968 and the founding of the Revolutionary Workers Party. While noting its vastly differing political experience from that of the Spartacist League, the speaker stressed the RWP's leftward course. Particularly important is its recent decision to enhance the polemical character of its press and to struggle for leadership within the existing unions rather than following the standard Ceylonese practice of organizing its own unions.

A comrade of the Austrian Bolshevik-Leninists surveyed the history of revolutionary Marxism in Central Europe, focusing on the struggle to break the working class from the stranglehold of Social Democracy. The speaker explained that his tendency evolved out of a series of New-Left splits from the German and Austrian Usec sections whose most characteristic expressions are the German IKD and Spartacus-BL. The Austrian Bolshevik-Leninists were drawn to the Spartacist tendency on the key issues of the contradictory class nature of the mass social-democratic parties and the consequent orientation of the communist vanguard toward them, a rejection of the "freedom-of-criticism" perversion of democratic centralism, a sharp line against capitulation to popular fronts (particularly in the recent French elections and in Vietnam) and rejection of "neo-capitalism."

Another comrade of the SL/ANZ spoke on the recent developments in Australia, stressing that Whitlam's Labor Party government originally enjoyed bourgeois support on the basis of plans for economic rationalization (e.g., incomes policy), while awakening illusions in the working class. Both its working-class and bourgeois support are now dwindling, however. The speaker described the bitter strike at Ford Motors which demonstrated that the Australian CP's "workers control" campaign is simply a new term for old-fashioned reformism. The rapidly-expanding SL/ANZ has established itself as an aggressive propaganda group exposing reformism and revisionism within the ostensibly revolutionary left. Recently the SL was able to force Tariq Ali, a leader of the British Usec section, to participate in an organization-to-organization debate during which he stated that the Vietnamese NLF did not act in a Stalinist manner, and defended guerrilla strategy in Latin America.

Reflecting the growing international impact of the Spartacist tendency and the fruitful period opening up as the rotten blocs of the IC and Usec split apart, the symposium underlined the urgent necessity of international polemical discussion on key political issues (popular fronts, nature of the social-democratic parties, guerrilla warfare, Pabloism, democratic centralism, etc.) in order to crystallize a Bolshevik-Leninist tendency and work toward the rebirth of a programatically united democratic-centralist Fourth International. ■

nostic on precisely these two questions! In Cleveland, RSLers refused to discuss the Russian question, while their New York comrades have several times intervened in SL public classes and argued for a state capitalist view. The SL spokesman attacked the "freedom of criticism, unity of action" line on the organization question (the early Lenin formulation embraced by Shachtman and by several current centrist formations), citing the apparent variation among RSLers on the Russian question as evidence that the RSL maintained Shachtman's "interpretation" of democratic centralism.

The SL reporter pointed out that the state capitalism theory is basically a moral stance—simple impressionistic rejection of Russia—and is ultimately merely silly. Societies are based on class relations determined at the point of production. The fact that the Soviet bureaucrats live well and the workers poorly does not make the former a new class with a historical mission and a characteristic relation to the means of production. Shachtman knew this and tried to come up with a more sophisticated evasion: bureaucratic collectivism. But neither theory can explain the extreme fragility of bureaucratic rule as shown by the Hungarian uprising of 1956, in which the bureaucracy simply fragmented, with the vast majority of its lower levels going over to the side of the workers.

The SL reporter challenged the RSL to explain its positions on the Russian question and democratic centralism—something it never got around to doing. He also charged that on the one issue on which the Revolutionary Tendency did choose to fight the IS majority—trade-union policy—it emerged with the same operational position as the right wing led by Geier: critical support to Arnold Miller, the darling of the La-

bor Department, in the mine workers' elections.

The other speaker for the SL was a representative of the Leninist Tendency which had resigned from the IS following the expulsion of the RT/RSL. The LT speaker challenged the RSL reporter to reaffirm publicly what he had said previously on the organizational question (namely, support for the "freedom of criticism" position) and to defend his previous repudiation of Lenin's argument (in *What Is To Be Done?*) that socialist consciousness is brought to the working class from outside. (The RSL ducked this one also.) The LT speaker stated that the RSL position on critical support boils down to backing whoever is popular at the time.

The reporter for the RSL was Sy Landy, former national secretary of the IS and a long-time Shachtmanite who followed his former mentor into the Socialist Party in 1958. Accusing the SL of relying on "potshots," he agreed that the RSL's documents were abstract and defended this as necessary in order to explore the methodology and put the final stamp on Shachtmanism, something he insisted the SL had never done. Attempting to reply to the charge that the RSL does not have a consistent position on the Russian question, he stated that the RSL is still incomplete because it was prematurely expelled from the IS before the fight had clarified all the issues.

Landy declared that we are now in a pre-revolutionary period internationally, which has produced an advanced layer of workers who consider themselves revolutionary: the task is to reach this layer. The RSL stands for revolutionary regroupment.

On the question of critical support, Landy charged the SL with having a static, recipe-book approach. The RSL

continued on page 10

К П О К О Д И Л



ОБЩАЯ ПЛАТФОРМА

Soviet cartoon during Moscow Trials period portraying Trotsky as Nazi agent.

5/ THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

(Editor's Note: The recent wave of virulent anti-Trotskyism being spread by various Maoist groups relies on the standard Stalinist weapons of lies and distortion, and above all on ignorance about the true history of the communist movement. The present series, replying to the articles on "Trotsky's Heritage" in the New Left/Maoist Guardian, serves as an introduction to this history and a brief summary of the principal political issues separating Trotskyism from Stalinism.)

A party that is incapable of defending the conquests already won by the working class will certainly be unable to lead the proletarian revolution. From the time it was formed in 1923 until Stalin ordered the German Communist Party to capitulate to Hitler without a fight almost ten years later, the Left Opposition steadfastly held to the banner of the Third International. In spite of the most incredible bureaucratic rigging, wholesale expulsions, and even exile and deportation, Trotsky held adamantly to his course of reforming the Comintern. Bureaucratically expelled Left Oppositionists demanded readmittance to their respective CPs and acted insofar as possible as factions of the Communist International, rather than proclaiming new parties. Critical events inside or outside the Soviet Union could stir the working class into action once again and provide the opportunity for replacing the Stalinist usurpers. Further, the Third International, enjoying the prestige of association with the only successful socialist revolution, had strong ties with the masses which could not be ignored. For the Left Opposition to prematurely renounce the Comintern would abandon hundreds of thousands of revolutionary-minded workers to the bureaucracy and doom the Trotskyists to isolation and irrelevance.

The sectarian-defeatist "Third-Period" policies of the Comintern which led to the victory of fascism in Germany in 1933 forced the Left Opposition to adopt a radical change in its perspective. Ever since 1930 Trotsky had warned that the fate of the international revolutionary movement depended on the outcome of the struggle against the fascist threat in Germany. The Communists (KPD), following Stalin's orders, played directly into the hands of the fascists by refusing to call for a united front with the Social Democracy (SPD) against the Nazis, instead denouncing the SPD as "social fascists."

The Call for a New International

Hitler's peaceful march to power, without even token resistance by the Communists, led Trotsky to correctly conclude that the KPD had decisively degenerated. As a consequence of this world-historical defeat and betrayal, the German working class lay prostrate for more than a decade and the second imperialist world war and Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union were prepared. The Left Opposition now called for a new party in Germany:

"The question of the open break with the Stalinist bureaucracy in Germany is at the present moment of enormous principled importance. The revolution-

The Stalin School of Falsification Revisited

ary vanguard will not pardon the historical crime committed by the Stalinists. If we support the illusion of the vitality of the party of Thaelmann-Neumann we would appear to the masses as the real defenders of their bankruptcy. That would signify that we ourselves veer toward the road of centrism and putrefaction."

—L.D. Trotsky, "KPD or New Party?", March 1933

But what about the rest of the CI?

"Here it is natural to ask how we act toward the other sections of the Comintern and the Third International as a whole. Do we break with them immediately? In my opinion, it would be incorrect to give a rigid answer—yes, we break with them. The collapse of the KPD diminishes the chances for the regeneration of the Comintern. But on the other hand the catastrophe itself could provoke a healthy reaction in some of the sections. We must be ready to help this process. The question has not been settled for the USSR, where proclamation of the second party would be incorrect. We are calling today for the creation of a new party in Germany, to seize the Comintern from the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is not a question of the Fourth International but of salvaging the Third."

—Ibid.

However, not a single one of the Comintern sections made the slightest protest to Stalin's claim that the policies of the KPD had been correct from start to finish, or even called for a discussion of the German events! Trotsky responded by declaring that an organization which is not roused by the thunderbolt of fascism and submits docilely to the outrageous acts of the bureaucracy demonstrates that it is dead and that nothing can revive it; Stalinism had had its 4 August (a reference to the definitive betrayal of the reformist German Social Democrats, who voted for the Kaiser's war budget in August 1914, thus siding with "their own" bourgeoisie in the imperialist war). In July 1933 Trotsky called on the Left Opposition to begin working for the creation of a new International and new revolutionary parties throughout the world. In accord with the new perspective, the Left Opposition changed its name to the International Communist League.

Trotsky's analysis was quickly confirmed. After the German debacle the Comintern substituted the capitulatory policy of the "united front" at any price for the adventures of the Third Period. In its international policies, the Soviet Union decided to join the imperialists' League of Nations (which Lenin had denounced as a den of thieves) and turned toward military alliance with French imperialism, openly repudiating revolutionary internationalism. The Stalinists divided the imperialist powers into two categories: the "democratic, peace-loving" on the one hand, and the fascist, war-like on the other. The Third International was subverted into becoming a simple tool for the diplomatic interests of the Russian bureaucracy, with the job of forging alliances with the "peace-loving" imperialists to protect "socialism in one country." Thus the French CP was ordered to vote for the defense budget of its bourgeois rulers. The Stalinist bureaucracy officially declared that Roosevelt was "honestly seeking a democratic and pacifist solution to imperialist conflicts" and consummated popular-front alliances with liberal bourgeois parties in France and Spain in 1936, which led to the victory of the fascists three years later. During World War II Stalin finally declared that the Comintern no longer served any purpose and formally disbanded it.

The ICL and groups sympathetic to

it did not simply proclaim themselves to be the new International. Expulsion of the Left Opposition from the Comintern had deprived it of a necessary sphere of political activity, forcing it to develop as an isolated propaganda group. The Left Opposition had been able to train a limited number of cadres but lacked roots in the masses and was numerically weak. Moreover, its organizations had not been tested in serious class battles. The period ahead was to be one of preparation:

"Propagating the ideas of the Left Opposition, recruiting more and more adherents, individually and in groups, into the ranks of the International Communist League, carrying on an agitation among the masses under the slogan of the Fourth International, educating our own cadres, deepening our theoretical position—such is our basic work in the historic period immediately ahead of us." [emphasis in original]

—L.D. Trotsky, "The SAP, the ICL and the Fourth International," January 1934

The principal tactic used by the ICL to recruit new adherents was revolutionary regroupment. Trotsky was the first to recognize the immensity of the task faced by his small, isolated movement. He searched out every opportunity to break out of isolation and find new allies, even temporary ones, so that the first steps could be taken toward the building of a new International.

In a period of tremendous revolutionary opportunities and dangers the oppositionist moods and tendencies of the 1930's bore a predominantly centrist character, vacillating between social patriotism and socialist revolution. The German events (1931-33), the crushing of the "leftist" Austrian Social Democracy together with its supposedly powerful party militia (the Schutzbund) in 1934, caused deep ferment in the working-class movement and a widespread rejection of reformism. A proliferation of centrist currents appeared, as frequently occurs in the early stages of a new upsurge of working-class militancy. The ICL oriented toward these groups in order by example and propaganda to win the healthiest elements to a revolutionary program. But the tactic of revolutionary regroupment is not, as some maintain, a process of political accommodation to centrism. At the same time Trotsky waged a consistent struggle against the vacillating centrist leaderships, mercilessly rejecting the slogan of "unity" of all working-class organizations regardless of program and tactics:

"...to blur our difference with centrism in the name of facilitating 'unity' would mean not only to commit political suicide, but also to cover up, strengthen, and nourish all the negative features of bureaucratic centrism, and by that fact alone help the reactionary currents within it against the revolutionary tendencies."

—"On the State of the Left Opposition," 16 December 1932

The realignment of forces within the European working class did not bypass the parties of the Second International. Disillusioned with the Comintern, many working-class militants and youth joined the social-democratic parties, resulting in the proliferation of leftward-moving tendencies within them. In France, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland sections of the Socialist Youth became sympathetic to Trotsky's ideas.

In France, the Socialists (SFIO) had split at the end of 1933 with the right wing forming its own organization. This split shifted the SFIO, the largest workers party in France, to the left, and Trotsky advised the small French section of the ICL to enter the Socialists. The formation of a "united front" of the SFIO and CP in July 1934 and talk of

merger of the two reformist parties provided added reason for immediate entry, every tendency outside the united front would become more isolated than ever. Trotsky advocated similar entries (the so-called "French turn") in most of the other sections as well.

The French turn led to deep disputes and even splits within the partisans of the Fourth International, with some ultra-left sectarians such as Oehler in the U.S. rejecting the entry tactic on principle. The French section was split in half over the question, and the Spanish Communist Left (led by Andrés Nin) rejected it outright (only to fuse with a reformist group to form the POUM a

distillation of the interests of the proletariat in the epoch of imperialism. It is a document that has been willfully misunderstood, both by its opponents and some of its supposed adherents. Above all, it is not a program of reforms but represents marching orders for the seizure of power by the proletariat. It is based on the premise that in the epoch of capitalist decay, the objective prerequisites for socialist revolution are not only ripened, but already beginning to rot. The fundamental factor preventing world revolution is the reformist leadership of the unions and mass workers parties, the agent of the bourgeoisie in the workers move-

layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat." [emphasis in original]

—"The Transitional Program," 1938

Such demands included a sliding scale of wages and hours, opening the books of the capitalists, expropriation of industry under workers control, for the formation of factory committees, workers militias, soviets and a workers government. In the backward countries it called for proletarian revolution, supported by the peasantry, which would solve both democratic (agrarian revolution, national independence) and socialist tasks. In the Soviet Union it

to finish. Nevertheless, both Moscow-line and Maoist Stalinists today continue to repeat the slanders that Trotsky cooperated with the fascists even though there was never produced one shred of evidence to "prove" these charges.

Also at this time Stalin unleashed a systematic campaign to exterminate Trotskyist leaders throughout the world and to eliminate the thousands of Russian Left Oppositionists in the labor camps. An eye-witness account from the Vorkuta camps told of roughly 1,000 Bolshevik-Leninists in this camp, and several thousand more in the other camps of the province. Down to the end, the Trotskyist prisoners called for the overthrow of the Stalin government, while always stressing they would defend the Soviet Union unconditionally in case of war. When in the spring of 1938 the GPU ordered the murder of all remaining Trotskyists they marched to their deaths singing the *Internationale*.

Internationally, the GPU had assassinated Trotsky's son; the Czech Erwin Wolf and the German Rudolf Klement, both secretaries of Trotsky; and the Pole Ignace Reiss, a former head of Soviet secret service in Europe. During the same period they also eliminated prominent ex-Trotskyists such as Nin in Spain, the Austrian Landau and others. The culmination came with the assassination by a GPU agent of Trotsky himself on 20 August 1940.

Unconditional Defense of the Soviet Union

The favorite charge of the Stalinists during this period was always that Trotsky allied with foreign powers to destroy the Soviet state. This was a bald-faced lie, as Trotsky always insisted that true Bolshevik-Leninists must unconditionally defend the historical gains of the October Revolution (see part 3 of this series). Every single programmatic document of the Left Opposition, the International Communist League and the Fourth International proclaimed the unconditional defense of the USSR against capitalist restorationist forces and imperialist attack.

But defense of the Soviet state required above all the ousting of the Stalinist regime which consistently sabotaged that defense. By the theory of "socialism in one country" the bureaucracy wrote off the possibility of world socialist revolution which was the only real defense of the achievements of the first workers state in history. But Stalin did more than this: he twice decapitated the top leadership of the Soviet armed forces during the late 1930's (after repeatedly purging the Red Army during the 1920's to drive out Trotskyists); and he placed blind faith in his treaty with Hitler, thereby preparing the way for the rout of the Russian forces during the first weeks of Hitler's 1941 invasion of the USSR. Only by vigorously leading the workers against their own bourgeoisies in the capitalist countries, and through political revolution in the Soviet Union, could the road be open to socialism. This was the task of the Fourth International.

Trotsky's last political battle was over precisely this question. In 1939-40, under the pressure of public opinion which had turned against the Soviet Union during the Hitler-Stalin pact, a petty-bourgeois opposition formed among elements of the leadership in the American SWP. The Shachtman/Burnham/Abern group suddenly "discovered" that the Soviet Union was no longer a workers state, and thus need not be defended unconditionally. Trotsky steadfastly refused to give one inch to the Shachtmanite faction, for he understood perfectly that to waver on this crucial issue would condemn the Fourth International to an ignominious death. This dedication to Bolshevik principles cost the SWP roughly 40 percent of the party membership when the Shachtmanites split in 1940, and destroyed the youth section. Though weak and persecuted, the Fourth International was able to avoid its own "4 August" by steadfastly holding to its program during this period of intense social patriotism.

[TO BE CONTINUED]



Trotsky Memorial Meeting at Hotel Diplomat, New York, 28 August 1940.

year later). Even where it was carried out, however, the French turn and struggles to regroup revolutionaries out of leftward-moving centrist formations brought few recruits to the Trotskyists. The proletariat had a long series of defeats behind it and was in retreat. With the threat of a new world war, the working class was interested in immediate solutions to its problems; the tiny Trotskyist groups were not attractive.

Founding of the Fourth International

But with the impending threat of imperialist war and the drying up of the various centrist currents following the advent of the popular-front governments in France and Spain, the objective need for the foundation of a new International permitted no further delay. In September 1938 the founding conference was held in Paris with 21 delegates representing 11 countries. While the Fourth International was weak in numbers, it represented the continuity of Leninism, expressed above all in its program.

The basic programmatic document adopted at the founding conference, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* ("Transitional Program"), is the single most comprehensive and succinct summary of Trotskyism, representing the

ment: "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."

During the period of progressive capitalism the Social Democracy distinguished its minimum program (trade-union reforms, political democracy) and its maximum program (socialism), postponing the latter to the indefinite future. Now "there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards...every serious demand of the proletariat...inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state." The task of the communist vanguard was to make the proletariat conscious of its tasks, through a series of transitional demands which formulate the objective needs of the working class in such a way as to make clear the need to destroy capitalism:

"The strategic task of the next period—a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization—consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation). It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the 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 consciousness of wide

called for political revolution, while stressing the commitment of the Fourth International to unconditional defense of the USSR against imperialist attack.

Stalinist Persecution

The Fourth International, at the time of its founding conference, was composed of sections consisting of a few dozen or at the most a few hundred members (with one exception, the U.S. section, the Socialist Workers Party, with 2,500 members). But despite their small numbers, the Trotskyists were a mortal threat to Stalin and his entourage of bureaucratic usurpers. The only answer was political and physical annihilation.

Stalin was, however, increasingly worried about even his own faction, and beginning in 1936 he proceeded to purge the entire leadership of the army; through the medium of the Moscow trials he accused and convicted all nine members of Lenin's Political Bureau (save Stalin himself), as well as virtually the entire Bolshevik Central Committee of 1917. At the third trial (March 1938) Trotsky and his son Leon Sedov were accused of conspiring to sabotage and overthrow the Soviet government and restore capitalism in alliance with Hitler and the Mikado. In his famous secret speech at the 1956 Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev officially admitted that the trials and the "confessions" on which they were ostensibly based were a fraud from start

Trotskyist Work in the Trade Unions

The Primacy of Politics

After the formation of the Workers Party (WP) through the fusion of the Musteite American Workers Party with the Trotskyist Communist League of America (CLA) in 1934, the Trotskyists' organizational course took them into the leftward-moving Socialist Party in 1936. After winning a sizeable section of the SP youth they then split off from the Social Democrats to found the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1938. During this period of upsurge, the Trotskyists grew and continued to do trade-union work and other mass work, giving the lie to Stalinist assertions that the Minneapolis strikes of 1934 were the only mass work the Trotskyists ever did. The Trotskyists led mass unemployed leagues, conducted mass defense work and worked in the unions in mining, textiles, auto, food workers, maritime, steel and teamsters, among others. Less spectacular than the Minneapolis strikes perhaps, nevertheless this work was of lasting importance and vital to the building of the revolutionary vanguard in the U.S.

The Trotskyists' policy of broad united fronts continued to play a vital and useful role as long as the bulk of the reactionary AFL bureaucracy fought the establishment of industrial unions. The Workers Party declared its main goal to be the formation of a "national progressive movement" for militant industrial unionism (*New Militant*, 19 January 1935), and the Trotskyists hoped, with good reason, to win the leadership of important sections of the working class by being the most consistent fighters for this minimum but key immediate need of the working class. At the same time they did not hide their socialist politics, in contrast to the Stalinists who attempted to masquerade as simple pro-Roosevelt militants. As much as possible, the Trotskyists operated as open revolutionists. Gerry Allard, CLA member and a leader of the Progressive Miners of America in southern Illinois, addressed the miners about an approaching strike in the following terms:

"Being a Marxist, a revolutionist, it is my opinion that we should militarize the strike, revamp the Women's Auxiliary along the original lines, augment our forces by seeking the organizational support of the powerful unemployed movement in Illinois, seek allies in the rank and file of the United Mine Workers of America, and go forward once again with the same determination that built this union. This is the road of struggle...."

— *New Militant*, 30 March 1935

Allard went on to appeal to the miners to see their struggle in the broadest possible context, as the impetus for the organization of auto, steel, rubber, etc.

Toledo, 1935: Conflagration in Auto

Following up on the work of the Musteites in the great Auto-Lite strike of 1934, the Workers Party played a key role in a strike at the Toledo Chevrolet transmission plant in 1935, being instrumental in getting GM workers in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Norwood and Atlanta to strike simultaneously. Two Trotskyists, Cochran and Beck, leaders of the Workers Party and Spartacus Youth respectively, were arrested while picketing the Flint, Michigan headquarters of Chevrolet in an attempt

to spread the strike into the auto capital (*New Militant*, 11 May 1935).

The spreading of this strike throughout the GM empire was prevented only by the relative organizational weakness of the Trotskyists and the diligent, strike-breaking efforts of the AFL's appointed head of the auto union, Francis Dillon. Dillon personally headed off a sympathy strike of Buick workers in Detroit and sabotaged the strike at its base in Toledo by threatening to withdraw the local's charter and splitting the strike leadership at the key point. GM agreed to a wage increase and published a stipulation that it would meet with the union leadership, but because of Dillon's treachery there was no signed contract. The workers went back solidly organized and undefeated, however, since the company had the militant 1934 strike in mind and had made no attempt to operate the plant with scabs. It was the first GM strike the company had failed to smash, and was an inspiration for the later auto sit-down strikes which built the UAW and established the CIO.

After the strike, the Workers Party published a critical assessment of the strike leadership of which it had been a part, denouncing sloppiness, lack of attention to details (such as not calling sufficient strike committee meetings) and the "fundamental error" of allowing the daily strike paper, *Strike Truth*, to be suppressed (*New Militant*, 18 May 1935). This performance was in sharp contrast to the Minneapolis truckers' strikes the year previous, in which meticulous attention to tactical and organizational details and the hard-hitting regular strike daily had been instrumental in achieving the ultimate victory of the strike. At the same time the Trotskyists were able to recruit the most conscious workers to their organization, with the Minneapolis branch of the CLA increasing from 40 to 100 members and close sympathizers during 1934 alone. Many years later, Cannon analyzed the main weakness of the work in Toledo as the failure to consolidate lasting organizational gains. He blamed this on Muste, who was a "good mass worker" but "tended to adapt himself" to the mass movement too much for a Leninist, at the expense of developing firm nuclei "on a programmatic basis for permanent functioning" (*History of American Trotskyism*).

First Auto Union Caucus Formed

The Workers Party was still working under the disadvantage in Toledo that the revolutionary leadership of the 1934 strike had been brought in from outside the union, thereby lacking sufficiently deep roots to hold the militants together against Dillon's maneuvering in 1935. Today the Marcusite National Caucus of Labor Committees, a group which has not the faintest idea of what it means to organize the working class, lauds precisely this weakness as the hallmark of revolutionary strategy. Their hero Muste soon thereafter abandoned the WP to return to the church. The deficiencies of the Trotskyists' trade-union tactics were not to be found in "overrating the unions" as the NCLC crackpots would have us believe, but in the failure to organize firm class-struggle nuclei "on a programmatic basis for permanent functioning" within the unions. The struggles in Toledo gave birth to the first auto union caucus, the Progressives of UAW Local 18384, but its program was limited to the militant unionism of the broad united fronts the Trotskyists advocated: for industrial unions, reliance on the power of

the ranks as opposed to arbitration or government boards, etc. As such, it had the episodic character of a united front and lacked the clear revolutionary political distinctiveness which became crucial after the establishment of industrial unions under reformist leadership in the late 1930's.

Another point made by Cannon in drawing the balance sheet of the Workers Party period should be made elementary reading for the Labor Committee, which fetishizes unemployed organizing. The mass unemployed organizations inherited by the Trotskyists in their fusion with the Musteites were highly unstable:

"We reached thousands of workers through these unemployed organizations. But further experience also taught us an instructive lesson in the field of mass work too. Unemployed organizations can be built and expanded rapidly and it is quite possible for one to get illusory ideas of their stability and revolutionary potentialities. At the very best they are loose and easily scattered formations; they slip through your fingers like sand. The minute the average unemployed worker gets a job, he wants to forget the unemployed organization...."

— *History of American Trotskyism*

The Making of the Modern Teamsters Union

The most lasting achievement of Trotskyist trade-union work in the 1930's was the transformation of the Teamsters from a localized, federated craft union into a large industrial union. In the 1930's, while long-distance trucking was becoming more and more important, the Teamsters union was still limited to local drivers, divided by crafts (ice drivers, milk drivers, etc.) and dependent on local conditions. Based in their stronghold in Minneapolis, the Trotskyists spread industrial unionism throughout the Northwest through the Teamsters. An 11-state campaign led by Farrell Dobbs to organize over-the-road drivers included conquest of the all-important hub of Chicago and established the principle of the uniform area-wide contract. The campaign's achievements were solidified through a major strike struggle centered in Omaha, Nebraska in 1938, which was won through the same skillful organization that had succeeded in Minneapolis. As in Minneapolis, the building of the party went hand-in-hand with the strike, resulting in an SWP branch in Omaha.

Especially in the mid-1930's, the mass work of the Trotskyists was far-reaching and significant out of proportion to their size. Yet the Trotskyists knew they were not yet a real party and could not become a party leading significant sections of the masses in struggle until the centrist and reformist forces blocking the path were removed. It was for this reason that the Trotskyists entered the SP in 1936: the SP was large, included a rapidly-growing left wing (particularly in the youth) and was attracting militant workers who could be won to Trotskyism. The Trotskyists had to defeat sectarians in their own ranks, led by Oehler, who assumed that the party could be built directly, through the orientation of a propaganda group to the masses. The Cannon-led majority of the WP hardly ignored mass work. It was, in fact, an important part of the entry maneuver. While in the Socialist Party the Trotskyists established new trade-union fractions, notably in maritime (principally the Sailors Union of the Pacific) and auto, meanwhile considerably embarrassing

the reformist SP leaders by their class-struggle policies. When they emerged from the SP more than doubled in size in 1938, the Trotskyists, though still small, were in a better position than ever to conduct work in the unions.

CIO Victories Pose Question of Politics

The rise of the CIO through the massive struggles of 1936-37 transformed the labor movement and altered the terms of class struggle in favor of the workers. The organized workers were in a better position to resist the onslaughts of capitalism; however, the new unions were controlled by a bureaucratic layer which shared the pro-capitalist, class-collaborationist politics of the old AFL bureaucracy. Having reluctantly presided over the militant struggles which established the CIO, these new bureaucrats desired nothing more than to establish "normal" trade-union relations with the capitalists, gain influence in capitalist politics, etc. As inter-imperialist war drew closer, the ruling class was gradually forced to temporarily lay aside its attempt to destroy the unions and accept the coalition which the bureaucracy readily offered. Thus the trade-union bureaucracy was qualitatively expanded and consolidated as the chief agency for disciplining the work force, replacing for the most part the Pinkertons and bloody strike-breaking as the principal means of capitalist rule in the hitherto unorganized mass production industries. This process was completed during the Second World War, when the ruling class allowed the completion of union organizing in key areas in exchange for full partnership of the trade-union bureaucracy in the imperialist war effort (the no-strike pledge, endorsement of the anti-labor wage controls, strike-breaking, etc.).

Besides displacing organization of the unorganized as the key immediate issue, this transformation placed the question of politics in the foreground. The industrial unions had been built, but they alone were clearly insufficient to deal with the outstanding social questions—unemployment, war, etc.—which determined the conditions under which they struggled. With the renewal of depression conditions in mid-1937-38, accompanied by increased employer resistance to union demands, opposition to Roosevelt burgeoned and mass sentiment for a labor party developed, expressed through such agencies as Labor's Non-Partisan Political League (LNPL), the CIO political arm and the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota. In order to head off this movement, the bureaucracy invented the myth of Roosevelt as a "friend of labor" and used the Stalinist Communist Party, closely integrated into the CIO bureaucracy, to pass off this warmed-over Gompers policy as a "working-class" strategy—the popular front. The CP unceremoniously dropped its earlier calls for a labor party.

The Trotskyist Transitional Program

The primary task of revolutionists in the labor movement had shifted, therefore, from leading the struggle for industrial unions to providing a political pole of opposition to the class-collaborationist bureaucracy. The Transitional Program ("Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International"), adopted by the SWP in 1938, was written by Trotsky largely to provide the basis for such a struggle.

by Chris Knox

It contained demands designed to meet the immediate felt needs and problems of the workers (wages, unemployment, working conditions, approaching war and fascism) with alternatives leading directly to a struggle against the capitalist system itself: a sliding scale of wages and hours, workers control of industry, expropriation of industry without compensation, workers militias, etc. Most importantly, the program proposed transitional organizational forms and measures designed to advance the workers' ability to struggle for these demands and to provide the basis for the overthrow of capitalism: factory committees, soviets, arming of the proletariat and workers

Program in their press and conducted campaigns for specific demands such as workers defense guards, labor party, struggle against approaching war, etc., their day-to-day trade-union work continued on the old basis of united fronts around immediate issues. As the organization of the unions proceeded and the opposition of the bureaucracy to organizing industrial unions receded, this united-front policy turned into a bloc around simple trade-union militancy with whole sections of the non-Stalinist, "progressive" trade-union bureaucracy. Criticism of these bureaucrats tended to take the form of pushing for consistent trade-union militancy rather than building a revolution-

challenge mounted by the bosses was in Omaha.

The united front to organize the over-the-road drivers was not wrong, but the Trotskyists lacked the means to distinguish themselves politically from the bureaucracy. This could have been done through a caucus based on the Transitional Program. The *Northwest Organizer* was founded in 1935 as the organ of a pan-union caucus formation, the Northwest Labor Unity Conference, but the NLUC's program was limited to militant, class-struggle union organizing, under the slogan, "All workers into the unions and all unions into the struggle." Eventually the *Northwest Organizer* became the organ of the Minneapolis Teamsters Joint Council and the NLUC lapsed, since its oppositional role was liquidated. When Tobin began to line up behind the war effort, the Trotskyists in Minneapolis opposed the war and won over the Central Labor Union, but they lacked the basis for a factional struggle in the union as a whole that a political caucus orientation might have provided. Dobbs simply submitted his resignation as organizer in 1940, without waging a political fight. A few years later, Tobin finally was able to crush the Trotskyist leadership in Minneapolis, with the aid of the government's first Smith Act anti-communist trial of the leading militants.

The Two-Class Party

The bloc with "progressive" trade unionists was reflected politically in the Trotskyists' orientation to the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, with which most of the local trade unions were affiliated. Left-leaning FLP supporters were an important component of the Trotskyists' united front. In 1929, the excellent document, *Platform of the Communist Opposition*, had pointed out:

"The organization of two classes in one party, a Farmer-Labor Party, must be rejected in principle in favor of the separate organization of the workers, and the formation of a political alliance with the poor farmers under the leadership of the former. The opportunist errors of the [Communist] Party comrades in the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota and other states [in 1924] flowed inevitably from and were secondary to the basically false policy of a two-class party, in which the farmer and worker are ostensibly on an 'equal basis,' but where in reality the petty-bourgeois ideology of the former actually dominates."

—*Militant*, 15 February 1929

Written by the American Trotskyists, this statement thus carried forth in hard political terms the criticisms made by Trotsky of the Pepper leadership of the CP in 1924. Pepper had blithely made a fundamental revision of Marxism in order to tail the radical farmers of the FLP into the third capitalist party movement of LaFollette. The Minneapolis Trotskyists, however, failed to implement this policy in their orientation to the FLP. In 1935 they critically supported the FLP candidate for mayor of Minneapolis (despite the current Workers Party position against labor party formations), and in 1938 they supported FLP Governor Benson in the primaries as well as in the general election, without in either case mentioning the need for the "separate organization of the workers." The SWP's September 1938 program for the FLP endorses the adherence of both mass workers' and mass farmers' organizations to the FLP and complains only of the inordinate power of the ward clubs, through which the Stalinists eventually wielded the dominant influence in the FLP. This necessarily blurred the SWP's campaign for a working-class labor party based on the Transitional Program, since in their

program for the FLP they were forced to emphasize demands for the petty-bourgeois farmers (loans, easing tax burdens, etc.) which watered down the working-class content of their program and was the inevitable result of the petty-bourgeois nature of the FLP as a two-class party. While not politically fatal in itself, this lack of clarity was a reflection of an accommodationist bloc with the left wing of the trade-union bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the Trotskyists compounded their inflexible united-front trade-union tactics with an over-reaction to Stalinism. The 1938 SWP trade-union resolution stated categorically:

"While always expanding our program independently and maintaining our right of criticism, our Party in a certain sense supports the 'lesser evil' within the unions. The Stalinists are the main enemy.... We unite with all serious elements to exclude the Stalinists from control of the unions."

—*Socialist Appeal*, 26 November 1938

The Stalinist CP, many times larger than the Trotskyists, was indeed a key political enemy in the unions. Having shifted to the right from a destructive policy of self-isolation during the "Third Period" (1929-35), the CP had become intimate advisers to the CIO bureaucracy and hard right-wingers in the unions, doing whatever possible to crush and expel the Trotskyists. Its main aim was to preserve links to the liberals and the collaboration of the labor movement with Roosevelt and U.S. imperialism. The CP participated directly in the bourgeoisie's attempt to militarize the labor movement for the war. Thus in maritime, while the CP and its allies were busy weakening the 1936 West Coast longshore strike, wrecking the militant Maritime Federation of the Pacific and giving back-handed support to the government's effort to break the seamen's union hiring halls through the Copeland Act, the Trotskyists made a correct united-front bloc with the militant but "anti-political" Lundberg leadership of the SUP.

Nevertheless, the determination of the SWP to unite with the politically undefined "all serious elements" against the Stalinists in all cases reflected trade-union adaptationism. The SWP's reasoning was that, unlike standard trade-union reformists, the Stalinists were the agency of an alien force outside the unions—the bureaucratic ruling elite of the Soviet Union—and therefore willing to destroy the unions to achieve their ends. This was an implicit "third campist" denial of Stalinism as a tendency within the labor movement. That the Trotskyists never drew this logical conclusion from their position and pulled back from it later did not prevent them from falling into errors as a result of it even while the CP was at its worst during the popular-front period (1935-39).

The worst such error was the SWP's "auto crisis" which peaked in January 1939. The UAW was a key battleground between Trotskyists, Stalinists and social democrats in the CIO. Wielding power with a bureaucratic heavy hand, UAW President Homer Martin, a left-leaning trade-union reformist, went so far in his battle against the Stalinists that he eventually lost all authority. To the left of the Stalinists on some issues, he was at base reactionary and made a concerted effort to smash wildcat strikes. The SWP, however, extended critical support to Martin to stop the Stalinists. The crisis came while Cannon was in Europe following the founding conference of the Fourth International in Fall 1938. The SWP Political Committee was being run by Shachtman and Burnham, who were soon

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SPECIAL BULLETIN

THE NORTHWEST ORGANIZER

Official Organ of the Minneapolis Teamsters Joint Council

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, FRIDAY, NOV. 12, 1937

P. J. Corcoran Slain; Rites Saturday—TJC Calls Holiday For Morning, 9-12

Governor Benson Offers \$500 for Pea's Murderers

Pea's Murderers

Teamsters Offer \$10,000 For Corcoran's Assassins

Teamsters Offer \$10,000 For Corcoran's Assassins

Teamsters Offer \$10,000 For Corcoran's Assassins

Teamsters Offer \$10,000 For Corcoran's Assassins



Portrait of P. J. Corcoran

The Northwest Organizer, the newspaper of the Minneapolis Teamsters Joint Council, was written by the Trotskyists, who led Local 574. SWP trade-union work in the 1930's relied too much on broad united fronts for immediate demands. Trotsky commented: "You propose a trade union policy, not a Bolshevik policy.... I notice that in the Northwest Organizer this is true. ...The danger—a terrible danger—is adaptation to the pro-Rooseveltian trade unionists."

\$10,000 Reward is Offered for Slayers

MONAD

and farmers government (as a popular designation of the dictatorship of the proletariat).

Also in 1938, Trotsky urged his American followers to enter formations such as the LNPL and fight for a labor party based on the trade unions, armed with the Transitional Program as the political alternative to the class collaborationism of the Stalinists and trade-union bureaucrats. This reversed the Trotskyists' earlier position of opposing the call for a labor party on the grounds that the utterly reactionary character of the Gompersite labor bureaucracy could allow the organizing of mass industrial unions directly under the leadership of the revolutionary party. This would have effectively bypassed the need for the transitional demand of a labor party. With the organization of the CIO on the basis of militant trade-union reformism, the balance of power between the revolutionaries and the labor bureaucrats was shifted in favor of the latter. But as the strike struggles achieved the original goal of union organization, and as Roosevelt's policies led to economic downturn, the newly organized and highly combative rank and file of the CIO unions began to come into direct political conflict with their pro-Roosevelt leaders. The call for a labor party became a crucial programmatic weapon to mobilize a class-struggle opposition to the Lewis bureaucracy.

Though politically armed to meet the new situation, the American Trotskyists nevertheless failed to find a consistent form of expression for their program within the unions. While they propagandized for the Transitional

ary political alternative, so that when the "progressive" bureaucracy lined up with Roosevelt for war in 1940, an embarrassing lack of political distinction between the Trotskyists in the trade unions and these "progressives" was revealed.

The course of events in the Northwest Teamsters was a graphic example. For two years after the 1934 strikes in Minneapolis, the Tobin leadership of the Teamsters International continued to try to smash the Trotskyist leadership of Local 574, using red-baiting, gangsters and a rival local. Then a subtle shift began to occur. As the Trotskyists spread out, building support for the campaign to organize the over-the-road drivers, more and more bureaucrats became won over, including the key leader in Chicago, whose adherence went a long way toward ensuring the success of the campaign. Finally, by the time of the 1938 Omaha strike, Tobin himself began actively cooperating, even supporting the organizing drive against his old allies who still sought to preserve the local power of the Joint Councils at the expense of modernization, and appointing Farrell Dobbs International Organizer.

The 1936-37 strike struggles had finally rendered pure craft unionism obsolete even within the AFL, and old-line craft unionists began to tail the CIO both in order to enhance their organizational power and because the bourgeoisie itself was less resistant and more willing to accept organization of the workers in exchange for the use of the bureaucracy as its labor lieutenant. Throughout the entire area of Dobbs' 11-state campaign, the only serious

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Wildcats Explode in Detroit Auto

crats are attempting to deny the right to existence and propagation of their views to political groups which, regardless of whether they are members of any particular union, are by their stated aims legitimate members of this workers movement.

The Spartacist League stands ready to defend any such group so attacked. Should the Woodcock bureaucracy resume its gangster attacks, the SL will issue an immediate call for a united front to defend the right of tendencies within the labor movement to distribute their press publicly in Detroit. This united front would be open to all groups which stand in solidarity with the UAW against the companies (i.e., are not strikebreakers) and claim to be for militant democratic unionism (we are not addressing the UAW bureaucracy). To effectuate this, we would propose an action such as a well-publicized mass mobilization to defend salesmen (on public property) at a particular plant, barring on principle only such actions as would cross the class line by directly using the power of the bourgeois state to coerce the union (for instance, court injunctions).

The chief difference between the McCarthy-period purges and the present wave of union-condoned firings of militants, bureaucratic strikebreaking and actual thug attacks by UAW officials is that in the earlier witchhunt numbers of more conservative workers were mobilized to chase Communist Party members and other radicals out of the plants. (The task of the bureaucrats, led by the demagogic Reuther, was

made easier by the CP's policies during and immediately following World War II, when it was the staunchest supporter of the hated no-strike pledge.) In the present case, the workers are essentially neutral as a group, with neither the Marxists nor the bureaucrats having a solid base of support among the ranks. The workers are completely disillusioned with the union bureaucracy as a leadership, but the alternative leaders are essentially unknown, for the most part outsiders as far as the majority of the workers is concerned.

The Mack Ave. sit-down was planned by a small handful with no real roots in the plant. They were unable to mobilize more than a small percentage of the workers and were stigmatized immediately as "communist" (which, as presented by the bourgeois press, still conjures up lurid images of bomb throwers and robots living on gold from Moscow). Nevertheless, the bureaucracy of Local 212 was partially split, with some elements helping to protect the strikers from the police excesses. The International had to bring in its goons from other plants.

However, the bureaucracy was able to play on this essential neutrality of the workers, get them back to work relatively easily and isolate the strikers. It could do this not because the workers didn't sympathize with the demands of the strike (they did), but because the ostensible Marxists had not yet won recognition from the ranks as established leaders, on the basis of previous actions and struggles in the plant and in the union in defense of the workers' interests. Workers cannot and will not follow a self-proclaimed "leader" who is essentially unknown to them, who pulls an action which is unprepared for by any mass mobilization of the ranks and which, for those few daring to participate on the spur of the moment, means high risk of being fired. The over 40 workers now fired from the Mack plant are now removed from the scene, unable to prepare for future mass actions.

The Mack Ave. sit-down strike, like the Jefferson plant occupation three weeks earlier, was a reminder of what has been done in the past and what can be done in the future. Furthermore, while it failed to raise any general political issues, it went beyond the Jefferson strike in raising demands such as "30 for 40," voluntary overtime, right to strike over unsafe jobs, improved cost-of-living, etc., which are of interest to all auto workers rather than just the workers of one plant. However, unlike the Jefferson strike, it was planned with a cynical disregard for the consequences to anyone actively supporting it, by a group which has claimed to be a communist vanguard organization long enough to know what adventurism is. (Real communists do not attempt premature revolutionary actions, involving only handfuls of the most advanced workers, which are doomed to isolation and defeat.) In fact, Progressive Labor knows perfectly well what adventurism is... and consciously goes ahead with it anyway, since it has rejected the painstaking Leninist course of winning over the masses to communism and playing a real leading role in the mass struggle.

PL reflects, in both its past zig-zags and present politics, the opportunism and "Third-Period" adventurism of the Stalinist Communist Party of the thirties and forties. In its "Third-Period" phase (1929-35), the CP pulled adventurous strikes without proper attempts to mobilize the workers and set up sectarian "red" unions. As these adventures inevitably failed and the sectarian unions shrank, the CP "red" union leaders often cynically accepted economic settlements which were worse than those obtained by regular AFL unions in the same industries, in order to cling to contracts with a few companies. Later, when the CP turned toward popular-front alliance with Roosevelt and the liberal bourgeoisie, it adopted a "left-center coalition" policy of blocking with a section of the trade-union bureaucracy. In both cases, the CP line constituted an abdication

of the struggle for communist leadership of the working class.

WAM and Progressive Labor members must be defended against the joint company/UAW bureaucracy drive to isolate and deprive them of voice within the union and workers movement generally. However, they must be politically rejected by all serious workers interested in building a vanguard party. PL/WAM can only demoralize those involved in their fake "mass actions" and corrupt others with their orientation toward "left-center coalitions" on the basis of the most minimal trade-union slogans. WAM has been organized primarily around only one slogan—"30 for 40"—and its practice has included wooing typical, reformist trade-union bureaucrats on that basis (see "PL Finds Road to Bureaucrats," WV No. 21, 25 May 1973).

Contract Negotiations

The wildcat events in Detroit coincide with the opening of formal bargaining in the wake of record-breaking profit levels during the last year for all four U.S. auto manufacturers. The wildcat strikes are a response to the fact that those profits, which the UAW leaders now hypocritically attack, were made possible because the UAW leaders consciously pursued a course of class collaboration. They both underplayed wage demands in favor of "humanizing working conditions"—thereby ignoring the ravages of runaway inflation—and helped isolate and squelch local strikes over working conditions (as in Lordsburg)—thereby assisting the companies to drive up the rate of exploitation. Furthermore, the union leadership has been soft-pedaling talk of a strike despite the outstanding, unsolved demands of the workers—including those, such as voluntary overtime, adopted by the leadership itself, which the companies have adamantly refused to consider. The perpetuation of the one-company-at-a-time strike "strategy" is a further sign of weakness, pushed by the bureaucracy only because it fears an industry-wide mass mobilization of the workers.

This bureaucracy must be smashed and replaced. But the substitution of a handful of adventurers for the workers is no better in the long run than the substitution of the bureaucracy for the workers. Both forms of substitutionism feed on each other.

The only answer is the patient construction of a revolutionary leadership which can gain the confidence of and lead the class. This must be done through the proper balance of propaganda for the revolutionary program and exemplary leadership in struggle. The program must go beyond the demands of auto workers, because a revolutionary leadership of the auto workers must act in the interests of the working class as a whole in order to be revolutionary, i.e., in order to be more than simply a new and slicker version of the present bureaucracy. Thus it is necessary to build a pole of opposition in the unions around the struggle for political consciousness: the need for a workers political party, a workers government, political strikes against war and government wage boards, international class solidarity, as well as for transitional economic demands (30 for 40, full cost-of-living).

Leading particular actions by the workers, however, requires an elementary understanding of strategy and tactics. Fifteen or 50 people in one department on one shift cannot substitute themselves for the rest of the plant, much less for the rest of the industry, when calling for such industry-wide demands as 30 for 40 and full cost-of-living. The bureaucracy is still strong enough to outflank, isolate and destroy any such attempts. The revolutionists must use propaganda and education to consistently expose the bureaucracy and win over the workers to their program, calling and carefully preparing such actions along the way as will emphasize crucial points without leading to the destruction or rout of the revolutionary forces. ■

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RSL Gives "Critical Support" to Trotskyism

criterion for critical support is whatever aids the independence of the proletariat; Miller claims to support democracy in the unions but can't deliver on independence from the state, so the RSL will support him on the first in order to expose him on the second.

Two hours of the meeting were devoted to discussion from the floor. Several SL supporters berated the RSL for not dealing with the fundamental questions of Shachtmanism, especially the Russian question. One SLer remarked, reversing Trotsky's formula, that the RSL had gone from gangrene to a scratch. Another speaker charged that the RSL's new-found "Trotskyism" is merely the latest variant in the IS' methodology of "critically supporting" whatever is popular: formerly lauding pacifism and black nationalism, now lauding the Trotskyist movement.

Other comrades pointed out that for years it has been the SL which has defended the concrete Trotskyist positions which the RSL now wants to embrace: e.g., trade-union work based on the Transitional Program, opposition to petty-bourgeois protest politics like the IS' ill-fated Peace and Freedom Party. A member of the Militant Action Caucus of CWA, which the supposedly "sectarian" Spartacist League supports, pointed out that the MAC had been in the forefront of the attempt to organize a united-front opposition to the threat of a new anti-red clause in CWA, while the RSL had just pulled its West Coast supporters out of that industry entirely.

A spokesman of the Leninist Tendency charged that Landy's remark about a premature split from the IS was pure hypocrisy: every time the LT had warned against a premature split in advance of political clarification, it had been accused of playing into the hands of the IS majority.

During the discussion, RSLers made the hilarious charge that their views were being suppressed because they had had only a few speakers from the floor in contrast to the thirty or so SL supporters who had spoken. The chairman replied that only those who had not yet spoken were being recognized. She pointed out that she had already called on all RSLers who had raised their hands and urged RSLers who had not already spoken to do so. Only one RSL supporter eventually accepted the offer, although several other RSLers were present. The real question, of course, is why had Landy not mobilized more supporters to attend the meeting, since he had been explicitly invited to debate the SL at our summer camp where most of our membership was present? In any case, the RSL will have opportunities for several future confrontations in debates being planned in several localities.

In his summary, Landy concentrated on attacking the SL for having lots of positions, but no analysis. He accused the SL of a fundamental revision of Marxism for its view that under exceptional circumstances (e.g. Cuba, China) petty-bourgeois and Stalinist forces can create deformed workers states. He compared the SL unfavorably with the Workers League for not having produced as much written material and for insisting on the importance of programmatic positions and paying less attention to analysis and methodology. Replying to a charge that the RT/RSL had never taken a position on scabbing in the 1968 New York teachers' strike, he stated that the RSL condemned this scabbing and had affirmed this ten times previously—but, he added, "so what?"

In his summary, the LT speaker

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REVOLUTIONARY
LITERATURE

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The Primacy of Politics

to draw the full conclusions from their Stalinophobia and lead a faction out of the SWP (in 1940) denying that the Soviet Union was any kind of workers state and refusing to defend it, and likewise denying that the Stalinists were a tendency within the workers movement. With their own measure of bureaucratic highhandedness, Shachtman and Burnham tried to ram a pro-Martin policy down the throats of the auto fraction in 1938 just as Martin was leading a rump convention of the UAW out of the CIO, back into the AFL and eventually to oblivion. The bulk of the auto union dumped Martin and held its own pro-CIO convention. The SWP had to do an abrupt and embarrassing about-face entailing two issues of *Socialist Appeal* which contradicted each other, for which Shachtman and Burnham refused to acknowledge responsibility.

During the Hitler-Stalin Pact period (1939-41), the beginning of World War II, a general reversal of positions took place. Reflecting Stalin's deaf with Hitler and turn away from the earlier alliance with France, Britain and the U.S., the CP conducted a grudging but definite turn to the left, denouncing the "imperialist" war, alienating its liberal allies and reinvigorating its working-class base. The "progressive" trade unionists with whom the Trotskyists had been blocking on trade-union issues meanwhile became central in the pro-war, patriotic lineup. As a result of this switch, in discussions between the SWP leadership and Trotsky in Mexico in 1940, all the inadequacies of the Trotskyists' trade-union work then became manifest (see "Discussions with Trotsky," in his *Writings, 1939-40*). "The Stalinists are the problem," pointed out Cannon: "By their change in line they dealt a heavy blow. We were forging ahead when they made the switch,

paralyzing our work." Despite this damaging admission, the SWP leaders were opposed to a policy of maneuver to take advantage of the new situation. Trotsky proposed critical support to the CP candidates in the 1940 elections. He had to reiterate that this was theoretically possible, since the Stalinists had made a sharp, though temporary, left turn and were just as much part of the labor movement as the equally reactionary forces in the unions with whom the Trotskyists had until then been blocking. The SWP leaders objected, saying that it would disrupt the work in the trade unions, in which what were admittedly blocs at the top with "progressives" had been necessary in order for a small force of revolutionists to come forward and begin political work in the unions. Criticizing his followers for lack of initiative, Trotsky went to the core of the problem:

"I believe we have the critical point very clear. We are in a block with the so-called progressives—not only fakers but honest rank and file. Yes, they are honest and progressive but from time to time they vote for Roosevelt—once in four years. This is decisive. You propose a trade union policy, not a Bolshevik policy. Bolshevik policies begin outside the unions... You are afraid to become compromised in the eyes of the Rooseveltian trade-unionists."

To the American leaders' protestations that their forces were too small to preserve an independent course, Trotsky said, "Our real role is that of third competitor," distinct from both Stalinists and "progressives," stating that his proposal for maneuver "presupposes that we are an independent party." Thus the discussions uncovered the fact that the Trotskyists' lack of an independent political pole in the unions, distinct from episodic blocs and united fronts around immediate issues, had compromised their general ability to maneuver and their independence as a party. They had become over-identified with their bloc partners.

In his report of these discussions to the party, Cannon agreed with most of Trotsky's points in some revealing passages, while continuing to oppose the

proposal for critical support to the CP in the elections:

"...our work in the trade unions up till now has been largely a day-to-day affair based upon the daily problems and has lacked a general political orientation and perspective. This has tended to blur the distinction between us and pure and simple trade unionists. In many cases, at times, they appeared to be one with us. It was fair weather and good fellows were together...."

"Then all of a sudden, this whole peaceful routine of the trade union movement is disrupted by overpowering issues of war, patriotism, the national elections, etc. And these trade unionists, who looked so good in ordinary times, are all turning up as patriots and Rooseveltians."

—*Socialist Appeal*, 19 October 1940

Thus the primacy of politics in trade-union work had snuck upon the SWP and clubbed it over the head. The problem had not been caused by lack of a principled struggle for the program, nor primarily by blocs which were unprincipled in character. Criticism of bureaucratic allies in the public press had sometimes been weak, but the SWP had vigorously struggled in the public domain for its program, while raising key agitational demands in the unions. The main lack had been a consistent pole, in the unions, for the struggle for the Transitional Program and against the bureaucracy in all its manifestations, i.e., a struggle for revolutionary leadership of and in the unions. Instead of developing such caucus formations as the Progressives of the UAW and the Northwest Labor Unity Conference into

political formations in opposition to the bureaucracy, as the early Communists' Trade Union Educational League had been, the Trotskyists allowed these formations to be limited politically to the character of united fronts: episodic alliances based on immediate issues. As such, not only did they not last, but the Trotskyists themselves, in the unions, became politically identified almost exclusively through these united fronts, rather than through the struggle to build the vanguard party.

Size was not a factor, since in some ways the problem was at its worst where the Trotskyists were strongest, in the Northwest Teamsters. Rather, the SWP demonstrated a lack of flexibility of tactics and an unwillingness to upset its policy of continual blocs with "progressive" trade unionists on day-to-day issues by a hard, political drive for power based on revolutionary answers to the larger issues. But the larger issues dominated the day-to-day issues, and as imperialist world war drew closer the Trotskyists had to pay the price of isolation for their earlier failure to appear as an independent force in the unions. Unfortunately, they were unable to absorb the lessons of this period sufficiently to prevent the repetition of these characteristic errors. The Trotskyists continued, especially after World War II, to rely on a policy of united fronts on trade-union issues, rather than the construction of political formations within the unions—caucuses—to mount a comprehensive fight for a full revolutionary program.

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Defend the Farmworkers!

bilingual leaflet and with slogans and banners (we were the sole group to appear with these) calling for "A General Strike to Defend the UFW"; "Armed Self-Defense of UFW Picket Lines"; "Down with the Rodino-Kennedy Bill—For an International UFW"; and demanding "Expropriate the Fields Under Workers Control." The SWP, which had provided marshals for the event, used a bullhorn to drown out the slogans chanted by the SL, while a prominent supporter of the RU, which had reportedly been red-baited by Chavez, was overheard protesting its fidelity to the UFW bureaucracy (the RU had purposefully not brought any "offensive" revolutionary literature or signs) and offering to demonstrate its servility by physically expelling SL supporters. But the offer was not taken up.

• At the "unofficial" demonstration in Oakland on the same day, the SL likewise intervened with its signs and leaflet, eliciting the same predictably hostile response from the ostensibly revolutionary organizations present (IS and WAM).

• At yet another "Boycott Safeway" demonstration on August 4 in Richmond, attended by only about 150 persons, mostly white liberals, SL/RCY supporters were met with violent hostility from the UFW organizers, who conferred with the police in an effort to have the SL contingent expelled. When the demonstration reached the Safeway store, a UFW goon tore down the SL banner, "For a General Strike to Defend the UFW," and the SL marchers were forced to picket separately from the general line.

• On the same day an SL/RCY team which went out into the fields was able to establish that this hostility was emanating from the UFW leadership not from the ranks. This team attended a UFW demonstration of about 200 farm workers at Mendota, in the Fresno melon-growing region. When the SL contingent arrived and began distributing a bilingual leaflet, it was enthusiastically received; indeed, many farm workers returned for additional copies of the leaflet. In the ensuing discussions with about 30 rank-and-file Spanish-speaking farm workers, SL supporters stressed our defense of the union while criticizing Chavez' strategy and pointing out that only a policy of

sharp class struggle, embodied in the slogans raised by the SL, could lead the union to victory. Local organizers were quite friendly; it was only when a sound truck with higher-ups arrived that a UFW organizer told the workers to throw away our leaflets. Surrounded by goons and police, the SL supporters were forced to leave.

• On August 25 trade-union supporters of the *Bay Area Worker*, an RU-backed newspaper, organized a caravan to the Merced area. As demonstrators, including the SL/RCY, were picketing the police station, the RU attempted to convince UFW leaders not to allow the SL to pass out our leaflets or sell *Workers Vanguard*. When an SL supporter, speaking in Spanish, attempted to explain our position to the farm workers, she was prevented from speaking and drowned out by RU chanting. Nevertheless, a majority of the union members received our leaflet enthusiastically. A majority of the farm workers present clustered around, eager to discuss the issues involved in the strike and the policies necessary for victory. After this had been going on for about ten minutes, the UFW leaders sent goons over to physically drag away the farm workers from the discussion, while RU supporters chanted, "Chavez si, Sparts no."

• In keeping with the SL's policy of united working-class action to defeat the attack on the Farmworkers, the SL has also distributed leaflets at the Fremont GM plant, where a large proportion of the workers are chicano and there has been a widespread desire among the rank and file to organize UAW support to the UFW. This attempt to mobilize the ranks has been opposed by the OL-supported Brotherhood Caucus, whose leaders are now demonstrating that they are bureaucrats no different from their predecessors. Thus the Brotherhood-Caucus has strongly discouraged workers from bringing up the question of the UFW at union meetings, putting exclusive emphasis on the upcoming UAW contract just like any other business unionist. All the fake "lefts" who tailed the Brotherhood in their press—notably the RU and the October League—share responsibility for this rejection of proletarian solidarity. ■

noted that the RSL claimed to have discovered the tactic of regroupment but didn't even bother to send most of its Chicago members to the debate to help expose the SL before virtually the entire SL membership. He pointed out that, given the RSL's justifications for critical support to Miller (i.e., the critical support tactic is applicable any time you want to expose a reformist leadership in the eyes of its base) the RSL must support popular fronts—after all, what's more popular than a popular front? Certainly the working masses have illusions in popular fronts! The speaker noted that the SL gives critical support to a trade-union bureaucrat only if there is a central plank in his platform which if carried out would unite the workers against the class enemy.

In his summary, the SL reporter attacked the RSL's hypocritical charge that the SL didn't write enough: the RSL knows all our positions—how did they find out? Remember that for years we and these comrades have stood on opposite sides of the class line on crucial issues. Did they really want more SL publications then? For the past fifteen years, Landy has been fighting as a Shachtmanite against Trotskyism. Now he comes here and claims he was born two months ago.

The IS had not a trace of internationalism, not a trace of identification with the working class, no discipline—just a great big "with it" blob. And here is Landy, one of the architects of every rotten IS position, and you would never know it. This self-amnesty is appalling.

The RSL has not emerged from the Shachtmanite "third camp" milieu, the SL reporter charged. This was an organizational and largely cliquish split. The documents of the RSL closely parallel many SL views. Is there in fact a tension between these views and, for example, the capitulation to Miller?

Or is this a deliberate hoax, an attempt to fake left-centrism while preserving intact the fundamental reformist appetite of the old IS?

Referring to the SWP's Internationalist Tendency, the Class Struggle League and the RSL, the reporter invited them all to get together. He noted an increasing tendency for such organizations to define themselves solely by opposition to the SL. In terms of the enormous task we face, he observed, the SL is minuscule, but to the centrists we're obtrusive, in the way we've got a press, we're in the factories, we're active internationally. To these petty centrist currents, this seems like some kind of an abomination, a crime against nature. There they are, proclaiming opportunist support to Miller and his ilk, while the SL struggles on the basis of principle. And the centrists, the capitulationists, the rotten blocs fragment while the SL continues to grow and to carry out its work. The feeling is, if you sell out, you ought to get rich.

The reporter cited the development of the Bulgarian Social Democrats before World War I. The Narrow Socialists, in this predominantly peasant country, insisted that only the working class can lead the revolution. The Broad Socialists glorified all sections of the oppressed, talked endlessly about unity. Under Comrade Dimitrov the Narrow Socialists waged perhaps 200 strikes and lost perhaps 195 of them. Yet when it was all over, the Broad Socialists were one-tenth the size of the Narrow Socialists. And academic social-democratic historians are still muttering about it.

The SL reporter concluded by remarking that there is a continuity and centrality in the outlook and work of the SL and "the thread of the future of revolutionary Marxism runs through the needle of the Spartacist League." ■

Cops Attack, Chavez Runs Defend the Farmworkers!

Events in the past two months have strikingly confirmed our warning that massive defeats and possible annihilation are in store for the Farmworkers Union so long as it follows the pacifist-defeatist policies of the Chavez leadership (see WV No. 23, 22 June 1973). Now this possibility is being realized under our very eyes, at the cost of great suffering for the thousands of UFW members and agricultural workers throughout California. The UFW policy of relying on liberal Democrats, students, housewives—on anything, in fact, but united working-class action—against the grower-Teamster offensive can only lead to catastrophe.

Beginning with the wave of sweetheart contracts negotiated by the agribusinesses with the Teamsters bureaucracy in late spring, the Spartacist League has consistently called for defense of the UFW, Teamsters out of the fields. While many allegedly socialist organizations have been more than happy to jump on the Farmworkers bandwagon against the unpopular and ultra-conservative Teamsters, the SL has been the only organization to consistently put forward a real alternative to defeat through leaflets and signs at numerous UFW support demonstrations: armed self-defense of the picket lines; for a statewide general strike to defend the UFW! With the thousands of arrests during the summer and the recent killings of two strikers by sheriff's deputies, these demands are burning issues in the fields today. The response of the other major radical organizations in the area, particularly the Maoists of the Revolutionary Union (RU) and October League (OL), however, has been uncritical endorsing for Chavez and efforts to exclude the SL from Farmworker demonstrations.

At its peak the UFW had 180 contracts representing 40,000 farm workers. This figure has now dropped to 11 contracts for 6,500 workers. The first major loss, in mid-April of this year, was in the Coachella Valley, where the growers signed sweetheart contracts with the Teamsters over the heads of the workers, enforcing them by well-paid Teamster goons recruited from motorcycle gangs. Chavez' reaction? At the 21 July UFW Delano rally he commented, "We were asked by the press if we had lost the strike in Coachella; I told them workers never lose strikes!"

The Chavez bureaucracy has been striving to conceal from the rank and file just how critical is the situation for their union for obvious reasons: a determined defense of the UFW would require farm worker militancy which would necessarily dump Chavez' turn-the-other-cheek pacifism. In order to contain any unwanted outbursts of militancy, the union leadership likes to use (instead of the soft-spoken Chavez) UFW Vice President Veracruz. This would-be charismatic misleader and consummate demagogue gave a rip-roaring speech at the Delano rally—a real call to action—with the sole omission of any concrete suggestions as to how to pursue this life-and-death struggle. Instead, while carefully avoiding any calls for labor unity, he addressed his speech to the liberals present, claiming that the UFW leadership was "building a union that will not only defend farmworkers but change society as a whole," a union that was "becoming the star of the movement of human liberation!"

While verbally saving humanity Chavez and Veracruz are busily abandoning the very gains which set the UFW contracts apart from the rotten sellouts negotiated by the Teamsters. Now Chavez is suggesting that maybe the union hiring hall isn't all that

vital after all, and that a compromise, with the growers and the union jointly administering the hall would be perfectly acceptable! Similarly, earlier this month Chavez issued a letter agreeing to another "compromise," proposed by George Meany, whereby a grower with complaints of "contract violations" against the UFW could appeal to an AFL-CIO arbitrator, who would then arrive at a final and binding decision.

Chavez Leadership Opts For Na-Win Tactics

Rather than attempt to defend the Farmworkers Union on the picket lines, the UFW leadership has always preferred the middle-class protest tactic of a consumer boycott. In addition to the fact that this time the boycott is less effective than ever, the threat to the union and its members is greater than ever. Instead of the absolutely crucial demands of an armed defense of the UFW picket lines and a statewide general strike to defend the UFW, Chavez' latest innovation is symbolic fasting and deliberate provocation of mass arrests of the Farmworker rank and file. At the Delano rally Chavez spoke with pride of his Ghandi-inspired "fill the jails" tactic, stating that in 1973 alone some 6,000 farm workers had been arrested, with roughly 1,200 currently locked up (and many subjected to beatings by racist cops), concluding happily, "and the end is not in sight!" What makes this defeatist tactic even more pathetic is that the UFW leadership rejects the militant labor action required for the union to win—armed defense of the picket lines, hot cargoing of scab grapes and lettuce, etc.—because it is "illegal" according to the bosses' laws. Yet under the current court injunctions the farmworkers are forced to break the law just in order to picket! Chavez' explanation for picking one illegal activity over another was that "these injunctions, which are unconstitutional, have to be tested." Thus Chavez announced in advance his readiness to remain within the confines of whatever anti-labor laws are currently felt to be necessary by the bourgeoisie and hence determined by the courts to be "legal."

United labor defense of the UFW is no impossible pipe dream. On 15 July 500 Teamster truck drivers struck in the Salinas area, cutting off

vegetable deliveries for weeks and causing the State Board of Agriculture to urge Nixon to intervene. Even more significant was the emergence toward the end of July of a distinct possibility of a general strike in support of the UFW when some 65,000 Teamster-organized cannery workers struck upon expiration of their contract. Many of these workers are chicanos who sympathize with the plight of the farm workers despite the attitude of the union leadership. Indeed, one of the issues in the cannery strike was the attempt by the Teamster bureaucrats to introduce into the contract a clause which would have made it possible for the union to refuse to handle UFW-picked produce. There has also been much opposition to Fitzsimmons' attack on the UFW from the Teamster rank and file, particularly in Los Angeles. Predictably, however, Chavez did not even attempt to utilize these opportunities to push for a statewide general strike in support of the UFW and against government interference in the labor movement. Instead, he further demonstrated his subservience to capitalist law-and-order by going back to the same courts which outlaw UFW pickets in order to sue the Teamsters. He has also announced readiness to place the UFW under the jurisdiction of the NLRB, which among other things administers the anti-communist, anti-labor Talt-Hartley Act.

The UFW leadership's pacifist tactics, the most militant of which have been its impotent one-hour-long picketing of a few Saleway stores, have resulted in an unbroken chain of defeats for the Farmworkers, as grower after grower has signed with the Teamsters. The sudden display of a "conciliatory" attitude by Fitzsimmons, who on August 10 repudiated 30 contracts negotiated by Teamster field agents in the Delano area, does not alter the essentials of this situation. A UFW which exists on the tolerance of the Teamsters and has abandoned the gains of the early UFW contracts (especially the union hiring hall) is just as thoroughly defeated—and just as acceptable to the growers—as if it had been completely smashed. Indeed, the existence of two sellout unions in a single industry, competing for whatever pittance the growers decide to cast them, is probably preferable for the corporate giants of California agribusiness. (Fitzsimmons has not disavowed contracts outside the imme-

diate area of Delano, the old home base of the UFW.)

SL Defends UFW, Attacks Bureaucratic Misleadership

While criticizing the Chavez leadership for setting the stage for defeat after defeat, the Spartacist League and Revolutionary Communist Youth have at the same time been among the most active organizations on the left in defending the struggle of the Farmworkers. Moreover, out of all these ostensible revolutionists, the SL/RCY alone have not capitulated before the Chavez bureaucracy and the pressure of bourgeois liberal public opinion: the SWP, the IS, PL/WAM, the RU and the October League have abjectly tailed after Chavez, while the pitiful Workers League has contented itself with sideline commentary.

The capitulation of these fake "lefts" is all the more disgusting since the UFW bureaucracy obviously fears the effect of radical propaganda on the Farmworker ranks, given the increasingly obvious failure of its own social-pacifist tactics.

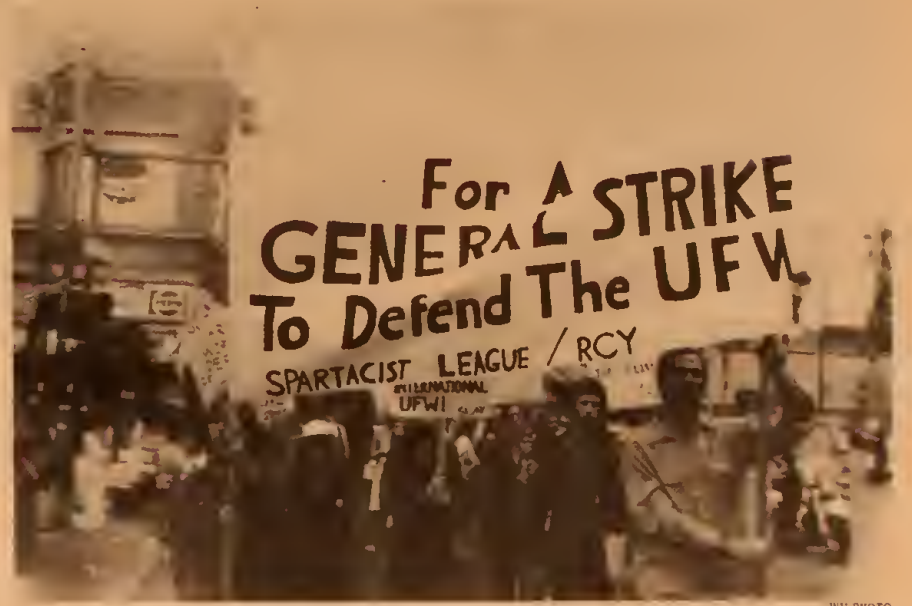
Thus after revelations by the CP's *People's World* that the Oakland "Strike Support Committee" was actually under the control of "dangerous radicals," Chavez disavowed the 28 July Oakland Safeway march on the grounds that "If you don't work with the [UFW] boycott committee, we don't want your help." Similarly, UFW organizers have twice asked union members not to read SL/RCY leaflets, but without success.

The SL/RCY have, in contrast, shown themselves capable of combining active, militant defense of the UFW against the companies, the cops and the Teamster bureaucrats with the vital struggle against the sellout leadership:

- At the July 21 Delano rally a contingent from the Bay Area and Los Angeles SL/RCY were alone in introducing class-struggle slogans into the purely symbolic march. Signs carried by SL supporters read: "Defend the UFW—Teamsters out of the Fields"; "For a General Strike against Union-Busting"; "For Workers Militias"; and "Expropriate Industry under Workers Control!"

- At the July 28 "official" demonstration in San Francisco, which drew well under 1,000 persons (Chavez was careful not to mobilize the Farmworker ranks), the SL/RCY criticized the impotent "Boycott Saleway" tactics in a

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