

# VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

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## MAN AND THE MOON

The landing of men on the moon by the American government testifies to the vast expansion of science and technology in the six hundred-odd years since capitalism began to emerge from the womb of feudalism, and to the rapid increase of the productive forces in this century.

The bourgeois press has hailed this accomplishment as a triumph for mankind, and as promoting world peace. The Communist Party's "Daily World" and the Socialist Workers Party's "Militant" have critically enthused over the technological advance for humanity.

Revolutionary socialists, on the contrary, aware of the explosive character of the increasingly powerful forces in the hands of the American imperialists, see the moon-landing as an alarm, as a warning of impending disasters for mankind, unless an end is made to this most aggressive and predatory ruling class, and its increasingly irrational capitalist system, by a working class revolution.

The history of humanity testifies to the truth of the historical materialist proposition, that the development of the material productive forces is the factor which acts to revolutionize society, that out-lived relations of production, which increasingly confine and constrict these forces, must be over-thrown, and new relations established corresponding to these

forces, if "the common ruin of the contending classes" is not to ensue.

Marx and Engels were able to state in 1848 in the Communist Manifesto, that:

"For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces... against the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule".

Since then, and especially since capitalism passed into its moribund stage, imperialism, the magnitude of disasters for humanity has kept pace with the magnitude of the productive forces, increasingly used for destruction, including that of the most important force, man.

### Capitalist Disasters

Thirty million casualties in the first World War! Fifty million in the second! Countless millions doomed to slow and early death through starvation and disease! The slaughter of Korean and Vietnamese by American imperialism!

Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons which threaten to wipe out all humanity and life itself! Now, even in its "peaceful" pursuits, bourgeois society poisons the earth, polluting the atmosphere, soil and oceans.

Has capitalism acquired a new lease on life as a result of the moon-troop? Is the voyage to the moon analogous to the discovery of America by Columbus almost five hundred years ago, which Marx and Engels indicated helped pave the way for the development of the world market and provided a mighty impulse for capitalist development?

Viewed historically, and taking into account the difference between infancy and far-advanced old age, the further development of technology at this stage can only and intolerably sharpen the contradictions of capitalism, and increase the urgency of proletarian revolutions.

#### Preparation for War

Space exploration is a fundamental expression of the preparation for war by American capitalism against the degenerate and deformed workers' states.

No new areas are opened up, either as sources of raw materials or as markets for investment. On the contrary, the voyage is itself an expression of the advanced contradictions of an aged but virulent capitalism, still faced with the conquests of the first and only successful proletarian revolution, the October Revolution in Russia, which continue to exist, although in distorted and contradictory form and which still represents a breach in the world capitalist system; with the widening of that breach through the transformation of Eastern Europe, China and Cuba into deformed workers' states, and with a maturing world capitalist crisis, which promises to accentuate the threat of revolutions in both the advanced and underdeveloped sectors of its system.

The basic contradiction which places world capitalism in crisis, also acts on the Stalinist bureaucracies in the degenerate and deformed workers' states. The more openly counter-revolutionary policies of the Soviet bureaucrats reflect the incompatibility of a bureaucratic caste with the growing productive forces. This contradiction continually produces internal pressures which lead to political revolution, while compelling the caste to policies which lead back to capitalism. At the same time, its ability to perform counter-revolutionary services in the interests of "socialism in one country", is lessened with its exposure.

One hundred and twenty-one years have elapsed since the Communist Manifesto was written. Had the proletarian revolution which was then expected by Marx and Engels occurred, the world would not only have been spared the immeasurable suffering it has endured and continues to endure, but even then would have experienced a vast expansion in productive ability, in its control over nature, in its capacity to satisfy the needs of humanity.

#### The Future

Today, the space voyage only begins to indicate the tremendous heights to which mankind can aspire, in a rational society, with planned production geared to man's use, and not to a system of profit for a minority at the expense of the vast majority.

Humanity's future can be brilliant indeed. For this to be realized, however, the putrifying carcass of capitalism must be buried. The working class will not be able to function as capitalism's gravedigger, however, without its vanguard party. Because American imperialism represents the greatest threat to humanity, an especially heavy responsibility for the future rests on the American workers and revolutionary socialists.

## PERSPECTIVES AND PROGRAM FOR THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

### Introduction

The viewpoint of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER was originated in 1967 by a former minority of the Spartacist League, as the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle".

The "Memorandum" was a strategic and tactical orientation for revolutionary socialists, directed toward the construction of a Leninist vanguard party, i.e., a party which is guided by the theory and practice of scientific socialism, which has ineradicable roots in the American working class, as a result of its proven leadership, its educational and organizational role, and which, thereby, also wins support from intermediate petty-bourgeois strata, e.g., students, intellectuals, etc. The focus of the "Memorandum" on the Negro struggle, correctly emphasized the centrality of the Negro question to the construction of a Leninist party in the US, and to the American social revolution, in a working class divided on racial lines.

The "Memorandum", a synthesis of the theoretical and practical, incorporated essential conceptions of the transitional program of the Fourth International, largely written by Trotsky in 1938, his views on the Negro question, and the pioneering work of the early Communist Party, operating in the Trade Union Educational League, before its ultra-left transformation.

We believe that the Memorandum's perspective has been shown to be valid and valuable. While modifications are now necessary, as a result of developments since 1967, and the expansion of our own horizons, we are convinced that its outlook can illuminate the American revolutionary road. We have, therefore, incorporated its essence in this statement, brought it up to date, and further expanded it, in the form of theses.

Initially, we present our general economic and political perspectives, and trade union perspectives and

program. We intend to present our program for other arenas in future issues of the newsletter, and to expand upon these propositions concretely.

### Economic and Political Perspectives

1. Despite Keynesian fiscal, credit and monetary manipulations, which have been able to maintain the precarious equilibrium of world capitalism at a high plateau, and in a semblance of boom, and despite uneven development and minor fluctuations in the world market, the post-World War II expansion of capitalism has reached its end.

2. The crisis of world capitalism, reflected in monetary and balance of payments difficulties, expresses the underlying and fundamental contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production; between the tendency of capital to accumulate at an accelerating and ever increasing rate, and the limitations imposed on production by capitalist profit; by the requirement to expand production on pain of extinction, and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall with each such expansion.

3. The steep ascent--prepared by the massive destruction of the second World War, the huge infusion of capital from the US which emerged from the war with an unscathed and enlarged productive plant and a giant share of the world market, Keynesian deficit financing, the temporary suspension of the law of value in international relations in behalf of American monopoly capital, the temporary stabilizing effect on the market of the degenerate and deformed workers' states--guarantees that the decline, presently taking place, will be of catastrophic

proportions.

4. The capitalists in every country prepare for sharpening international competition, for increased commercial and industrial war for the shrinking world market, by a war against their own working classes, through destruction of living standards, through intensified exploitation.

5. The economic contradictions find expression in an unbalancing of the social equilibrium, as the workers fight against the attempts of their ruling classes to improve their international economic positions and rate of profit at their expense.

#### Trade Union Perspectives

1. The increase in militancy among American workers is reflected in heightened strike and rank and file activity by all sections of the working class, directed at both the capitalist class and their labor-lieutenants, against attempts to destroy their right to strike, the erosion of real wages through inflation, the intolerable increase in speed-up, and the threat which automation and technological advances offer to their jobs.

2. The mounting offensive of the ruling class places on the immediate agenda, the need for independent organization of the working class in its own political party, and the unity in action of its organizations.

3. The black workers, the most militant of all, are increasingly fighting against the special oppression of Black people, against its status as a specially oppressed race-color caste, and its super-exploitation in the work-place.

4. Unity of black and white workers against their exploiters can only be forged in the struggle against the super-exploitation of black workers, within the context of a struggle for the interests of all workers.

5. The black workers, politically in advance of the white, can play

an exceptional role in the coming American revolution, and provide leadership to the working class as a whole, to the extent that a party of the Bolshevik type is built.

6. Black and white workers can be won to socialist consciousness only in uncompromising struggle against all manifestations of white chauvinism, and its reflection, black nationalism. Black workers will be able to achieve class consciousness to the degree that white workers recognize the identity of their interests with the interests of the working class as a whole, to the extent that the white workers realize that the struggle against special oppression is in their own most immediate and fundamental interests.

7. The rank and file trade union caucus, fighting on a program of transitional demands, is the instrument which can unite black and white workers in struggle, and raise their consciousness to the socialist level.

8. Black caucuses, presently materializing at a rapid rate, often with leaderships which voice black nationalist ideas, are manifestations of the determination of black workers to end their special oppression. To the degree that rank and file bi-racial caucuses, able to wage a serious struggle against racial discrimination do not exist, black caucuses will continue to proliferate.

9. Attempts to split the workers through the formation of separate black unions, play directly into the hands of the bosses, and must be firmly opposed.

10. The united front tactic, developed by Lenin and Trotsky, is the means by which a rank and file caucus can convince black workers that it will not down-grade or ignore their special demands, can produce a common front of struggle which leads to an organic caucus unity, and in the process, either win or expose the leaders of the black caucus and advocates of black separatism.

11. Within the rank and file caucuses, committees composed of black and white workers should be constituted which would focus on the special oppression of black and other exploited minorities. Where black workers are excluded from jobs and membership in unions, a struggle by the rank and file caucus to end such exclusion is mandatory.

12. Rank and file caucuses must wage a determined struggle against the special oppression of women, which is also fundamentally expressed in the work-place as super-exploitation. Women, and especially black women, the most exploited and oppressed of all, are today among the most ready to struggle for equality in wages, jobs and working conditions. Special committees comprised of both men and women, should be formed which would educate both the caucuses and the workers as a whole, to the necessity of fighting male supremacist attitudes, in their immediate and fundamental class interests.

#### Trade Union Program

1. A transitional program for rank and file caucuses, would vary with specific industries and work-places, but would tend to have the following general positions:

a. A fight against overt and covert manifestations of discrimination against black, other minorities and women, by the bosses and labor bureaucrats, e.g., work assignments, pay differentials, racial slurs, etc.

b. A minimum wage at a decent standard of life, aiming particularly at overcoming and eliminating the super-exploitation of minority and women workers.

c. Upgrading of minority workers to skilled crafts at the bosses expense.

d. A sliding scale of wages and hours, linking:

1) the right of unemployed to

jobs. Organizations of the unemployed, especially youth, can be united with workers in common struggle through the caucuses.

2) the shorter workweek without loss in pay, as the means to provide more and higher skilled jobs, thereby eliminating competition of workers for the dwindling supply. This demand is especially necessary in the struggle against racial discrimination, and in uniting black and white workers.

3) the skilled crafts with the general working class struggle,

e. Organization of the unorganized. Minority workers form a high proportion of the work-force in the sweat-shops and run-away shops. Rank and file caucuses must take the lead in organizing workers into the established unions, or into independent unions, where this is not possible.

f. A system of public works, for a period of rising unemployment, to ensure the right to work.

g. A rank and file slate of candidates against the entrenched bureaucracy to achieve democratic control of the union.

h. A labor party based on the unions.

2. A national caucus movement which would link up shops and unions, regionally and nationally, in a transitional organization, and unite the working class around the program of transitional demands.

An organization of this type would not only serve to unite the workers' organizations against the ruling class offensive, but would, at a revolutionary juncture, be readily transformed into factory committees and workers councils, i.e., would constitute the nucleus of dual power, of working class rule, of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Along this road, it would demand expropriation under workers' control of key industries, e.g., monopolies, war industries.

Excellent Program!

NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Lenin versus Wohlforth  
on the National Question

Hardly had the Workers League's (WL) Tim Wohlforth ended his homily against the revisionists of Lenin, on the need "to understand reality in all its concreteness...within its proper historical evolution" (The New Nationalism and the Negro Struggle, p. 1), when he emerged with a new supra-historical law, which he, in the exact same manner as the revisionists, foists onto Lenin. Lenin, it seems:

"emphasized throughout his writings that the necessity for raising this demand for self-determination is always associated with a country in a state of backwardness which has either not passed through the bourgeois democratic revolution or where this revolution has only been partially successful" (emphasis added).

~~"Lenin", continues Wohlforth, therefore, "saw no validity whatsoever to the right of nations to self-determination" in "advanced capitalist countries", and "current nationalist and semi-nationalist movements in Belgium, England, Canada and the United States" are "so completely reactionary" because "the bourgeois revolution has long been completed" in these countries.~~

Wohlforth triumphantly holds aloft the warrant for his position, point 6 of "Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", in which Lenin analyses in this connection three main types of countries.

In addition to the proscription on the right of nations to self-determination in Western Europe and the US, Lenin, it seems also set forth two other categories where the "slogan" was applicable, the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and those countries where the "bourgeois democratic revolution had only partially succeeded

in creating multi-national states" such as "'Eastern Europe, Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia" (The New Nationalism, p. 3, emphasis added).

It is obvious nonsense to attribute to Lenin the opinion that the bourgeois democratic revolution had "partially succeeded" in Russia prior to 1917, let alone that its "partial" success had created the Russian multi-national state.

It would also seem that Wohlforth is not aware, even after having read Lenin on the national question, that bourgeois democracy is, at best, limited and incomplete in every area, including the national.

If, as Wohlforth avers, Lenin had ruled out the applicability of the right to self-determination for nations which had completed their bourgeois-democratic revolutions, then how could he have pointed to the example of the secession of Norway from Sweden as an instance of its valid use? In what essential way in regard to the national question did the Norwegians before 1905 differ from the present-day Welsh or Scots in Great Britain, Flemings in Belgium, French in Canada, or Bretons in France, etc.? Perhaps Comrade Wohlforth will be good enough to enlighten us.

According to Lenin:

"Until 1905 autonomous Norway, as a part of Sweden, enjoyed the widest autonomy, but she was not Sweden's equal. Only by her free secession was her equality manifested in practice and proved... As long as Norway was merely autonomous, the Swedish aristocracy had one additional privilege..." (The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up, Lenin's emphasis)

If "backwardness" is the criterion, for the right to self-determination to be supportable, then how does Wohlforth explain the fact that the Bolsheviks supported the right of Finland to secede, after the October Revolution? Why did they insist upon that right

Did him say they are a nation here.

for peoples in a Soviet Russia, no longer a "prison-house of nations"?

### The Right of Nations to Self-Determination

The objective basis for the national question was stated by Lenin as follows:

"Developing capitalism knows two historical tendencies in the national question. The first is the awakening of... national movements, the struggle against all national oppression, and the creation of national states. The second is... the break-down of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital.." (Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism, p. 20)

[As a consistent dialectical materialist, Lenin understood that the working class, arising in a national environment, could only be made conscious of its international character, not by attempting to ignore the national, as did Rosa Luxemburg, but by transcending it.

Lenin fought for the adoption of his position upholding the right of nations to self-determination, i.e., the right to secede, as a correct understanding of the dialectical unity of national and international, which would enable the Marxists to lead the working classes of both the oppressed and oppressor nations to proletarian internationalism.

Lenin never gave the "national question..support" as Wohlforth's diffuse language has it, but unremittingly and intelligently opposed every manifestation of bourgeois nationalism. In order to do so, he was required to wage a struggle against opportunist and sectarian (the opportunism of a different sort) policies in the socialist movement--against those from the oppressed nations and national minorities, who spoke from the viewpoint of petty-bour-

geois nationalism, and those, who in the name of internationalism, either behaved like annexationists (from the oppressor nations), or played into the hands of real annexationists (from the oppressed nations).

It is only from a correct appreciation of Lenin's unyielding struggle against metaphysical and opportunist approaches on the national question, that we can understand his theses, which represented, not only a summation but also, an enlargement of his position of the national question.

Needless to say, Lenin elaborated no supra-historical dogmas, but on the contrary, indicated in the shape of a program, for which he educated, and which he ably defended, the duties and responsibilities which devolve upon the Marxists in the historically prepared concrete situation, in which they are required to function.

### Types of Countries

What Lenin did say about the three main types of countries was the following:

In the first type, "the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States", bourgeois national movements did not exist! In answer to Luxemburg, Lenin replied that point 9 of the program "covers all instances of bourgeois-democratic national movements.../but/ it is ridiculous to seek an answer to non-existent questions in the programmes of Western Europe." (Lenin's emphasis)

The second type referred to the countries of:

"Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia /where/ the twentieth century particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle."

In the third type:

"the semi-colonial countries... socialists must...demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation, and support the...more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements..." (Theses, point 6)

The sheer nonsense uttered by Wohlforth in Lenin's name, does not result from over-hasty formulations or generalizations, but directly from Wohlforth's method. No matter how many times he capitalizes, not only the first, but every letter in the word (as he did in his review of Lunacharsky's "Revolutionary Silhouettes"), he cannot transform his method into the method of Marxism.

Wohlforth wishes to provide a theoretical justification for the positions of the Socialist Labour League (SLL), which does not uphold the right of the Scots or French Canadians to self-determination, while also posing a theoretical basis for opposing the Black struggle in the US. He, therefore, approaches the national question tendentiously, and develops his position through an eclectic and mechanical reading of Lenin.

For the same reason, Wohlforth tends to de-emphasize the stress Lenin places on the differing educational approaches to the workers of oppressor and oppressed nations, i.e.:

"In the oppressor countries, emphasis must be laid on their the workers advocating freedom for the oppressed countries to secede and their fighting for

it. Without this there can be no internationalism...This is an absolute demand, even where the chance of secession being possible and "practicable" before the introduction of socialism is only one in a thousand. It is our duty to teach workers to be "indifferent" to national distinctions...But it must not be the indifference of annexationists.

On the other hand, a Social-Democrat from a small nation must emphasize...the second word of our general formula: 'voluntary integration' of nations" (Questions of National Policy, p. 151, Lenin's emphasis)

We ask the comrades of the WL and SLL--to the degree that bourgeois national movements have arisen, which involve masses of workers in the "democratic" capitalist countries, as a result of the artificial prolongation of the life of capitalism by Social Democracy and Stalinism and under the impact of the developing world crisis--would not Lenin's position on self-determination be a far more logical and effective, not to speak of valid, method of combating the influence of bourgeois nationalism on the working classes of both oppressor and oppressed nations, than the neo-Luxemburgist position which you have adopted?

Luxemburg's mistake was mitigated by the fact that she came from an oppressed nation. But the SLL comrades in England, who uphold the state borders of the British "Commonwealth" against the Scots, the Welsh and French Canadians, do not have her excuse!

(to be continued)

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