

# Auto, Airline Workers Face Massive Layoffs

## A SOCIALIST PROGRAM TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

During the last three weeks there have been numerous articles in the bourgeois press announcing an impending "fuel-crisis" recession. Both Britain and Japan are in the throes of a sharp economic crisis, while in the U.S. both auto and airline workers face the threat of immediate unemployment. "Auto slump, layoffs grow with fuel crisis," declared the headline in the 5 December *Detroit News*. As layoff announcements snowballed the paper reported five days later that "62,000 layoffs may be only beginning." The article continued: "Over 62,000 workers in Michigan are among the 200,000 nationally who are being laid off temporarily or indefinitely by General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, mostly because of decreasing sales. Auto analysts are forecasting that sales could decline 13 percent or more in 1974..." (*Detroit News*, 10 December). Meanwhile announcements of layoffs were being issued by airlines as well. United Airlines announced terminations of over 1,000 workers for early January, as Eastern was reportedly planning to sack as many as 5,000 by the end of 1973. And although seasonal unemployment is standard for the auto industry, reports of an impending serious recession raised the spectre of massive indefinite layoffs for millions of workers. The draconian measures of the British government in ordering a three-day workweek (in other words, a 40 percent pay cut) give an idea of the seriousness of the situation. Unemployment is today a problem that any force pretending to represent the workers' interests must have an answer for.

Periods of massive long-term unemployment are one of the most pernicious aspects of capitalist exploitation. Pleading excuses such as the need to "balance inventories" or "foreign competition," the bourgeoisie forces the working class to pay the costs of marketplace anarchy by periodically driving large numbers out of productive labor, forcing the unemployed to subsist on charity or the public dole. The auto industry is a classic example of this destructive anarchy. Only three months ago the "Big Three" were pushing their workers at a backbreaking pace, with compulsory overtime for 10-hour days and six-day weeks (with 12-hour days, seven days a week in many foundries and repair sections). Now it has laid off fully one-fourth of the production workers in the industry (200,000 out of 800,000), with a prospect of long months of unemployment for tens of thousands!

### Fuel Crisis and Mass Unemployment

The government is now estimating a 6 percent jobless rate for 1974, but many economists already reject such figures as far too low. While the official unemployment rate (which understates actual unemployment by about one-third) went up "only" 0.2 percent in November (to 4.7 percent), this represents an additional 195,000 jobless workers. The full effects of the fuel

crisis cutbacks, however, will not appear in the statistics until February. In the meantime, unemployment in key industrial states such as Michigan is already well over 6 percent, and official predictions are that it may double, with more than half a million unemployed in the state, topping the 1958 recession rate of 12 percent. Blacks, other minorities and youth will be the hardest hit, and unemployment for these groups is already at recession levels: over 9 percent for Michigan blacks and 14 percent for teenagers.

In addition to auto workers, airline employees have been the hardest hit by

layoffs so far. While the companies all plead poverty and blame the fuel shortage, this is in large part a convenient excuse. While profits are at record levels throughout American industry, the major airlines were already planning and instituting cutbacks in service to eliminate the less profitable runs and increase the rate of occupancy by less frequent service. The layoff announcements by United in early December led to a number of workers joining TWA strikers on the picket lines at Kennedy airport in a strike which was threatening to spread industry-wide, before its settlement later in the month. (The TWA strikers picketed other airlines to protest the industry's anti-

strike mutual-aid pact.)

While the airlines were using the "energy crisis" as an excuse for carrying out planned cutbacks, General Motors carefully geared its layoff announcements to contract talks, announcing the first round shortly before GM workers' ratification votes. The company announcement that 16 of its plants would close for a week before Christmas, with more layoffs probable in 1974, came after the gradual sputtering out of the Ford workers' (largely leaderless) rebellion in early November, producing the desired effect of pushing through the sellout contract and dampening any opposition to the UAW tops.

*continued on page 10*

## Protesting Nixon/Oil Company Price Gouging

# Truckers Tie Up U.S. Highways



Truckers block Delaware River Bridge in December.

In angry response to drastic increases of fuel prices (up almost 35 percent during November alone) and Nixon's support for the oil monopolies in the so-called "energy crisis," thousands of independent (owner-operator) truckers tied up the nation's highways last month. The movement began with scattered "stall-ins" on the Interstate highways in Ohio and Pennsylvania, traditionally centers of truckers' unrest, and a mammoth blockade of the Delaware River Bridge and New Jersey Turnpike on December 5 which reportedly involved some 1,800 trucks and a 12-mile traffic jam.

After unsatisfactory negotiations with Nixon's Transportation Secretary Brinegar, a group claiming to represent the protesting independent truckers called for a two-day stoppage the following week. Tie-ups of truck stops and key intersections were largely effective in Ohio (where state police reported 85 violent incidents, half of them shootings) but sporadic elsewhere. In the end this produced nothing but temporary increases in diesel fuel allocations and some token checks of price gouging by the Internal Revenue Service. A few days later, however, Teamsters Union President Fitzsimmons announced the reopening of contract talks for over-the-road drivers who, since they are paid by the mile, have suffered a 10-20 percent wage cut as a result of reduced speed limits.

These protests were among the first signs of an impending sharp economic crisis resulting from fuel cutbacks and a cyclical recession which was widely predicted to hit in early 1974 even before the recent Arab oil boycott. Toward the end of December the Nixon administration announced it was preparing a stand-by rationing system and cutting gasoline supplies by 20 percent for January. Meanwhile, layoff announcements proliferated, with General Motors sacking 38,000 employees (roughly 10 percent of its production workers) indefinitely. After a 2-1/2 year boom economists are now predicting a zero growth rate for the first quarter of 1974, accompanied by simultaneously increasing inflation and unemployment.

### Truckers' Grievances

The backbone of the protests was provided by unorganized militants among the 100,000 owner-operators who haul long-distance freight on contract from shippers and brokers. Among these are 25,000 independent steel haulers who are a special section of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and whose rates are negotiated by the union. Additionally, the over-the-road company drivers, who are the heart of the IBT's Master Freight Agreement, cooperated in many places in protesting the reduction of speed limits to 50 and 55 mph. While the independents and over-the-road drivers are relatively well-paid (the latter making an average of \$25,000 a year and the former somewhat more than that), they all face grueling working conditions. A

*continued on page 9*

## Israeli Trotskyist on

# The 1948 Arab-Israel War

...page 6



# Spartacist League Debates CSL in Chicago

CHICAGO—On December 9 the Spartacist League and Class Struggle League debated here the question of "The Vanguard Party and the Working Class." Speaking for the SL was Steven Green and for the CSL one Henry Platsky. Above all the debate demonstrated the changing relation between the two organizations over the past year and a half. While the SL has remained firm in its struggle for programmatic clarity, leading it to reject the CSL's proposal of an unprincipled fusion in 1972, the CSL has continued its policies of rotten combinationism while moving steadily to the right.

The present CSL is the result of a fusion last April between leaders of the former Leninist Faction of the SWP and Harry Turner's minuscule Vanguard Newsletter group. It was interesting to note that attending the debate were more former members of the LF who are now SLers than were present from the CSL. This unusual relationship of forces (small groups normally recruit from the larger, but here it has been the reverse) is particularly galling to the CSL leaders who, despite their various formulae for winning instant mass support, have been faced over the past 18 months with a substantial hemorrhaging of their followers. The audience provided "living" proof that opportunism does not always pay, even in the short run.

Rather than arguing about programmatic differences over the question of the party and the class, Platsky spent virtually his entire presentation elaborating a theory that the SWP had degenerated into centrism in the 1948-53 period. According to Platsky, the Spartacist League "came out of the bad school and they still practice and teach that school—they teach the politics of the SWP of the '50's, the deformed centrist school." The CSL attached great importance to this theory, believing that it definitively refuted the SL's claim to represent the historical continuity of Trotskyism. (As an SL supporter—and former CSLer—noted in the discussion period, this argument amounts to asserting original sin: the SWP was centrist, therefore so is the SL.)

While the SWP made errors in the late 1940's and 1950's, Platsky could

not point to a single decisive event which codified a qualitative break with Trotskyism. Such eclectic arguments are unable to explain the SWP's healthy rejection of Pablo's liquidationism in 1953. (In fact, Platsky argues in the November *Class Struggle* that "against Cannon's 'anti-Stalinism,' the Cochranites conciliationism [sic] seemed almost revolutionary by comparison!" But, Brother Platsky, the Cochranites were mouthing Pablo's views of adapting to the Stalinists while Cannon fought to preserve the very existence of the Fourth International.) An SL supporter noted in the discussion that the SWP was revolutionary enough to support the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, while Platsky has the ultra-Pabloist Stalinism-is-the-road-to-socialism position of supporting Khrushchev's crushing of the workers councils!

Another highlight of the debate was Platsky's attempt to reconcile CSLer Barbara Vukovich's position that a labor party led by reformist bureaucrats like Arnold Miller would be a "step forward" with Platsky's own statement that Miller was "conducting guerrilla warfare on the rank and file." Said Platsky, "Miller will betray the class—of course he will—that's why we give him critical support!"

The debate also concerned international questions. The CSL's only serious intervention into the world Trotskyist movement occurred last spring when it gave fulsome support to the German group Spartacus-BL in its split with the IKD (Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands). At that time Platsky denounced our "neutrality," i.e., our refusal to support either side since neither stood fundamentally closer than the other to the programmatic positions of the Spartacist tendency. (Platsky and Co. had of course been only too happy to back the side where they thought they had an "in" and declare it qualitatively superior.) When Green informed the assembled CSLers that the two German groups are now conducting fusion negotiations, they sat in stunned silence.

Green asked how it was that the CSL—which has so vehemently attacked the SL's orientation toward regrouping leftward-moving, subjectively revolutionary elements in other left groups around the program of Trotskyism as "petty-bourgeois"—has found it necessary to devote ten articles in the 11 issues of its newspaper to the SL (including two centerfolds). Could it be that the CSL is coming to realize that workers are also interested in politics and therefore affected by various socialist political currents? It seems more likely that these workerists, who make a false dichotomy between the left (as petty-bourgeois) and the working class (as virginally pure), have been forced to fight for their very survival against opposing political tendencies.

And why this obsession with the SL? First, the SL represents the largest and fastest-growing tendency which claims to represent Trotskyist orthodoxy against Pabloist revisionism. Unfortunately for the CSL, this growth is not the result of adaptationism toward various petty-bourgeois trends (Maoism, guerrillaism, workerism, etc.) but of principled struggle for the program of working-class independence. Second is the fact that, as an SL supporter put it, "Almost to a man they [the CSLers] seem to be people who have bounced off the SL. The LF had the program of the SL but couldn't quite make it and retreated—that was the central basis of the [ex-LF/VNL] fusion, essentially an anti-Spartacist tendency!" ■

## Correction

In the article "Harvester Strike Called Off," in *WV* No. 32, 9 November 1973, we stated that Workers Voice, a syndicalist group in UAW Local 6, and Local 6 President Roth "endorsed Reverend Jesse Jackson's government financed PUSH coalition...." Actually, Workers Voice and Roth endorsed the Coalition for Jobs and Economic Justice (CJEC), which was created by Jackson's PUSH coalition and the UAW bureaucracy.

## Resolution of Militant Caucus of AFSCME Local 2070

### For An Immediate Presidential Election!

### For A Workers Party!

WHEREAS, it is clear that Nixon has committed crimes against the international working class through Watergate, anti-working class policies, and most importantly with the murder of thousands of workers and peasants in Indochina, and

WHEREAS, workers in this country cannot accept simply the replacement of Nixon by another Republican or Democrat who represents the self-same capitalist interests, and

WHEREAS, AFSCME local 2070 has already gone on record supporting the impeachment of the president, be it therefore

RESOLVED, that local 2070's delegates to the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor present a motion to the body calling for a united labor rally to include participation by all independent unions to raise the following demands:

*Oust Nixon! For an immediate presidential election! Break with the Republicans and Democrats! For a workers party based on the trade unions!*

## MAHWAH FORD

### Defend Wilbur Haddock and Fired UAW Militants

One of the many fired victims of the repression against rank-and-file militants and leftists at the Mahwah, New Jersey Ford plant is Wilbur Haddock, a leader of the United Black Workers (UBW) of Local 906 and a militant in the plant since 1958. His arbitrary firing last March was part of a pattern of company provocations that later led to an abortive wildcat strike.

Haddock was one of three singled out and fired in 1969 for allegedly leading an anti-racism protest in which black workers demonstrated on the highway leading into the plant. Along with the others who had been singled out for persecution he was rehired through union pressure and he ran for president of the local in 1972 on a program of militant trade-union reformism. However, the company continued to harass the victims it had picked out. When Haddock was fired again last year he was the last remaining of the 1969 "leaders."

There followed a series of firings and walkouts over excessive heat in the early summer, until finally the sacking of UAW local vice president Dave Gardner led to a brief wildcat strike. The local leadership under Joseph Reilly not only refused to lead the strike, but even heightened its vicious red-baiting against the militants.

#### "Compony-Union Conspiracy"

The wildcat was followed by yet more firings and victimizations—involving at least 30 firings and 450 cases of disciplining directly connected to the protests. A clear pattern emerged: those fired were not just anti-company militants, of which there were many, but potential and real opponents of the Reilly regime in the local. All the leaders of the Rank and File Caucus (politically backed by the reformist Communist Party) were fired. All the members of the Workers Action Movement (WAM—supported by Progressive Labor) were eliminated. All existing caucuses were wiped out. Gardner (whose case was irrevocably lost through the union's "umpire" arbitration procedure) and John Leitsy, a trustee of the union who was fired after the wildcat, had been the two biggest vote-getters of all candidates in the previous union elections and were rumored to be seeking Reilly's job. The UBW's conclusion in the Haddock case, that "there is a deliberate conspiracy taking place by both the company and union officials to deny him his job and proper representation," is precisely correct.

The entire labor movement has an interest in defending Haddock and protesting the betrayals of the Local 906 bureaucracy. What is needed is a united defense of all the victims of the 1973 wave of firings (which is still continuing). Unfortunately, the UBW has not sought to build such a united defense, nor to confront the bureaucracy within the union on its failure to vigorously defend the victimized militants. Moreover, it has apparently sued both the company and the union in the bourgeois courts. The UBW circular on Haddock states that "only after pressure was brought on the company and union officials by a suit filed with the Labor Relations Board and the State Civil Rights Commission," was Haddock's mysteriously "lost" grievance "found" again. Militants who consistently stand on the side of the working class must oppose the intervention of the capitalist courts in the unions. Not only does such intervention in the long run harm the cause of the independence of the labor movement from the state, but in the short run it seldom aids the oppositionists.

The UBW specifically requests that letters of protest be sent to both the company and the union, making no distinction between a demonstration of solidarity against the class enemy and a protest against bureaucratism within the workers movement. Since real defense depends on labor action, and letters of protest to the company are likely to have about as much effect as the proverbial "letter to your congressman" urged for every ill by liberals and the Communist Party, we suggest letters of protest to the union. These should oppose red-baiting and racism as divisive forces within the labor movement and demand, in the name of labor solidarity against the companies, that immediate action be taken to restore the job of Wilbur Haddock and all the fired victims of the 1973 events. (The UBW requests copies of all letters of protest on the Haddock case):

Joseph Reilly, President  
UAW Local 906  
156 Valley Road  
Mahwah, New Jersey 07430

(copies to) Wilbur Haddock  
United Black Workers  
P.O. Box 1855  
Newark, New Jersey 07101

## WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Bi-weekly of the Spartacist League

#### Editorial Board:

Liz Gordon (chairman)  
Jan Norden (managing editor)  
Chris Knox (labor editor)  
Karen Allen (production manager)  
Joseph Seymour

Circulation Manager: Anne Kelley

West Coast Editor: Mark Small  
Southern Editor: Joe Vetter  
Midwest Editor: Steve Green

Published by the Spartacist Publishing Company, Box 1377, G. P. O., New York, N. Y. 10001. Telephone: 925-8234.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.



# RSL Claims Russia Is Capitalist

On December 15 the Spartacist League and Revolutionary Socialist League debated in New York the class nature of the Soviet Union—a degenerated workers state or state capitalism? In the debate the SL defended the position of revolutionary Trotskyism, calling for a *political revolution* to overthrow the rapacious bureaucracy and at the same time for *unconditional defense of the USSR* and the conquests of the October Revolution against imperialist attack. The RSL, in contrast, expounded the social-democratic program of Shachtmanism, maintaining there is no qualitative difference between "state-capitalist" Russia and any other capitalist state. Speakers for the SL pointed out repeatedly that this anti-Marxist position leads straight to "State-Department socialism" and support for bourgeois counterrevolution in the USSR. The RSL's ability to put a left face on this bankrupt theory is a temporary product of the U.S.-USSR "detente": as soon as fundamental class realities assert themselves with sharp conflicts between the imperialists and the Stalinist-ruled states, the fundamental anti-Sovietism of this "theory" will be nakedly revealed.

Leading off the debate, Joe Drummond, speaking for the Spartacist League, pointed out that the RSL's "state capitalism" was nothing more than a change in terminology from Shachtman's "bureaucratic collectivism" and, if anything, a theory even farther from Marxism than the latter's rantings about a new totalitarian class society. At least Shachtman didn't try to assert the absurd proposition that the bureaucracy was made up of capitalists.

"The orthodox Trotskyist position on the Russian question," he went on, "is the following: that Russia represents a degenerated workers state. The Trotskyists seek a political revolution against the bureaucracy, while maintaining the gains of the October Revolution, the nationalized property forms, the planned economy, state monopoly of foreign trade. At the same time we unconditionally defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack."

In contrast to the petty-bourgeois moralists of the RSL who see only the

fact that the bureaucracy is parasitic, and therefore want to label it "capitalist" in order to express their outrage, "The advantage of Trotsky's analysis... is that he dialectically posed the question.... His perspective started from the viewpoint that the bureaucracy was a contradictory, transitory phenomenon." Responding to the RSL's claim that if the SL defends nationalized property forms, this must mean that nationalized property defines a workers state, Drummond noted: "Trotsky's method... was not the

nant of workers' power and established a new class power of its own" (Max Shachtman, "The Struggle for the New Course").

What is this supposed fundamental distinction between property forms and relations of production? This false dichotomy was already demolished by George Novack and John G. Wright in 1951, writing against the Johnson-Forrest tendency of the SWP, who also held that Russia was state capitalist. Novack and Wright explained that these two terms are "but two expressions of

"The October Revolution was accomplished for the sake of the toilers and not for the sake of new parasites. But due to the lag of the world revolution, due to the fatigue and, to a large measure, the backwardness of the Russian workers and especially the Russian peasants, there raised itself over the Soviet Republic and against its peoples a new oppressive and parasitic caste, whose leader is Stalin...."

"But, fortunately, among the surviving conquests of the October Revolution are the nationalized industry and the collectivized Soviet economy. Upon this foundation workers' soviets can build a new and happier society. This foundation cannot be surrendered by us to the world bourgeoisie under any conditions. It is the duty of revolutionists to defend tooth and nail every position gained by the working class, whether it involves democratic rights, wage scales, or so colossal a conquest of mankind as the nationalization of the means of production and planned economy. Those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones. Against the imperialist foe we will defend the USSR with all our might. However, the conquests of the October Revolution will serve the people only if they prove themselves capable of dealing with the Stalinist bureaucracy, as in their day they dealt with the czarist bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie."

—L.D. Trotsky, "Letter to the Workers of the USSR," 1940

RSL's method; that is to abstractly ask whether or not nationalized property forms were progressive in themselves. The RSL baits us, well if the Labour Party nationalized industry in Britain, would that make it a deformed workers state? The major difference is that in Russia, in China, in Cuba, in Eastern Europe, the bourgeoisie was smashed, they were sent packing, their state was smashed, and the nationalized property forms filled up that vacuum."

The SL speaker also challenged the RSL to answer a number of questions about its position (which it has not yet explained in writing): is state capitalism some new productive mode distinct from "plain old" capitalism, and if so what is its historic role? Also, "in an anti-bureaucratic revolution what would the RSL do differently from us, besides beating their chests about how they're going to overthrow the capitalists and we're only going to overthrow that poor measly bureaucracy." And when the RSL places the definitive turn in 1928 or, as they did in the discussion, with a civil war (which no one noticed at the time) during the Moscow Trials of 1936-38, then how does it characterize the USSR until then, since the proletariat was politically expropriated with Stalin's triumph in 1924?

## Property Forms vs. Production Relations?

Jack Gregory, speaking for the RSL, began his presentation by attacking the SL for fetishizing property forms and ignoring the law of value. "We are told that the gains of the October Revolution are nationalized property forms, economic planning, monopoly of foreign trade. We are talked at about property relations, property relations, property relations...." he complained, retorting: "What about the relations of production?" Repeatedly during the discussion the RSL maintained, like Shachtman, that the class character of property is determined solely by who controls the state apparatus. And along with Shachtman they claim that the property foundations of the USSR fundamentally changed their class character during the Moscow Trials when "the new bureaucracy smashed the last rem-

nant of workers' power and established a new class power of its own" (Max Shachtman, "The Struggle for the New Course").

This position was not simply invented by the SWP majority but is in fact part of the ABC of Marxism. In his famous preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, Marx wrote: "At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work before."

In contrast to the RSL and Johnson-Forrest, who want to deprive the term capitalism of any scientific meaning, simply reducing it to an epithet, Novack and Wright stated unequivocally: "Capitalist production, exchange, accumulation could not take place without the private ownership of the means of production any more than slavery could operate without chattel slaves or feudalism with serfdom.... In our day the further growth of the productive forces is fettered by capitalist property forms (or productive relations). New property forms are required, nationalized property. That is why Marx and Engels insisted that the transition to socialism could not be achieved except through centralizing 'all the instruments of production in the hands of the state'."

Concerning the relation of "state capitalism" to Shachtmanism, they went on: "Among those who have committed the same error is, incidentally, Shachtman. According to the latter, the Stalinist bureaucracy has 'established new property relations while retaining more or less intact the old property forms (i.e., state property) and thereby set up' a 'new social order' (*New International*, September 1942)." With regard to the Trotskyists' supposed idol worship of nationalized property, they note that "The Communist Manifesto is unambiguous on this score. It states that 'the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.' In order to replace it by what? By nationalized property" (William F. Warde [George Novack] and John G. Wright, "Marxist

Method and Ideas and the Method and Ideas of Johnson-Forrest," [SWP] *Discussion Bulletin* No. 7, April 1951).

## What is the Law of Motion of the Soviet Economy?

Another glaring example of the RSL's preposterous attempt to apply Marx's analytical categories relating to capitalism to the USSR was Gregory's challenge to the SL to explain the "law of motion" of Soviet society. This is a terminological absurdity, for the law of motion is applicable only to capitalist society, where the social relations of men are masked by their positions in the relations of production, and where the economic evolution of society is determined by blindly operating forces which are independent even of the will of the capitalists. Repeatedly, Gregory asserted that "the worker is paid at value" and asked why the bureaucracy did not raise the wages above value "if only a bit." According to the RSL, the Trotskyist analysis could not explain why the Soviet Union's economy is stagnating today. The RSL's answer? "The falling rate of profit" is at work!

These pseudo-Marxists fail to understand that the economics of transitional societies have a dual character and that in Russia ever since the victory over the kulaks in the mid-1930's, the planning principle has been predominant. (However, with the free market for consumer goods, the law of value continues to operate in sectors of the Soviet economy, and the Yugoslav case demonstrates that the deformed workers states are still far from the definitive triumph of the planning principle.) There is no economic law of motion of the USSR. Its fate will be determined by the progress of world revolution; or if not, by the triumph of barbarism on a world scale and devastating counterrevolution in the deformed workers states. The fundamental conflict in the USSR today is a political struggle between the working class and the bureaucracy for control of the state apparatus. Thus when the living standards of Russian workers were raised under Malenkov and Khrushchev it was because of a decision of the bureaucracy, not because the law of value temporarily ceased to operate or some such other bocus-pocus. As for the current decline in the growth of the Soviet economy, it is clearly due to the incredible bureaucratic deformations of the planning which, as Trotsky foresaw, beyond a certain low level of industrialization absolutely requires democratic control by the working class if it is to be at all successful.

For the rest of his time, the RSL speaker wallowed in petty-bourgeois moralizing, noting that if economic growth was so important, the SL should support Brazil; the Keynesians centralize, so the SL should support Keynesianism, etc. Of course, for the Shachtmanites who cannot grasp the class difference between Brazil (where the bourgeoisie controls the state) and Cuba (whose bourgeoisie is now sitting in Miami), such absurd questions do seem disturbing. Having eliminated all scientific economic content from the term capitalism, what indeed is the difference between Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia?

After noting that the piecework system had been reintroduced in the Soviet Union and capital was being imported from the West in greater and greater quantities, the speaker went on at length about how accumulation was constantly increasing in the Soviet Union. (As SL supporters noted in the discussion, it was Trotsky who had favored the import of more capital from the West, and Stalin who had believed he could build "socialism" by sealing off Russia economically. Moreover, how could the RSL claim to be Trotskyist with all this whining over accumulation—the level of accumulation and rate of productivity are too low in the USSR, not too high!) To sum up he announced, as if it demolished all opposition, that the Chase Manhattan Bank had just

continued on page 11

## Spartacist Local Directory

- BERKELEY**—  
OAKLAND..... (415) 653-4668  
Box 852, Main P.O.  
Berkeley, CA 94701
- BOSTON**..... (617) 492-3928  
Box 188, M.I.T. Sta.  
Cambridge, MA 02139
- BUFFALO**..... (716) 837-1854  
Box 412, Station C  
Buffalo, NY 14209
- CHICAGO**..... (312) 728-2151  
Box 6471, Main P.O.  
Chicago, IL 60680
- CLEVELAND**..... (216) 651-9147  
Box 6765  
Cleveland, OH 44101
- DETROIT**..... (313) 921-4626  
Box 663A, General P.O.  
Detroit, MI 48232
- LOS ANGELES**..... (213) 467-6855  
Box 38053, Wilcox Sta.  
Los Angeles, CA 90038
- NEW ORLEANS**..... (504) 866-8384  
Box 51634, Main P.O.  
New Orleans, LA 70151
- NEW YORK**..... (212) 925-2426  
Box 2377, G.P.O.  
New York, NY 10001
- SAN DIEGO**..... (714) 272-2286  
Box 22052, Univ. City Sta.  
San Diego, CA 92122
- SAN FRANCISCO**..... (415) 653-4668  
Box 1757  
San Francisco, CA 94101



## UMW Holds Pittsburgh Convention

# Miller Polices Miners for Companies

CLEVELAND—The United Mine Workers' convention, held in Pittsburgh from December 3 to 14, provided ample proof for those not yet convinced that the victory of "reformer" Arnold Miller in the December 1972 union elections just replaced one bureaucracy with another. True, the Boyle operation was an incredibly venal gangster regime while Miller and Co. go to great lengths to give themselves a popular image, talking endlessly of safety and democracy. But this only makes the regime more pernicious, awakening illusions among the ranks, while the new UMWA tops refuse to lead a real battle against the corporations and their government. In fact, the policies of the ex-Miners for Democracy (MFD) now in power have been to rely ever more heavily on Nixon's Labor Department and Bureau of Mines, while forcing the membership to put up with the rotten contract foisted on it by Boyle's gang of crooks.

Although Miller's election victory was based on suing the union in the bourgeois courts to force a new election, most of the supposedly socialist left dutifully tagged along like obedient lapdogs after the demagogic claims of the MFD. But while he talked much of "democracy" Miller very carefully avoided basing his candidacy on an organized militant opposition with a class-struggle program, which might as easily sweep him out of office as it swept him in. Instead, like other would-be bureaucrats (such as the United National Caucus in the auto union or the Morrissey clique in the NMU), Miller sought victory by promising something to each of the various interest groups in the union (pensioners, strip miners, etc.). To ensure the bourgeoisie of his dependability he similarly worked closely with the Labor Department and according to the instructions of his liberal lawyers.

The Spartacist League pointed out soon after the election (see WV No. 17, March 1973) that the reformers' election victory would in no way propel the rank and file toward revolutionary politics. On the contrary, it would introduce further obstacles to the miners' struggle by binding the union even more closely to the bourgeois state. Unlike the UNC and similar reformists, the "progressive" Miller did not even need a "maximum program" of radical-sounding demands to attract militant support, while preserving a tamer "minimum program" to reassure the timid. The incredible bankruptcy and stench of the Boyle regime was sufficient to line up both the U.S. government and most of the ostensibly revolutionary left behind the same candidate!

### Miller and Militancy

Miller's first year in office, culminating in the recent convention, offers clear and ample proof that it is necessary to make a conscious break with class collaboration in order to transform the trade unions from weapons of the capitalists to discipline the rank and file into instruments of the working class in pursuit of its revolutionary interests. Very early on Miller made his attitude toward militancy plain to all. In the 15 February 1973 *UMW Journal* he asks the miners to eschew irresponsible wildcats in favor of the established grievance procedure. Alluding to rumored "imperfections" in this cumbersome mechanism, he goes on: "I did not negotiate the current contract and believe we can win improvements in many areas when it expires in 18 [:] months. Until then, we're going to have to make the companies live up to the contract just as we must."

Don't miss that last part! In short, the miners are obliged to honor contracts which were negotiated by the gangster Boyle when the membership



Arnold Miller

was bound, hand and foot. Democracy, it seems, is second to a higher principle: a pathetic respect for bourgeois legality.

Admitting that the number of wildcats had not declined since Miller assumed office, the UMWA bureaucracy unfolded an elaborate campaign aimed at dampening local militancy. On the one hand the "new team" sought the cooperation of the coal operators, holding a series of meetings with company officials throughout the mining districts "to discuss the grievance machinery." This effort was particularly aimed at the troublesome District 31 (northeastern West Virginia). The second prong of this effort to improve conditions within the existing framework was exerting pressure on state inspection agencies to decertify supervisors who are remiss in enforcing safety standards. At the same time the union lawyers are trying to convince the Supreme Court of the miners' right to strike when they believe their safety is endangered. (Good luck!)

The real thrust of the campaign is described in an article "Wildcat Strikes" in the 1-15 August issue of the *UMW Journal*. After demagogically hinting that miners who strike without the permission of the International are responsible for depleting UMWA welfare and retirement fund royalties and for upsetting the union drive to "make the grievance machinery work," the article goes on to describe Miller's proposed changes. These range from the most minimal reforms like clarifying the language to others which would actually strengthen the company's hand (in the guise of getting "speedy, impartial" settlements).

Thus it is suggested that foremen be given more leeway so that they can adjudicate matters on the spot! Faith in the discredited umpires is to be restored by creating a three-umpire panel, one from management, one from the union and then that ubiquitous third party representing the "public interest." Such "neutrals," however, invariably end up supporting the "general interests" of bourgeois society. The demand for more committees is rejected on the absurd ground that many locals do not collect enough in dues to pay for additional committeemen. (They collected enough to keep Boyle and his cronies rolling in money for years.)

Wildcats are generally symptomatic of unorganized frustration and often result in failure. A class-struggle opposition in the unions must seek not to dissipate anger in endless partial walk-outs which result in large numbers of firings and few real benefits. But we nevertheless support wildcats against the rapacious companies and vigorously oppose efforts by the union bureaucracy to suppress them. Miller, far from

wanting to unify the ranks for a determined struggle against the operators, is instead trying to get dissatisfied militants to put their faith in the courts, just as he did. The way to build for a successful strike in 1974 is not to smash these outbursts of dissatisfaction but to put the whole strength of the union into winning the most important local strikes.

While the wildcat issue only made the floor of the convention once, everyone knew it was there. And the one mention was not insignificant. In the report of the constitution committee there was an ominous-sounding amendment stating: "The autonomy of a District or Local Union may be suspended or limited... to assure performance or enforcement of collective bargaining agreements..." Miller's buddies were able to whip up enough support to win a close vote on this strike-breaking clause by exhorting the members to have faith in their leadership and by promising to use this weapon only against evil bureaucrats like Boyle, never against the good rank and file. However, on the last day of the convention the delegates turned down Miller's "streamlined" grievance procedure.

### The High Cost of Class Collaboration

The use of the bourgeois courts against the unions not only subordinates the trade unions to the capitalist class, it also costs a lot in the short run. An interesting example in this regard is the "Rauh incident" at the convention. This arose when one of the dele-

gates angrily demanded that Joseph Rauh, who had just finished addressing the convention, account for a bill of \$300,000 he had reputedly submitted to the UMWA for his efforts as the legal wizard of the Miners for Democracy. Miller feigned ignorance while Rauh remained silent. Later, in a press conference, however, he was happy to explain.

As attorney for the MFD, and with its backing, he had billed the then Boyle-led union for his services in cleaning it up for the government. His goal was to have the courts rule that such claims must be paid under the anti-labor Landrum-Griffin Act. After the usual appeals, the Supreme Court ruled last year in his favor, which Rauh, of course, described as a great victory. Unfortunately, in the meantime the UMWA regime had changed and thus the bill was submitted to Joseph's good friend Arnold: "\$100,000, give or take \$25,000," to Mr. Rauh, an unspecified amount to this attorney and a donation to a "Fund for Union Democracy" to be administered by some bourgeois civil liberties group. The miners were understandably outraged and Miller understandably embarrassed. Seeing that this was not the time to press an unpleasant subject, Rauh, for his part, was in a generous mood, conceding that he would not prosecute the union if it failed to pay up.

Miller knows that the courts are not popular among the miners. (In fact, a good part of the substantial vote for Boyle in the elections came from members who didn't want outsiders like the courts interfering in their union.) So at

## Miller Uses Comics in Campaign Against Wildcats





an appropriate opportunity during the proceedings he launched into a demagogic speech, proclaiming, "The courts, in my opinion, have never been fair to the working man, particularly the coal miner. We have to abide by the labor laws. We didn't write them. We must work to repeal labor laws, if we can..." Mr. Miller's sudden disillusionment with bourgeois justice is, indeed, sad. But he might inform his newspaper editor to spread the word, since the *UMW Journal* currently looks as much like a legal trade paper as a union organ, so many court cases is it covering.

### The Convention: Trovesty of Workers Democracy

Despite all of the hullabaloo about democracy during the 1972 UMWA elections, there was precious little of it in evidence during the convention. Conspicuously absent was any rank-and-file opposition, despite a year of repeated guerrilla warfare between the membership and the new leaders over the wildcat strike issue. Delegates were neither allowed to present motions from the floor nor to amend the recommendations of the various committees. The committees, in turn, were staffed by appointed delegates and submitted their resolutions piecemeal so that it was hard to get an overall picture. The delegates could only accept their recommendations or return them to the committees.

Much discontent focused on the recommendations of the contract negotiations committee. Several delegates noted that although the committee promised to "make every effort" to secure the six-hour day, it had neglected to ensure that there would be no cut in the present weekly wages or to adjust overtime provisions so they would be based on a 30-hour week. These oversights were, of course, not accidental since the union bureaucracy has absolutely no intention of fighting for this demand, throwing it in only as a sop to militant elements.

The delegates continued to return the bargaining resolutions to committee both in order to secure greater gains and to eliminate loopholes and exceptions from the contract. Lest the delegates become overly impressed with their "powers," however, Miller took the floor to remind them that all they were doing was "tell[ing] the negotiators [i.e., the union leaders] in a general way what you want them to try to get..."

While the delegates were efficiently kept under control, UMWA leaders were taking no chances with the left either. No ostensibly revolutionary organization was allowed either to display, distribute or sell its literature at or near the convention. After the union brass had caught SWPers trying to sell the *Militant*, they promptly ejected the paper's reporter. Managing to get back in later, the *Militant* representative sought to blame the hotel management for the "unfortunate" incident and, indeed, the SWP neglected to mention such trivial affairs in its published reports. The following day the UMWA also arranged for the removal of the NCLC. The Spartacist League was denied a booth to display its literature on

the grounds that the great number of groups bidding for space necessitated that only groups "connected with the union" would be allowed the privilege.

Evidently this select company includes the U.S. government, since the Departments of Labor and Interior and the Bureau of Mines were accorded an entire room to push their wares (along with their propaganda). Another of those connected with the union seems to be Michael Harrington's social democrats, whose "Newsletter of the New Democratic Left" was distributed openly at the convention. (This, incidentally, is another sign of the growing and more open influence of the cold-war anti-communist social democrats as advisers for the reactionary AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Another was the election of New York teachers' union head Albert Shanker as a vice-president of the labor federation last year.) When a member of the reformist Rank and File Caucus of the United Steel Workers attempted to distribute a leaflet critical of I.W. Abel's no-strike pledge, however, the leaflets were promptly confiscated.

### Union Bureaucrats and the Labor Party

The panoply of labor bureaucrats assembled at the convention no doubt appreciated Miller's "responsible" efforts to keep clear of fostering rank-and-file revolt in other unions. The political spectrum ranged from the extreme national-chauvinist right wing of the labor movement (I.W. Abel) to its reformist left (Fitzgerald of the United Electrical Workers). One of the latter, James Matles (secretary-treasurer of the UE), made an enigmatic call for "workers' class political action" which elicited an enthusiastic response from the delegates. But while the labor friends of the reformist Communist Party (which pushed the liberal Democrat McGovern in the last elections) are clearly testing the water with such timid suggestions of a labor party, they are certainly not going to risk their respectability by fighting for one.

Talking with a reporter from *Workers Vanguard* several days later, UE president Al Fitzgerald "admitted" that he was for a labor party (all he called for on the floor was the election of workers to Congress), but did not advocate a break with any of the existing parties (?). Asked why he neglected to mention the issue on the floor, he offered the excuse that a labor party could not be formed before the next election. Somehow the glaring contradiction between this statement and the UE's efforts to impeach Nixon was not clear to him.

Another of those left-talking bureaucrats who neglected to raise the issue of a labor party, at a time when Nixon is holding on to the presidency by the skin of his teeth and both parties are widely discredited by their support for wage controls and the Vietnam war, was one Arnold Miller. This is not significant in itself, since Miller does not pretend to be a reformist socialist or anything else but a good old "democrat." (He ran for the West Virginia legislature on the Democratic ticket a

*continued on page 11*

## Cop-Baits SL:

# Wohlforth Attacks Spartacists in Cleveland



WV PHOTOS

These photographs show Tim Wohlforth and his Workers League in the act of violently excluding Spartacist League supporters who were attempting to enter a publicly advertised WL forum entitled "We Will Not Accept Dictatorship" held at the Cleveland YWCA last December 13. This disgraceful example of the WL's contempt for the principle of workers democracy was followed by an editorial in the December 21 issue of the WL's *Bulletin*, "A Warning of Police Provocation." Was the WL admitting that it has finally embraced the logical consequences of its anti-communist behavior? Hardly. The thrust of the WL article is summarized in its charge that "Police agents are obviously using the most frenzied and degenerate middle class groups like Spartacist and the Labor Committee as a vehicle to break up any serious opposition to the government."

Once again Wohlforth resorts to the technique of the big lie to conceal the WL's despicable hooliganism. This pathetic anti-Trotskyist excrement must continuously take refuge behind the techniques of Stalinism to conceal its political bankruptcy. Spartacist supporters are repeatedly excluded from WL "public" meetings so that WLers may remain shielded from political debate. The WL calls on hotel managers and cops to protect the WL's "right" to hold "public" meetings from which certain members of the working-class public are excluded. Those who protest this suppression are slyly labelled cop agents. The WL has shown over and over again that no Stalinist atrocity is too shameful to be employed against members of the working-class movement. And as these photographs graphically show, Wohlforth himself is not above lending a hand.

In Cleveland, the excluded SLers resisted passively in order to avoid a bloody incident which would give Wohlforth fuel for further slanderous allegations of SL "disruptive activities." But we are not cowed by Wohlforth's lies and will continue to use all principled means—including protest demonstrations and, where necessary, self-defense against WL thuggery—to expose the fake-Trotskyist WL and its fraudulent "public" meetings.

Challenged to defend the exclusion, the woman in the lower picture shouted "F--k workers democracy." In order to deny that SLers had the same right as anyone else to attend a public meeting, other WLers asserted that the meeting was "by invitation only" although it had been announced by leaflets and in the pages of the *Bulletin*. When several members of the audience protested the exclusion after the melee, Wohlforth's response was to evict one of the critics!

The WL's Stalinist methods are but the logical handmaidens of a political "method" of pervasive two-bit opportunism and political bankruptcy. It is the duty of authentic revolutionary Marxists to vigorously combat such Stalinist practices. The consistent defense of workers democracy is one of the hallmarks of Trotskyism and is therefore totally foreign to the WL.



Miners begin shift at Hamilton No. 1 Mine in Kentucky.

UNITED MINEWORKERS JOURNAL



# On the First Arab-Israel War

by Y. RAD

The editors of Workers Vanguard are pleased to print this valuable study taken from the Israeli Marxist publication, Vanguard. The article differs at certain points from our own previous understanding of events in the key 1947-49 period. This consideration only increases the document's worth for us since critical assimilation of the author's view by American Marxists should add depth to our understanding.

## I. General Background

The Second World War was presented and has been presented up to now, both by the American, French and British imperialists as well as by the Soviet bureaucrats and their parties, as "a war of the democratic powers against Fascism." In light of this "precise" class definition, the Stalinist Parties everywhere naturally supported the "democratic forces."

In reality, this war was no different in essence from World War I, despite the involvement of the USSR. That is to say, it was an imperialist war on the part of all the bourgeoisies that took part in the war, those who ruled the working class under the form of fascism and those who ruled in the form of "democracy." The aim of all elements of the imperialist bourgeoisie was a new division of power in the world.

The principal victor in the war was the American bourgeoisie, which began to make permanent the new imperialist order. On the one hand, it supplanted decaying British and French imperialism and those tied to their favors; on the other hand, it surrounded the USSR with military bases in all those countries which were established as its domain by the Yalta and Potsdam agreements—agreements which the Soviet bureaucrats also signed.

The decay of British and French imperialism in the Near East confronted the American bourgeoisie with the

question of how to rule this region without the necessity of direct military control.

A part of the American bourgeoisie, expressing itself through military circles and the State Department, called for using the system of British imperialism: supporting the Arab bourgeoisie and feudal elements while strengthening the British army in the area. Another part of the bourgeoisie, expressing itself through Truman, maintained that the existing Arab governments were collapsing and that it would not be possible to support them. The solution proposed by Truman was to strengthen Zionism, which was likely to play the key role in maintaining the imperialist order against all popular struggles in the area. It should be remembered that right after the war there was a sharp struggle by the masses in the entire area against British and French imperialism and the local bourgeoisies tied to them.

It is clear that British imperialism, looking for a way to postpone the end of its rule in the area, supported the American military circles and the State Department. Bevin maintained hysterically that the creation of a Zionist state as an expression of Zionism would necessarily cause a sharper popular struggle and would force American imperialism to send its army to the area. In that situation, the Arab bourgeoisie would not be able to stop the masses opposed to the creation of a Zionist state at the expense of the Palestinian people.

"The Zionists wanted more than just easier immigration practices. They wanted the American government to support their aim of a Jewish state in Palestine.... The State Department continued to be more concerned about the Arab reaction than the sufferings of the Jews...."

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that no U.S. armed forces be involved in carrying out the committee's [the Anglo-American Inquiry Commission—Trans.] findings [for the creation of a Jewish state—Y.R.]... they added that control of oil in the Middle East was a

very serious consideration... they were primarily concerned about Middle East oil."

—Harry Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, pp. 140, 149

The decision of the Security Council of 29 November 1947 reflects clearly the argument that was occurring within the American bourgeoisie. The decision established the principle of partition without specifying how it would be put into practice. This decision had only one meaning: to the extent that the Zionists could emerge from the military conflict with the upper hand, it would prove Truman's theories and the conclusion would be to strengthen Zionism. But to the extent that Zionism did not succeed in proving itself as a serious political power—the theories of Marshall would prevail and the whole matter would be presented as the failure of a humanitarian plan to rehabilitate the Jewish refugees.

## II. The Secret of the Zionist Victory

On the eve of the entry of the Arab bourgeois armies into Palestine on 15 May 1948, the Zionist military forces already controlled most of the area assigned to Zionism by the decision of the U.N.

Little more than a month later, by the first ceasefire of 11 June 1948, the Zionists had won militarily and had proved Truman's theories.

The question here is: what is the political explanation for the military victory?

### A) The complete control by the Israeli bourgeoisie over the Jewish working class

Unlike the Arab bourgeoisie which could not mobilize the Arabs and arm them for war because it was separated from them, in 1948 as today, Zionism could mobilize the Jewish working class behind it.

This situation requires explanation. It is possible of course to blame the Jewish working class, to maintain that it was in the interests of the workers to serve Zionism. But we maintain that the Jewish working class, as with all other parts of the world working class, has but one interest: proletarian revolution.

The explanation for the Zionist control does not lie in the interests of the Jewish working class but in its organizational position—its lack of any weapons or independent struggles. And the responsibility for this situation rests with the Communist Party.

In 1936 the Arab revolt broke out. For three years the struggle of the Palestinian masses against British imperialism and Zionism continued. A revolutionary workers party would have united the popular Palestinian struggle with the struggle of the Jewish working class against British imperialism, Zionism and the Palestinian bourgeoisie. But the Communist Party gave full support to the Neshashibis and the Husseinis [the two major competing groups of the Palestinian bourgeoisie—Trans.] who betrayed the Palestinian masses. This policy not only helped the oppression of the Palestinian masses, but it also pushed the Jewish masses into the arms of Zionism. At the time of the second world imperialist war, the



Prime Minister Ben Gurion reads Israeli Declaration of Independence.

Communist Party helped mobilize the Jewish working class behind British imperialism and Zionism.

The Jewish working class lacked not only a revolutionary party but also the elementary instrument for its economic defense. The Histadrut is not a trade union with reformist leadership (as the Communist Party maintains), but an arm of Zionism. Just as the Histadrut organized the Jewish workers against the Arab workers under the slogan "Hebrew labor," in 1948 with the support of the CP it organized the Jewish workers to fight the Arab masses under the slogan of "national liberation."

### B) The situation of the Palestinian masses

The Palestinian masses came out of the experience of the 1936-39 insurrection (during which they were smashed and became despondent) not only not knowing how to continue the struggle but also lacking the strength to organize anew. The several thousand who found the strength to struggle lacked the leadership to bring them to victory. The "Arab High Committee," the bourgeois Palestinian organization, put the Hussein family at the head of the guerrilla struggle. This family, at whose head stood the Mufti Haj Amin, had a central role in the betrayal by the Palestinian bourgeoisie at the time of the "Arab revolt" [in 1936-39]; today it continues in this task. On the one hand, each fighter had to supply his own weapons so that the guerrillas only had ancient light arms and many of the guerrillas lacked any guns to fight with. On the other hand, the Mufti conducted unceasing propaganda for the abandonment of villages and towns until the day of "victory and revenge." The same Palestinian bourgeoisie exposed fully its class character at the end of 1947 when King Abdullah set in motion his crafty plots which he contrived in conjunction with the Zionists.

On 1 December 1948 the King called a large assembly in Jericho to which were invited representatives of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. The mayor of Hebron, Sheikh Jabri, who today cooperates with the Israeli occupation government, was appointed by the King as head of the assembly.

The assembly made the following decisions:

1) The conference saw in the Land of Israel [the Hebrew expression connotes a vague geographic unit, approximately the area of the British mandate of Palestine in 1921—Trans.] a single unit which could not be divided.

2) Arab countries could not make war as separate forces but only with complete national unity. As a first step there should be unity with the people of Jordan.

3) The conference recognized His Majesty King Abdullah as king of the Land of Israel.



King Abdullah of Jordan



Arab legionnaires at Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem.

On 13 December 1948 a Jordanian Parliament composed of 20 members was established because the National Council had decided to approve the government policies on this question.

Counterposed to the Palestinian guerrillas and their traitorous leadership, the Zionist guerrillas possessed an army of about 70,000-80,000 men, armed with new weapons which included, according to Ben Gurion's version: 10,000 rifles, 900 submachine guns, 180 heavy machine guns, 672 light mortars and 96 medium mortars (Ben Gurion, *Be-hilhemet Yisrael*).

This army had experience that had been acquired at the time of the suppression of the "Arab revolt" and at the time of the second imperialist war. Most of its commanders were simply former British army officers.

### C) The Arab bourgeoisie

If it is easy to understand how the Zionists defeated the downtrodden Palestinian masses, at first sight it is much harder to understand how Zionism overpowered all the bourgeois Arab armies.

The following tables make it clear that the military victory of the Zionists in no way differed from a victory of the stronger army over a weaker force. But this fact requires a political explanation which comes after the presentation of the statistics:

It should be remarked that the statistics, taken from the book *Ha-sichuch Ha-Arabi-Ha-Yisraeli* [The Arab-Israeli Conflict] by Dan Safran, reflect the situation in the last months of the war. The Zionists possessed fewer weapons than are cited in the

table; their weapons supply was completed by the Soviet bureaucrats.

### ISRAELI ARMY (source: Safran)

Total Forces	70,000
Regular	30,000
Air Forces Total	67 planes
Fighter Planes	40 planes
Transport Planes	12 planes
Other	15 planes
Armored Forces	1.5 brigades
Medium and Light Tanks	40 to 50
Armored Troop Vehicles	200
Navy	
Torpedo Boats	5

### EGYPTIAN ARMY (source: Safran)

Total Forces	50,000 to 60,000
Regular	50,000
(of whom were sent to Palestine 18,000 soldiers, half from a reserve battalion and a second-rate garrison)	
Armored Forces	1 brigade
Medium and Light Tanks	80
Air Forces Total	70 planes
Fighter Planes	35 planes
Transport Planes	10 planes
Other	25 planes

### SYRIAN ARMY (source: Safran)

Total Forces	8,000
(of whom one armored division was sent to Palestine)	

### IRAQI ARMY (source: A. El-Tal)

15,000 men sent to Palestine	
------------------------------	--



General Sir John Glubb Pasha (left), commander of the Arab legion.

UNITED NATIONS





ISRAEL OFFICE OF INFORMATION, NEW YORK  
Declaration of Independence.



ZIONIST ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY, NEW YORK  
King Abdullah of Jordan



UNITED NATIONS  
Arab legionnaires at Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem.

On 13 December 1948 a Jordanian Parliament composed of 20 members was established because the National Council had decided to approve the government policies on this question.

Counterposed to the Palestinian guerrillas and their traitorous leadership, the Zionist guerrillas possessed an army of about 70,000-80,000 men, armed with new weapons which included, according to Ben Gurion's version: 10,000 rifles, 900 submachine guns, 180 heavy machine guns, 672 light mortars and 96 medium mortars (Ben Gurion, *Be-hilhemet Yisrael*).

This army had experience that had been acquired at the time of the suppression of the "Arab revolt" and at the time of the second imperialist war. Most of its commanders were simply former British army officers.

#### C) The Arab bourgeoisie

If it is easy to understand how the Zionists defeated the downtrodden Palestinian masses, at first sight it is much harder to understand how Zionism overpowered all the bourgeois Arab armies.

The following tables make it clear that the military victory of the Zionists in no way differed from a victory of the stronger army over a weaker force. But this fact requires a political explanation which comes after the presentation of the statistics:

It should be remarked that the statistics, taken from the book *Ha-sichsuch Ha-Aravi-Ha-Yisraeli* [The Arab-Israeli Conflict] by Dan Safran, reflect the situation in the last months of the war. The Zionists possessed fewer weapons than are cited in the

table; their weapons supply was completed by the Soviet bureaucrats.

#### ISRAELI ARMY (source: Safran)

Total Forces	70,000
Regular	30,000
Air Forces Total	67 planes
Fighter Planes	40 planes
Transport Planes	12 planes
Other	15 planes
Armored Forces	1.5 brigades
Medium and Light Tanks	40 to 50
Armored Troop Vehicles	200
Navy	
Torpedo Boats	5

#### EGYPTIAN ARMY (source: Safran)

Total Forces	50,000 to 60,000
Regular	50,000
(of whom were sent to Palestine)	
18,000 soldiers, half from a reserve battalion and a second-rate garrison)	
Armored Forces	1 brigade
Medium and Light Tanks	80
Air Forces Total	70 planes
Fighter Planes	35 planes
Transport Planes	10 planes
Other	25 planes

#### SYRIAN ARMY (source: Safran)

Total Forces	8,000
(of whom one armored division was sent to Palestine)	

#### IRAQI ARMY (source: A. El-Tal)

15,000 men sent to Palestine	
------------------------------	--

#### ARAB LEGION (source: A. El-Tal)

Total Forces	9,050
Irregular	1,200
Artillery	
2-inch guns	29
6-pounders	38
25-pounders	24
3-inch mortars	40
Armored Troops	
With machine guns	52
With heavy guns	72

What is the explanation for the "paradoxical" relation of forces? Immediately after the end of the second imperialist war, there was a wave of revolutionary struggles in different parts of the world. In Europe the economy was destroyed, as in other areas under the rule of the decaying European imperialism. In the Middle East the masses struggled more sharply and called into question the rule of the Arab bourgeoisie and their masters, the British imperialists.

The Arab masses correctly saw the rise of the Zionist state as a measure primarily aimed against them.

In this situation, the Arab bourgeoisie was forced to declare war against Zionism, because its fear of the masses exceeded its fear of Zionism.

If the Arab bourgeoisie had really intended to prevent the founding of the Zionist state, it would have been compelled to organize a general mobilization of the masses and to arm them with guns, with the clear understanding that those guns would be turned against it and against its masters, the imperialists.

There was only one possibility for the degenerate bourgeoisie: to wage a phony war for the purpose of deceiving the masses and of staying in power longer, with the clear understanding that this phony war would lead to military defeat.

Behind these steps of the Arab bourgeoisie in 1948 lies hidden the logic of the bourgeoisie in countries in which the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not been carried out.

The French bourgeoisie was capable of carrying out the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution: national liberation, agrarian reform, national unity, attainment of rights of free speech and of free assembly. At that time capitalism was in the ascendancy and the workers were not yet an independent class. But in the era of imperialism, in the time of the decline and decay of capitalism, when the working class has (for decades now) put the proletarian revolution on the agenda—to expect the bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped world to be prepared to carry out its historic tasks is to expect the bourgeoisie to be ready to commit suicide.

There is therefore no surprise in the ridiculously small military mobilization organized by the Arab bourgeoisie nor in the behavior of their armies in battle.

The Iraqi army (in addition to the battle of the "Star of Jordan," in which they were also quickly defeated) took part in the battle for Jenin on 2 June 1948: they conquered Jenin and then stayed there without moving until the Rhodes conference. They then beat a quick retreat to Iraq in order to suppress the raging masses.

The Syrian bourgeois army, instead of entering by way of Lebanon and conquering Nazareth and Afula, as simple military strategy required, penetrated to the Zemah-Tiberias area, fortified their positions and remained there when their left flank was exposed by the Iraqi army's turn toward Jenin.

The Egyptian bourgeois army, acting in accord with the instructions of the British imperialists, entered the Negev and conquered the part that the British imperialists wanted as a substitute for their position on the Suez Canal in case they were forced to abandon Egypt.

The same class strategy that weakened the Arab bourgeoisies was revealed in all its purity by the ruler of

Jordan, King Abdullah, in signing the secret agreement with Ben Gurion.

There has been an effort up until now, and of course in 1948, to conceal the fact of the agreements which decided that the area set aside for the Palestinians in the partition plan would be transferred to Abdullah. In exchange, Abdullah agreed to Zionist rule in the area of Palestine set aside for Zionism by the pirates of the UN. Not only did the course of the fighting follow this agreement exactly, but there are abundant witnesses to the authenticity of the agreement.

Not only does Yisrael Bar (in his book *Bitahon Yisrael*) state that the agreement existed—so does (in his memoirs) Abdullah El-Tal, a senior officer in the Jordanian Legion who was known for his nationalistic outlook and for his attempt at a coup in Jordan, which was partly a result of the negotiations.

On 16 January 1949 at a meeting between King Abdullah and the head of the Zionist delegation Sasson in the King's palace in Shuneh the king turned to Sasson and said, "I am an Arab king, I don't break my agreements. You know my feelings about you. Look, Sasson, my friend, we won't make war on you or attack you."

In the introduction to the book of Abdullah El-Tal, General Haim Herzog writes: "there is no doubt that Abdullah El-Tal and on the other hand the King and Glubb Pasha did not fight the same war. Tel wanted to destroy Israel, Glubb and the King wanted to seize the territories set aside for the Arabs."

The "battle" for East Jerusalem and the stillborn plan of Yigal Allon for the conquest of the West Bank are only some of the many examples which illustrate that the war between the Zionists and the feudal-bourgeois regime in Jordan was conducted according to the agreement.

The strength of the Legion in East Jerusalem was only enough to defend the city and to conquer the Jewish quarter, for under Abdullah El-Tal (the Jerusalem commander) there were in total 15 officers and 711 men and NCOs. On the other side, it is clear that the "attempts" of the Israeli army to conquer East Jerusalem, which came to naught, were only phony attempts. Even Ben-Gurion himself was forced to confirm this in the case of Kol Ha-Am [the CP newspaper—Trans.] vs. Ben Gurion in 1951.

In his book *Le-Or Ha-Yom U-be-Mahashak* [In Daylight and in Darkness] Yerohem Cohen states that after the conquest of the Galilee, Allon presented a plan for the conquest of the West Bank that was received with enthusiasm by the brigade command—Carmel and Y. Bar. "Carmel praised the plan and so did Y. Bar, representative of Yadin (head of the Operations Branch of the General Headquarters), and promised to recommend it to the General Headquarters. We were astounded when we were ordered to immediately move down to the Shphalah [western foothills of the Judean mountains—Trans.]."

### III. The Nature of the War

The discussion of the question of the agreements between Ben Gurion and Abdullah brings us to the question: what was the class nature of the 1948 war?

If we accept the claims of the Zionists and the Stalinists, it was the war of national liberation of the Jewish people. To say that, we must show that Zionism was a revolutionary bourgeois movement that captured state power after its victory over the imperialists.

One hundred years after the bourgeoisie in all those countries which have not carried out the bourgeois revolution (part of whose task is the achievement of national liberation) has ceased to be capable of carrying out that revolution... Zionism successfully dissolved the laws of history....

We can only take off our hats and

continued on page 8



# The First Arab-Israel War

shout with enthusiasm: Down With Marxism! Long Live Zionism!

But before we sacrifice Marxism, let us examine the hidden secrets of this claim concerning the nature of the war: To the Stalinist "national liberation" means:

Pillage, murder and expulsion of the Palestinian people because, in spite of the Zionist myth, the Palestinian masses did not leave their towns and villages of their own free will, but under compulsion and the force of fear (the number of Palestinian refugees, by an overly conservative estimate, exceeded 3/4 million).

"National liberation" means to conclude a pact with the feudal Abdullah for the express purpose of pillaging the Palestinian people.

"National liberation" means to free oneself from decaying British imperialism in order to become the stooge of American imperialism.

Anti-imperialist war means to retreat—on the orders of American imperialism—from the one battle Zionism conducted against British imperialism, as can be seen from the terminating of the fighting in the Sinai.

Zionism and Stalinism can define this war as a war of national liberation. We have a different definition for this filthy war: Zionism fought to establish itself, by means of the pillage and expulsion of the Palestinian people, as the strong power on which the imperialists could count as one of the central pillars of the new imperialist order.

The Arab bourgeoisie fought in order to preserve the position of decaying British imperialism and to save itself from the anger of the masses.

Neither of the two sides fought against imperialism, but rather on the side of the imperialists against the masses.

There are historical situations in which it is necessary to support the bourgeoisie in countries in which the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not been carried out, when the bourgeoisie is fighting against the imperialists. For example, Egypt in 1956 or when the Palestinian organizations (bourgeois and petty-bourgeois) struggle against Zionism and against Hussein. This requires critical support, with warnings against the betrayal of the bourgeoisie, and above all the maintenance of independence by the working class: "march separately, strike together."

But in 1948 any support for Zionism or the Arab bourgeoisie had only one meaning: betrayal of the working class. Similarly there is only one name for this war: imperialist war.

## IV. How Far Would Zionism Be Allowed to Expand?

If we have established that the Zionist victory was clear on 11 June 1948, with the declaration of the first ceasefire, the question which immediately arises is: "Why did the war end only in April 1949?"

The explanation for the Zionist victory in June 1948 is that the American bourgeoisie had concluded its debate over which power it would support in the Near East, the Arab bourgeoisie or the Zionists. But a question remained open: how far could Zionism expand and gather power without at the same time undermining the shaky order? As soon as American imperialism saw a force taking the place of the disintegrating Arab regimes, it sought to preserve them; that is, to preserve the rule of British imperialism over them. The American bourgeoisie decided the question of how far Zionism could expand by the same method it had determined which forces to support in the Near East in order to preserve its interests.

The Zionist decision to conquer the Negev was put into action only after they had persuaded American imperialism that the conquest of the Negev

suited their common interests. Before this decision was made, there were long discussions between American imperialism, British imperialism and Zionism that continued until the end of September. Macdonald's diary testifies to this struggle:

"the following suggestions are put forth by my Government..."

"1. Perhaps a solution can be worked out as a feature of any final understanding with Jordan which would exchange a large portion of the desert land of the Negev for that portion of fertile western Galilee which Israel now occupies militarily.

"September 22: Disturbing to learn that Washington and London have come out so strongly, so unreservedly for the Bernadotte proposals... that Israel will trade the Negev for portions of Galilee, particularly since most of the former was allocated to Israel by the

At the beginning of November, a session of the UN General Assembly began in Paris at which the pirate band debated whether to permit the Zionist campaign of pillage, and, if so, how to portray it. On 4 November 1948, it was formally decided to urgently call upon Israel to withdraw. But it is clear from what Macdonald's diary reveals that the Zionists received encouragement from the Security Council:

"The Israeli commanders were convinced that had they not been halted by the Security Council order they could have driven the Egyptians back into Egypt; they were eager to find a reason for resuming the offensive... [Israel] did not obey the order. This successful non-compliance perhaps encouraged Israel to prepare for further military action."

—Macdonald, *op.cit.*, p. 114

Seven days after the decision of the General Assembly, the Zionists opened a new campaign of conquest called "Operation Desolation" whose aim was the conquest of Sinai. But after Shever-Lev, commander of the 9th Brigade, had been sent to conquer El-Arish, he received a



Arab League holds meeting in Jordan.

U.N. partition resolution of November 29th and the latter area has been occupied by Israel forces...

"A high Israeli official in a confidential conversation [said]:..."

"3. United States support of Britain's proposal to give the Negev to the Arabs—that is, to Jordan—is no solution and can have only the following results:

a. It would not endear the U.S. to other Arab States.

b. It would create a miniature State of Israel which would inevitably become embittered toward the United States... [Macdonald] felt this analysis had much logic. Furthermore, Jordan would not be grateful to the United States for our support of what would be considered to be a British gift of the Negev to Abdullah."

—James Macdonald, *My Mission in Israel*, pp. 84, 85, 88

In his memoirs, Truman recounts how the decision that there was a place for the existence of a "strong and large" Israel was reached (as he stated in a speech at Madison Square Garden on 28 October 1948).

In the middle of October an Israeli Army force of four brigades split the Egyptian army and entrapped most of it at Faluja.

It is completely clear that the reason the surrounded Egyptian force did not ask for aid from the Iraqi or Jordanian bourgeoisie was a silent agreement for Zionist victory.

"Two Syrian battalions were sent to relieve the Iraqi troops so that they could aid those at Faluja, but as soon as the two battalions got to Drayah, they were stopped from entering the country and were told that if they tried to enter, they would be fired upon."

—A. El-Tal, *The Tragedy of Palestine*, p. 294

message from his commander Allon to cease action immediately. The fate of the attack on Rafiah was similar. Afterwards—for the first and last time in this "anti-imperialist" war—the Zionists entered into battle with the British imperialists, shooting down five Spitfire fighter planes on 7 January 1949. Immediately after this battle the Israeli army withdrew to the other side of the international border.

The "battle" for the Sinai illustrates well the nature of the war: for the first and last time in this war, Zionism was militarily in conflict with British imperialism, but it retreated as soon as American imperialism told it to.

On December 31,

"Washington instructed me to deliver immediately to the Israel authorities the substance of a cable which radically changed the whole situation. This was Great Britain's dramatic threat... to enter the war against Israel unless Israel troops withdrew from Egyptian soil. The United States in transmitting this British demand... declared sharply that Israel must withdraw its troops at once."

—*Ibid.*, p. 116

The explanation for the Americans' instructions is simple: they allowed Zionism to expand and to expel the Palestinian people so long as this expansion did not endanger the regime in Egypt or British imperialism there, so long as they did not see an alternative force that could rule in Egypt in place of Farouk.

Just as this "battle" illustrates the nature of the war, so the battle for the Southern Negev illustrates the nature of the opposition of Zionism to British imperialism. By the end of the war, the British bourgeoisie realized that its

estimate of the Zionist contribution to the making of the new imperialist order had been mistaken, so it gave Zionism the Southern Negev including Eilat, an important strategic port to the Indian Ocean.

On 5 March 1949, two brigades of the Israeli Army, "Golani" and "Ha-Negev," went down to conquer the southern Negev. The operation was carried out within strict limits, including

"...a limitation which aroused great astonishment among the commanders of the units, [which] was the order not to enter into battle during their campaign, and that in case of encounter with enemy forces they were to break off contact and to fulfill their task by indirect means."

—Y. Cohen, *Le-Or Ha-Yom U-be-Mahashak*, p. 260

The explanation for this strange order is given by El-Tal: "At the same time that the Jewish forces were approaching, and conflict was expected at any moment, Glubb Pasha sent a telegram to the commanders of the troops:

"6 March 1949 Immediate Telegram To: the commander of the Southern Region

From: Headquarters

Pull your forces immediately out of the following places:

- Mt. El-Vadabi
- Wadi El-Hini
- Ras El-Nekev
- Um Rashrash (Eilat)"

The confirmation of the fact that the Southern Negev was given to Zionism as a present from the imperialist "enemy" against whom Zionism was conducting a "war of national liberation" is again to be found in the words of Macdonald, who at the time of the crisis in Jordan spoke to the British Minister Sir Knox Helm. Helm told him:

"I feel strongly that the success of Arab intransigence would be a disaster for the U.S. and the U.K.'s vital interests in this area. Such success... could only take the form of breaking Israel's political power."

—Macdonald, *op.cit.*, p. 214

## V. The End of the War

The war of 1948 ended with an incident between Zionism and King Abdullah over the control of the Triangle [Negev—Trans.].

The bourgeois Iraqi army was forced to withdraw hastily from the conflict in the month of March 1949, in the words of Abdullah, "because of causes much more important than the problem of the State of Israel" (El-Tal, *op.cit.*, p. 363). In clear political language: in order forcibly to suppress the Iraqi masses.

In spite of the clear agreement between Abdullah and the Zionists that specified that the Triangle would remain under the rule of Jordan, the Zionists demanded the Triangle. Despite the pleas of the King, the Zionists made war upon him in order to make him surrender. The baron of the pirates, to whom Abdullah turned for help, answered him in a telegram dated 29 March 1949:

"Telegram from Truman To His Majesty

Mr. Truman acknowledges His Majesty's communication to him. He is forced this time to accept the demands of the Jews. Mr. Truman guarantees to His Majesty that he will prevent further claims by the Jews in the future."

The King was forced, of course, to hand over the area to the Zionists.

This incident characterizes the relations between Zionism and the Arab bourgeoisie since 1948. They cooperated in actions to oppress the masses. Zionism, however, enjoyed primacy in the imperialist order. It was not only a tool against the masses but also an instrument of pressure of the American bourgeoisie on the Arab bourgeoisie. Every time the Arab bourgeoisie demanded more than the American bourgeoisie was prepared to give—the whip of Zionism fell upon them.

## VI. The Soviet Bureaucrats

Another question needs to be answered: why did the Soviet bureaucrats





Israeli President Chaim Weizmann (right) presents Torah to U.S. President Harry Truman.

support Zionism? The answer is to be found in the class nature of the bureaucracy. In 1948 American imperialism had already surrounded the USSR with military bases. The question that faced the bureaucrats was how to break out of the encirclement without raising the danger of proletarian revolution.

It seemed to the USSR that it would be possible to exploit the temporary dispute between the British imperialists and the Zionists in order to penetrate into the Middle East and to prevent the construction of a military blockade against the USSR in the area. This was enough to result in support later on for Nasserism, Kassem in Iraq and the Ba'ath in Syria.

It is clear that in order to hide its aims from the working class, the Soviet bureaucracy was compelled to portray the 1948 war as a war of "national liberation" of the Jewish people, just as it portrays the bonapartist [Arab] re-

gimes as the "non-capitalist road to socialism."

But each step of the bureaucracy in support of the enemies of the working class not only helped to weaken the working class outside the Soviet Union, but also made more serious the danger that the USSR would go over to the imperialist camp. By supporting the Zionists the Soviet Union not only helped Zionism become an imperialist fortress against the masses of the Middle East, but also to become the strongest anti-Soviet base in the area.

There is only one way for the working class to defend itself from imperialism: proletarian revolution. There is only one way for the working class to defend the remnants of the victories of October: a political revolution of the working class in the USSR which will send the parasites who rule over the Soviet Union to the place to where all enemies of the working class will go.

### Conclusions

It is now possible to summarize the significance of the 1948 war and its lessons for the working class.

- The war of 1948 was not simply a war of one bourgeoisie against another but an imperialist war on the part of all the bourgeoisies that took part in the war against the Arab and Jewish masses of the area.

- This war was part of the defeat suffered by the masses after the second imperialist war in the framework of the new imperialist order.

- This defeat, as a defeat of the working class, is the responsibility also of the Soviet bureaucracy. Each step it takes in order to defend itself by means of subverting the proletarian revolution only advances the power of the imperialists and endangers further the gains of October.

- The agreement between Abdullah and Ben Gurion makes thoroughly clear the connection of the Arab bourgeoisie with the Zionists against the masses; at the same time, the agreement between the Zionists and Abdullah makes clear the aim of Zionism. The dispute between the Arab bourgeoisie and Zionism is over the question of who can better serve the interests of imperialism in the area.

- The Arab bourgeoisie is not adapted to fulfilling the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the area. These tasks fall on the shoulders of the working class.

- Not the Arab bourgeoisie in general and not the Palestinian bourgeoisie can implement the right of the Palestinian people to national self-determination; only a proletarian revolution can do so.

- The strength of Zionism comes from the absence of independent organizations of the working class, trade unions and a workers party. ■

Continued from page 1

## Truckers...

coast-to-coast turnaround (New York-California-New York) is expected to take only six days, with two drivers alternating around the clock and sleeping in the tractor.

The owner-operators, in addition, are a particularly vulnerable sector of the petty bourgeoisie, existing wholly at the mercy of the big shippers, hamstrung by antiquated ICC produce-hauling restrictions and constantly in danger of not meeting payments for their expensive rigs. Even in relatively prosperous times, most do not last longer than a few years in the trade. As soon as a recession hits, thousands go bankrupt while the interstate freight monopolies (whose rights are protected by law) pick up their business. Like most elements of the petty bourgeoisie, the owner-operators have no effective cooperatives or other associations and are, if anything, even more vulnerable to the destructive anarchy of the capitalist business cycle than the organized working class.

Thus the close to 100 percent increase in diesel fuel prices in some areas could be sufficient to drive hundreds of independents off the highways. (Drivers reported some Pennsylvania truck stops had raised prices from 36 cents to 74 cents a gallon, according to the 6 December *New York Times*, while others were limiting purchases to 10 gallons per rig, hardly enough to keep a truck on the expressway for two hours!)

### What Policy for Labor?

In keeping with his consistent support for Richard Nixon, wage controls, anti-communism and various other anti-labor measures, IBT chief Fitzsimmons opposed the truckers' stoppage. Reluctantly, however, he was forced to call for wage reopeners for his own membership in order to keep control of the seething ranks. Although in a confused way, many of the protesters instinctively understood that the action was directed against the government and opposed Fitzsimmons not only for his sellout contracts (7 percent wage increase while inflation is running above 9 percent) but for his politics also. The 7 December *Detroit Free Press* reported the conversation among one group of truckers: "'Hell, your newspapers say the Teamsters endorsed him [Nixon]. But you look around this room and I'll bet you there ain't two guys here that voted for him'," said one protestor.

Fitzsimmons' predecessor, double-talking Jimmy Hoffa, on the other hand, claimed to support the truckers' stoppage. But despite the anti-labor propaganda against Hoffa generated by Bobby Kennedy and the bourgeois press when he was organizing the over-the-road drivers on an industrial basis and producing the Master Freight Agreement, which establishes a single nationwide uniform wage, Hoffa is no more interested in the drivers' needs than his former lieutenant Fitzsimmons. To begin with, neither of them has a real program to provide leadership to the owner-operators' protest.

Should socialists support a work stoppage of truck owners who make \$30,000 a year and are clearly not workers but part of the petty bourgeoisie? It depends on the circumstances. Because they are placed between the capitalists and the working class, the two fundamental classes in modern society, groups like the independent truckers will swing widely in their orientation, sometimes militantly protesting alongside the workers and sometimes becoming the recruiting grounds for fascist filth. In this particular case their protest is directed clearly against the large corporations and the Nixon government. The working class is very much interested in imposing effective price controls and has no interest in artificially low speed limits.

But a class-struggle leadership of

the workers movement must seek to take the lead of such protests in order to direct them clearly against the real culprit: capitalism. Thus instead of raising demands for higher freight rates, which fail to distinguish the interests of the independent truckers from those of the freight monopolies, a militant Teamsters' leadership would call for the formation of cooperatives linked to the labor movement to defend owner-operators. This would provide real aid to the lone trucker, as opposed to rate increases which will do nothing to stop the thousands of bankruptcies every year as a result of the pressure of the big corporations and lessors.

As the farce of the one-shot IRS "investigation" of fuel price-gouging amply proved, it is hopeless to depend on the corporations' government for real price control, just as it is ludicrous to depend on the oil companies to provide accurate information about the "energy crisis." (As we go to press, tens of tankers are waiting to be unloaded in New York harbor, held up by lack of storage facilities since the tanks are full—yet we are supposed to be in the middle of the worst-ever oil shortage!) A program which defends the interests of the working class, and the struggling lower sections of the petty bourgeoisie as well, would call for price control and fuel rationing under the control of the unions, and opening the oil companies' books to workers' inspection.

For the drivers, the demand must be raised for a uniform hourly wage to cover over-the-road operations as well, so as to eliminate the pressure which forces drivers to travel at unsafe speeds for too many hours. The Trotskyist leadership of Teamsters Local 574 in Minneapolis, the first to organize long-haul truckers, introduced such a system in the '30's, but pressure from the IBT bureaucracy later led to its abandonment.

But fundamentally the question is political, requiring the formation of a workers party based on the unions and a workers government which could nationalize industry under workers control and break the political economic and military power of the bourgeoisie. It is only by putting forward such an audacious program, clearly pointing to the goal of socialist revolution while providing guarantees to the insecure, struggling small businessman, that the workers can hope to win leadership of the middle class. With a clear alternative to the voracious rule of the greedy "multi-national" corporations, who are driving down the living standards not only of union members but also of professionals and groups like the independent truckers, we can win the petty bourgeoisie to our side. But vacillation, calling for limiting protests to mild petitions and failing to fight for socialism will surely drive it into the arms of reaction.

By themselves, independent truckers are ultimately powerless. Even after the December stoppages they have no national organization or recognized leadership. Nor were they able to stop freight nearly as effectively as the 1970 Teamsters' strike, which tied up the Midwest for weeks. But led by a powerful union under revolutionary leadership they could win real price controls and contribute to the fight for the establishment of a socialist system in which, for the first time, they could enjoy real stability and protection of their interests. A victorious proletarian revolution would, in the process of liquidating capitalist ownership of the means of production, be able to make concessions to small property owners in order to absorb them more easily into socialized production (through cooperatives, etc.). But this does not imply that under the rule of the bourgeoisie there is any "third way," such as the reformist Communist Party's fabled "anti-monopoly government." It is either militant struggle against capitalist rule, under the leadership of the workers movement, or else the viciously pro-big-business government of Nixon (and far worse than him). There is no middle road. ■

## SL/RCV Public Offices

### BAY AREA

Wednesday }  
and } 1:00-6:00 p.m.  
Thursday }

Saturday 2:30-6:00 p.m.

330-40th Street  
(near Broadway)  
Oakland, California  
Phone 653-4668

### BOSTON

Wednesday } 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
and }  
Friday } 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Saturday 11:00 a.m.-3:00

639 Massachusetts Avenue  
Room 335  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Phone 492-3928

### NEW YORK

Monday }  
through } 3:00-7:30 p.m.  
Friday }

Saturday 1:00-6:00 p.m.

260 West Broadway  
Room 522  
New York, New York  
Phone 925-5665

REVOLUTIONARY  
LITERATURE



Continued from page 1

# ...Massive Layoffs

Soon after, Chrysler announced that six of its seven North American plants would close for a week in January and then announced further indefinite layoffs for 2,100 workers at its Jefferson Avenue (Detroit) and Belvedere, Illinois plants. This represents a 17 percent production cutback compared to January of last year. Chrysler, with recent heavy investments in larger car models (which get poorer gas mileage) and no domestically-made "compact" car, is in many ways in the worst position as a result of the gasoline shortage. However, layoffs have also hit American Motors, which is in the best position on the small car market.

The ostensible reason given for most of the auto layoffs is the time-worn excuse of "balancing inventories." This comes after a year of breakneck production, in which one million more cars were produced with the same number of workers over an 11-month period as compared to 1972, a result of brutal speed-up and compulsory overtime. Then suddenly a quarter of the work force is laid off. And despite the claims in the bourgeois press that laid-off auto workers receive 95 percent of the normal wages (through the Supplementary Unemployment Benefits program), most of the indefinite layoffs so far will not receive a penny from the company. First to go are the probationary employees (less than 90 days in the plant), who have no rights (as well as being paid lower wages, thanks to the UAW leadership). Next come those with less than one year's seniority. Only those with more than twelve months' seniority are eligible for SUB benefits.

## Price-Hike Orgy

Prices, meanwhile, continue to soar in what the *Wall Street Journal* (20 December) described as "one of the worst peace-time inflations in history." The nearly 9 percent annual rate of increase in consumer prices is expected to continue in 1974, pushed ahead by a wholesale price index which stands 17.5 percent above a year ago (*New York Times*, 7 December). The 3.2 percent rise in industrial commodities' prices for November was the largest such monthly increase in the 25 years such records have been kept.

Under the capitalist system, productive capacity will lie idle, going to waste while workers are unemployed, unless the companies can make a good "return" on their investment. Now many corporations are threatening to shut down production or curtail expansion if they are not exempted from price controls. In a clear blackmail attempt, Bethlehem Steel recently an-

nounced it would go ahead with plans for a 25 percent increase in productive capacity over 12 years if it were released from price controls (*Wall Street Journal*, 7 December).

The worst example of this extortion currently is the petroleum industry, which with the connivance of the Nixon administration is making use of the Arab oil boycott to create a "fuel crisis" panic and get away with huge price increases. Nixon's dumping of "energy czar" Love was motivated by acquiescence to the oil companies' power play, relying on price rises rather than rationing in order to "curb demand." (Subsequently, the government announced plans for "stand-by" rationing as well as doubling the price of gasoline!) This has led to a price orgy: refined petroleum prices shot up an incredible 34.7 percent in November alone, pushing the overall price index up almost 1 percent in a single month.

Nixon's "control" mechanism has become little more than a rubber-stamp device for approving whopping price increases, after having effectively held down wages (with the active cooperation of the labor bureaucracy) during the critical bargaining year of 1973. By all accounts the Nixon administration has given up hope for renewal of controls legislation and, having gotten past the largest contracts, now claims to be planning to hold down prices by increasing supplies. In view of current production cutbacks, the "energy crisis" and a threatening recession, such claims are utterly ludicrous.

Implementing this "game plan," the Cost of Living Council has been busy in recent months exempting industries and allowing substantial price hikes. Immediately after the finalization of the auto contract (which was subject to wage controls), the government lifted controls from the industry, which naturally resulted in immediate announcements of price increases from the "Big Three." Six other major industries have received exemptions since August, and price increases have been approved for six more since October, including hikes of 16 percent for aluminum and 13 percent for copper (*Business Week*, 15 December).

## Docile Bureaucrats

The companies are fully aware of the game they are playing and are understandably nervous about a possible reaction from labor. According to *Business Week* (15 December), "With this kind of prospect [of rising prices continuing in 1974], you can forget about labor union docility." At the same time, the business publication warns unions not to become less "responsible" than they have been during 1973!

"Docility" was certainly the word for union leadership during 1973, and there is no immediate prospect for change in this dismal picture. The UAW under the "liberal" Leonard Woodcock led the way with one of the most blatant betrayals of auto workers ever. The phony "voluntary overtime" clause of the new contract is operable only after 50 or 54 hours a week, and provided: it isn't changeover period, there's not more than a handful who want time off, it's not a "critical" plant and the company doesn't call an "emergency". The contract has completely inadequate wage increases and cost-of-living escalators and provides no protection whatever against the tremendous speed-up. Now that the situation has abruptly changed and massive layoffs are threatened, the inadequacy of the SUB benefits is also clearly revealed.

Woodcock, of course, refuses to fight layoffs. At a press conference at the recent convention of the United Mine Workers he said, "I'm afraid there will be more layoffs. There's not much we can do. We're certainly not going to strike on it." Meany's answer to the fuel crisis is an equally impotent call for "equality of sacrifice"—as if the workers were in any way responsible for the impending recession! In contrast to such mealy-mouthed "labor statesmen," a labor leadership representing the interests

of the union ranks would mobilize the workers to place the cost of economic crisis on those responsible for it, the capitalists. As for the AFL-CIO's "impeachment drive," class-conscious workers will note that the major labor leaders (including not only Meany and Woodcock, but even "radicals" like Cesar Chavez) endorsed the nomination of Vice President Gerald Ford, in order to encourage forces in the bourgeoisie to dump Nixon without upsetting the system. But Ford's politics are fully as reactionary as Nixon's. According to the AFL-CIO's own accounting he is 95 percent anti-labor—and this is Meany's answer to Watergate!

The key obstacle to a successful fight to counteract inflation and layoffs is the reactionary labor bureaucracy which is determined at all costs to defend the capitalist system and tie down the membership, thereby protecting its own comfortable positions and fat expense accounts. The struggle against these parasites must necessarily be a political fight for a proletarian program, or it will simply generate a slicker version of the same policy of class collaboration (such as that of the supposedly "Marxist" leaders of the French unions, who call fake general strikes simply to let the workers blow off steam). Only a revolutionary leadership on a class-struggle program provides a real alternative to the present misleaders of labor.

A labor leadership committed to pursuing the class struggle would, for instance, support a move to impeach Nixon, emphasizing his crimes against the working class. But it would not meekly accept the existing "rules of the game," as do Meany, Woodcock and their ilk, and instead would demand new elections so labor could present its own candidate, enforcing this demand with a political general strike. Instead of talking after the "friends of labor" in the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties (which "friends" regularly vote for imperialist wars and anti-labor wage controls) it would struggle to build a labor party based on the unions.

It would be the task of a class-struggle leadership of the labor movement to link the immediate struggles against high prices, layoffs, speed-up and compulsory overtime to the overthrow of capitalism—the only real alternative to exploitation. In the past reformist social democrats and Stalinists have sought to limit the workers' struggles to a "minimum program" of simple trade-union reforms within the framework of capitalism. "The workers are not ready for socialism," they argue. But in the epoch of imperialism, successful reformism is impossible. Pipe dreams of qualitatively improving the conditions of the working class through reform struggles can only lead to fatal illusions and pave the way to fascism and imperialist war. As Rosa Luxemburg said, speaking to the founding conference of the German Communist Party in 1918, "we know nothing of minimum and maximum programs; we know only one thing, socialism; this is the minimum we are going to secure."

But what about the immediate trade-union struggles over wages and hours, against inflation and layoffs? Are we to ignore them? Trotsky answered this question in the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International: "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 conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat" ("The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," 1938).

Today, as we enter a period of sharp economic crisis between the recent boom and a looming recession, the focus of workers' struggles will shift from speed-up and compulsory overtime to the question of unemployment. Instead of minimal reform demands (supportable in themselves, but clearly insufficient) for public works and improved unemployment insurance, the Transitional Program calls for a *sliding scale of hours* to divide the available work among all existing workers, without any cut in wages. A *sliding scale of wages* is demanded to protect the workers against the ravages of inflation.

Such demands can be concretized today in the call for 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay, with full cost-of-living escalator clauses. Likewise there must be strikes against layoffs, rather than meek acceptance of the capitalists' "right" to throw millions of workers onto the breadlines. To expose the supposed poverty of the oil monopolies, used to justify the staggering price increases, a class-struggle program would demand that the companies' books be opened to workers inspection, to reveal the truth about the "energy crisis." And to put an end to ruthless exploitation by the privileged few who run the country, such a program would call for a workers party based on the unions to fight for nationalization of industry under workers control and for a workers government which would destroy the capitalist state.

In particular, with threats of massive layoffs looming, an immediate demand must be raised to maintain unemployed workers as full members of their respective unions, with equal voting rights and not segregated from the employed workers by discriminatory barriers. A reduced monthly dues rate and special union committees for the needs of unemployed members (similar to existing committees on discrimination or safety problems) would further emphasize the importance of fighting unemployment through union action. A class-struggle leadership would also seek ways to organize unemployed workers in related fields, tying them to the labor movement through special sections of the unions, as was done by the Trotskyist leadership of the Minneapolis Teamsters' Local 574 during the 1930's depression. (We do not call for the setting up of impotent "unemployed leagues" divorced from the labor movement. Experience in the '30's fully demonstrated the instability of such leagues and the need for leadership from the employed workers.)

Such demands will, of course, run into stiff opposition by the labor bureaucracy which totally forgets about the needs of the membership the minute they are laid off and can no longer pay dues. Not only do the labor fakers have no program for fighting unemployment, but as soon as laid-off workers are out of the plant they are out of the union as well. To implement a real program to combat unemployment it is necessary first of all to defeat the class-collaborationist bureaucracy. The necessary instrument for this task is a class-struggle caucus, as the complement in the unions to the struggle of the vanguard party. Forward to a national class-struggle caucus in the UAW! ■

## GLASS SERIES

### BASIC TROTSKYISM

Jan. 7 United Front vs. Popular Front

Jan. 21 The Founding of the Fourth International

Feb. 4 The Struggle for the Fourth International in the Post War Era

## BAY AREA

For information call: (415) 653-4668 or 655-5175 or 763-4510

Published by  
SPARTACIST  
Box 1377-GPO  
NY, NY 10001

75¢

## Class Struggle in Auto

articles from *Workers Vanguard*



Continued from page 12

## French Stalinists ...

"for their own profit"! The opportunist appetites of these renegades from Trotskyism know no bounds.

In the parliamentary elections last March, Lutte Ouvrière distinguished itself by its rampant economism, putting its main emphasis on the 1,500 franc minimum monthly wage demand. Now it *drops even this demand*, simply calling for "developing" the working-class offensive against high prices (which the CP-CGT have supposedly already started), and otherwise endorsing the bureaucracy's slogans!

"And it is up to us, the workers, to oblige the union leaderships to organize the struggle or to continue the struggle without them if they refuse to do it.

Continued from page 5

## Miller Polices Miners ...

couple of years ago.) But in their desperate efforts to tail alter every available popular "reformer" out-bureaucrat, a number of ostensibly Trotskyist groups have attempted to glorify Miller as a supposed representative of the aspirations of rank-and-file militants for a break with the tradition of pro-company and pro-capitalist union misleaders.

One such fake-Trotskyist outfit which gave "critical support" to the Miners for Democracy in the last elections was the tiny Class Struggle League. Still eager to proclaim the "progressive" virtues of their candidate (though ritually warning that he will eventually sell out even though he is "honest" and "likable"), it took just a single offhand remark by Miller at the UE convention this fall to the effect that workers should "elect a labor president" (*Daily World*, 15 September) to provoke an entire article from the CSL calling on workers to give Miller's call a "careful look." The CSL claims that "Miller's idea of a labor party is one in which the workers will be better tied to the capitalist parliamentary farce. Still, such a party, even of the type that Miller has in mind, would be a step forward for the class." *Class Struggle* (November 1973) also notes that the new leader has been disbanding the "strong rank and file group" he used to win office.

At the convention the CSL would have noted that the MFD did not appear at all, having been quietly "disappeared" by the bureaucracy without a whimper from the ranks whose militancy it supposedly represented. But its leaders were not absent. They, like Miller, were sporting buttons of the Coal Miners Political Action Committee (COMPAC), the organizational form for the Mine Workers' support to the Democratic Party. Even before their 1972 victory a number of MFD leaders ran for office as Democrats and they have openly supported liberal West Virginia Representative Ken Heckler.

While the Spartacist League calls for a labor party in order to mobilize the working class to break with capitalist politics, it does not create illusions about a labor party led by "Miller, Meany, et al." as a "step forward." Nor are we so desperate to tail alter bureaucrats that we imagine that the arch-reactionary Meany or timid Democrat Miller are about to lead such a movement. Miller's labor party exists only in the imagination of centrist cretins who made the mistake of supporting him for president of the union (something they do not mention frequently these days) and are now looking for straws to cling to in justification of this rotten betrayal. ■

"That is why all workers should be on strike on December 6, why all should demonstrate in the streets their discontent and their desire to struggle together, in the face of the coming crisis, for their common objectives."

—*Lutte Ouvrière*, 4-11 December 1973

In contrast to this disgusting contest of reformist one-upmanship between LO/Rouge and the CP, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) has at least attempted to separate itself from the bureaucracy by waging a campaign "For Unity, Against Revolving Strikes." This campaign had a cutting edge against the labor bureaucracy, since the Stalinist CGT leadership expelled at least one militant of the OCI for opposing the defeatist revolving strike strategy at a union meeting (*Informations Ouvrières*, 21-28 November 1973).

However, the OCI failed to provide any concrete political alternative to the sellout reformists. This was evident both in its intervention in particular union situations and in the main slogans raised by the OCI with regard to the December 6 strike. For example, at a major meeting of public service employees on November 22 in Paris, organized by the OCI against the revolving strikes strategy, a letter was adopted calling for unity to be sent to the major unions. The OCI refused to argue against a motion (which was eventually passed) to eliminate from the letter a very mild call to further independent action after December 6.

In the same vein, the lead editorial in *Informations Ouvrières* No. 634 (29 November-5 December) stated: "People sometimes say to us: 'You are campaigning for unity, against revolving strikes! Very well... But unity for what? Unity on what program?' The OCI then explicitly refused to give the only possible answer to that question: that revolutionists must begin to wage a political struggle to oust the current union bureaucracy and replace it with a leadership based on a class struggle program.

The OCI recognizes that the strike on December 6 was a bureaucratic maneuver: "It's a fact: the party and union bureaucracies controlled the strike and demonstration from beginning to end, and they didn't want it finally to pose the question of state power" (*Informations Ouvrières*, 12-19 December). But then, it was not simply the bureaucrats who failed to raise the question of state power. Concentrating on the slogan "For Unity, Against Revolving Strikes," the OCI failed to raise the only concrete alternative to the Stalinists' popular-front line, the call for a workers government. Such a call, directed at the CP-SP-CGT-CFDT-FO bureaucrats and demanding they take power in their own name rather than relying on an alliance with residual sectors of the bourgeoisie, must be coupled with an intransigent struggle for a revolutionary program representing the interests of the working class as the only possible basis for a real workers government. Thus the call for a workers government, far from being an accommodation to the reformist bureaucrats, is in fact the cutting edge of the struggle against their policies of class collaboration! ■

Continued from page 3

## RSL ...

opened an office in Karl Marx Square in Moscow!

### Where Does It All Lead?

In the discussion period the RSL speakers did not add anything to Gregory's presentation except the explicit statement that "state capitalism is qualitatively the same as capitalism." Of the independents (neither SL nor RSL), a former member of the Jewish Bund who had fled Stalin's Russia and is now a member of the Social Democrats U.S.A. complained that in the SDUSA he unfortunately had to deal with "people who are violent anti-Soviets. But I will tell you something. When I heard this young man speaking in the name of the 'Revolutionary Socialist League,' I would say that he is worse even than the most anti-Soviets I have to deal with in the Socialist Party."

SL speakers pointed out that the RSL arguments simply came down to the fact that they *don't like* the Soviet Union. It is "essentially the Shachtman position, which is that democracy equals a workers state; which is why, in the last analysis, it is a social-democratic position." Another SL speaker responded to the RSL contention that since Trotsky was wrong in predicting that socialist revolution would follow World War II, therefore the RSL is right in saying the USSR is now "state capitalist":

"Trotsky's projections were certainly projections of revolutionary optimism... The Second World War did not, indeed, bring to a final intersection the contradictions which Trotsky clearly saw. This is not unusual among Marxists. I believe that several times in the 19th century, Marx anticipated that the decisive proletarian revolution within capitalist Europe would take place. That does not invalidate his understanding of the law of motion, but just that a particular intersection point was missed. And why was it missed? ... Trotsky sometimes notes, you may recognize the phrase, the subjective factor in history... The Fourth International is not an abstraction, an isolated entity out there somewhere. It was *shattered*! ... And in that strongest section of all [the American SWP], you Shachtmanites defected—half of you ran away!"

Repeatedly the RSL engaged in pacifist snivelling about the "workers' bomb," calling for the "disarmament of the bureaucracy," and announcing that the weapons of the bureaucracy would only be used against the workers. The SL speaker replied: "'Russia should not have had the bomb?' Right? Then you would not have a problem, because it is not just the workers and the bureaucracy; there is also capitalist imperialism... Without the 'workers' bomb' there would be no problem to debate tonight—to your satisfaction!"

The final SL speaker in the floor

discussion dealt with the questions of Cuba and China. RSL speakers had maintained that the Spartacist League, in saying that the Castro regime was a "petty-bourgeois government," had "invented" a third form of state, besides workers' and bourgeois. "As a good social democrat," the SLer noted, "you confuse the government with the state... He [Trotsky] characterized [Stalin's regime] as a petty-bourgeois bureaucracy. Bonapartist governments are in their nature *petty-bourgeois* because they stand between the two classes... States are a different matter. States defend different forms of ownership of the means of production, of appropriating social surplus."

He went on: "Now what happened in Cuba? The Cuban Revolution was made by a petty-bourgeois formation. Do you characterize the Castroites from their inception as a 'capitalist' formation? When they were in the mountains they were capitalists??... Then they smashed the existing ruling class... they [the capitalists] left Cuba. Now Castro stepped into a power vacuum... The petty bourgeoisie, that is right, cannot generate its own state. It must take a course. And the course that Cuba took was to make property social property—all property. It is not a question of selective nationalizations. It was the creation of the dominant mode of production."

He pointed out that if the RSL were consistent, its position would have been in 1948 that it didn't matter if Chiang Kai-shek or Mao Tse-tung won in the Chinese civil war, and that there is really no difference between India and China. In the Korean War the RSL would have had to call for the defeat of both sides! "If you were consistent, your position in the Cuban missile crisis would have been 'Third Camp.' And that is where the 'workers' bomb' comes in."

### Shachtmanism and Menshevism

Speakers from the Revolutionary Socialist League several times accused the SL of Pabloism because we recognize that under unusual circumstances petty-bourgeois forces have been able to overthrow capitalism (though never achieving socialism). Their reasoning reveals the RSL's own fundamental Shachtmanism, assuming that if a deformed workers state under Stalinist leadership is a "step forward" compared to capitalism, then we must advocate Stalinism! But the Trotskyist position is quite clear: we defend the Stalinist-ruled states against imperialism while advocating political revolution to overthrow the parasitic bureaucracy.

After hearing from the RSL that recognition of Russia as a degenerated workers state is Pabloist, it was interesting to read an article in the RSL's *Torch* (15 December-15 January) describing the impending split of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat. In the several paragraphs he devotes to the subject of Pabloism the author, Kevin Tracy, neglects to mention the connection between Pabloism and Trotsky's theory of a degenerated workers state. Why not? Because Tracy is a member of the former Communist Tendency of the SWP, which after liquidating itself into the IS now turns up as part of the RSL. And the still-existing ex-CT holds the orthodox Trotskyist position on the Russian question. We have said before that the RSL thrust was toward organizational Menshevism ("freedom of criticism")—here is a typical example.

What a rotten, rotten bloc! The cynical ex-CTers' only purpose to the state-capitalist Landyites is to provide a Trotskyist cover for a Shachtmanite racket. They can ignore the Russian question—but not for long. The first time a serious class issue rises concerning the deformed workers states, the RSL will split—If the supposed "orthodox Trotskyists" of the CT haven't completely liquidated their politics beforehand. In any case the direction of these left Shachtmanites is the same as that of their mentor—straight toward the accommodating embrace of the liberal bourgeoisie. ■

# WORKERS VANGUARD

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**includes SPARTACIST** ☐ Enclosed is \$3 for 24 issues ☐ Enclosed is \$1 for 8 issues

order from/pay to: Spartacist Publishing Co./Box 1377, GPO/NY, NY 10001



# WORKERS VANGUARD

## French Stalinists Call Token General Strike

### Push Impotent "Revolving Strike" Strategy

In view of the level of the class struggle in France since the legislative elections last March, a general strike against inflation on December 6, although hailed as the largest mobilization of the French working class since May 1968, has to be seen as the minimum response that the reformist bureaucrats of the Communist and Socialist parties and their trade-union allies (CGT, CFDT) could make in order to preserve their domination of the labor movement.

Following the elections, the French working class "returned to active mobilization in the streets and in the factories, putting an end to the bureaucratic truce imposed by the Communist Party and the CP-led labor federation (the CGT) during the campaign period" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 21, 25 May 1973). This mobilization included important strikes at Renault and in the large social security sector, in addition to the massive demonstrations of high school and technical school students over changes in the draft law.

During the post-election strike wave, the workers at the Lip watch factory in Besançon struck and occupied their factory in May to oppose its projected closing, and also continued manufacturing watches which they sold to support themselves. Lip workers continued their strike and kept on making watches even after the French riot police (CRS) had driven them out of the factory (August 14). The Lip strike set the tone for the upsurge in strike activity after the return from the traditional French August vacations.

### Fall Strike Wave

Since September, there have been major strikes in the printing industry (at Larousse, where workers occupied the plant), the French railroads (SNCF), the metal workers' union (which includes all workers who handle metal, e.g., steel, auto, etc.), the public services union and an unprecedented one-day strike by previously unorganized immigrant workers on September 14, as well as a large number of smaller and wild-cat strikes. These strikes—like the strike wave which preceded the electoral victory of the 1936 French Popular Front—have been overwhelmingly defensive in nature, aimed largely at protecting the working class, even if only partially, against rampant inflation and deteriorating living conditions. But like the 1936 strike wave, these defensive strikes contain a potential for open political mobilization against the shaky Pompidou regime.

With the exception of a united one-day strike of the public service employees on October 11, called by the three major union federations, the CGT, CFDT and FO, the CGT has concentrated on calling a series of "revolving strikes"—similar in nature to Woodcock's bankrupt "apache strategy" of last spring in the UAW—in which only one region, one factory or one sector strikes in isolation, while everyone else continues work. Thus the SNCF strikes in September and October were "revolving strikes" and on November 6 through 11 the CGT and CFDT called a series of nationwide (but partial) "revolving strikes" in many industries. Such strikes are of course divisive of class unity and serve only to tire and

demoralize the workers without being in the least effective. Even though partial strikes of this nature are traditional in France, the French working class is increasingly aware of their futility: this is one of the lessons of May 1968 which has been learned.

The obvious failure of this CP-CGT strategy to halt inflation and the increases in living costs, which have reached an annual rate of 15 percent in France, despite the "actions" of the unions against a series of governmental "anti-inflation" measures, could not but be apparent to the French workers.

### One-Day General Strike

In these circumstances, the one-day general strike, called mainly by the political parties of the popular front of last spring's legislative elections—slightly enlarged to include the left social-democratic PSU—and the unions which are led by them, served the function of channelling the unrest of the working class into apparently massive, but in fact safe, ineffective "action." And everything points to the conclusion that after December 6, the CP and CGT will return to the same old "revolving strikes."

The size and scope of the demonstrations leave no doubt as to the depth of the unrest, which extends to large segments of the petty bourgeoisie, as manifested recently in a strike by shopkeepers and small merchants against government taxation measures directed at them. The demonstration in Paris, by common account the largest since 1968, gathered nearly 500,000 workers and took over five hours to pass a single point. There were major demonstrations in other cities, both large and small: 50,000 in Marseilles, 25,000 in Toulouse, 30,000 in Bordeaux, 20,000 in Rouen and Brest, and so on. Perhaps as many as a million and a half workers all told actively participated in demonstrations across France.

To counter the discontent to which the strike bore witness, and parallel to the bourgeoisies of other countries (England, U.S.), the French government is attempting to use and to inflate the "energy crisis" in order to attack directly (as well as indirectly through inflation) the living standards of the working class by provoking a recession—or at least raising its spectre. In addition to "anti-inflation" measures aimed at the working class, significant numbers of French businesses have announced plans for layoffs, shutdowns, etc.

On the day of the general strike, both Citroen and Peugeot announced unusual unpaid 10-day shutdowns around Christmas and New Year. Citroen locked out its workers on the day of the general strike, declaring that they would have to make up the day on Saturday (no overtime, of course), and Peugeot has announced the layoff of some 259 Yugoslav workers, with more threatened. Along with rumors of other layoffs and factory closings, these announcements stir fears of unemployment in an effort to counteract working-class combativity and to limit even defensive strikes against such measures.

### Reactions of the French Left

When measured by their actions, the more militant posture adopted by the Communist Party and the CGT following last spring's elections was precisely that: a posture, aimed only at more efficiently channelling the working class into support for the "Common Program" of the popular front, which calls for maintaining the bour-



French workers march against inflation in Paris on December 6.

geois constitution, "republicanizing" the army (as in Chile, perhaps??) and reaching a "broader democracy." Thus the CP and CGT have minimized support for the strike of Lip workers—including sabotaging support demonstrations in Paris over the summer. The entire strategy of "revolving strikes" combines a seeming militancy with a predictable total lack of effect.

Among the ostensibly Trotskyist organizations, Lutte Ouvrière and the militants now grouped around *Rouge* (the paper expressing the views of the ex-Ligue Communiste) have both followed an economist line of being simply "more militant" than the CP or the CGT combined, in the case of *Rouge* with sponsorship of a variety of adventurist actions. Thus, around the strike at Lip, *Rouge* simply organized enthusiastic and uncritical support for the Lip strikers outside the mainstream of the labor movement; LO did the same with somewhat greater attention to the working class and somewhat less enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the major demonstration in support of Lip, in Besançon on September 29, which was downplayed by the CP and the CGT and CFDT federations, drew about 100,000 people, a third of them behind the banners of *Rouge* and Lutte Ouvrière.

Given the obvious depth of sentiment for support to Lip at that juncture, a correct call to expose the foot-dragging betrayals of the bureaucrats would have been for a general strike in support of the Lip demands against layoffs: a demand which was advanced only by the other major ostensibly Trotskyist organization in France, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste.

Similarly, the intervention of the ostensibly Trotskyist organizations in the December 6 strike amounted to an orgy of opportunism. Neither *Rouge* nor Lutte Ouvrière advanced any per-

spective beyond "more militant" demonstrations, and none of the groups posed the fundamental question of state power by raising the demand of a workers government. *Rouge*, which last March posed the question of political power by calling for a vote for the CP-SP-Left Radical popular front (!), this time limited itself to economic demands. Its editorial concerning the general strike focussed on the demand for 1,500 francs minimum monthly wage: "The CGT and CFDT unions at Renault Billancourt demand 1,500 F minimum. So why not 1,500 F minimum for everybody?" [emphasis in original]. Why not indeed, if your perspective is limited to the classic demand of simple trade unionism in the manner of Samuel Gompers or Leon Jouhaux—"more." And not so much more at that, since 1,500 F amounts to less than \$90 a week.

*Rouge's* demand for a "sliding scale" differs from the CP's only in that the former wants it based on a realistic price index and not the one used by the government or CGT. To show that it is not simply identical with the CP, *Rouge* ends by calling for "a new May '68, better than in '68! A May '68 where the workers keep the factories running but for their own profit. A May '68 for the time of Lip!" (*Rouge*, 30 November 1973). "A May '68 where the workers keep the factories running"! If ever there were a classic reformist distortion of the demand of workers control, this is it. The issue in the May events was to struggle for a workers government as an alternative to Gaullist bonapartism, to transform the CGT's economic general strike into a struggle for state power. But now *Rouge* wants to send the workers from the barricades and streets back to the factories to work

continued on page 11