

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

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A WRITE-IN VOTE FOR BUTELLE

As we indicated in July, of the three parties which carry a socialist banner in the forthcoming mayoralty election, the Communist (CP), Socialist Labor (SLP) and Socialist Workers (SWP), only the latter two project a program which warrants consideration from socialists.

Only the CP's candidate, Rasheed Storey, retains his place on the ballot. However, his candidacy seems, essentially, a means by which the CP faithful can be registered.

The CP, which has again unearthed its class collaborationist slogan of the "anti-monopoly coalition", has openly thrown its support behind Mayor Lindsay. This 'liberal', who not long ago called for bayonets to break the strike of sanitation workers, is paraded as a savior from right-wing candidates, Procaccino and Marchi. Savior Lindsay, had no compunctions about stealing the ballot space of the SWP and SLP in order to secure a second leading line on the ballot. Eager for the support of "liberals" and "progressives", and shrewd enough to recognize the direction from which the wind is now blowing, Lindsay has endorsed the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, the political expression of the liberal wing of the ruling class (See our article in this issue, "Ho Chi Minh--A Balance Sheet"). Its support for Lindsay, places the CP on the other side of the class line.

The SLP combines the most rigid

sectarianism with opportunist illusions in American "democracy", and with anti-Sovietism of the most rabid social-democratic variety.

It champions the cause of socialism, but in a manner which ensures its continuation as a small sect. Its major strategic design is a rigid dual unionism, of one "pure" industrial union to which workers are invited, and which will be the basis for constructing a socialist society.

Its focus is nationally delimited, and distorted by illusions about the nature of the state. The American ruling class is, evidently, expected to be the first throughout history, to be voted out by the ballot.

For revolutionary Marxists, partial gains have always been the by-products of the revolutionary struggle, and the struggle for partial gains has always been seen as the method for mobilizing workers for the revolutionary struggle, e.g., Marx and the struggle in England for the ten hour day. Not so the SLP! For it, any fight to improve wages and working conditions, for "reforms", attenuates the class struggle.

CLASS SERIES *

The SWP retains its socialist and labor party positions, although the main thrust of its campaign is enthusiastic support for black nationalism and all black separatist demands. It has even crossed the class line to scab and to encourage scabbing on NYC' teachers (See our article in this month's section of the series, "Nationalism and Internationalism")

Its support for the Vietnam Moratorium Committee is an extension of its anti-war umbrella "peoples front" coalition politics.

Without Enthusiasm

It is without enthusiasm that we conclude that critical support to, and a write-in vote for the SWP's candidate, Paul Butelle, is in order, as an alternative superior to abstention. As the foregoing indicates and as we also indicated in July, we do not repose the slightest confidence in the SWP in giving its mayoral candidate critical support. We consider it to be a centrist organization, which in the name of Trotsky, abandons the basic foundations of Trotskyism.

* * * *

The historical and theoretical content of revolutionary Marxism will be explored in a 15 week class series, which will begin on Sunday, November 2nd.

The series will be under the direction of Bob Davis, an experienced lecturer and class discussion leader. He brings to the series, an excellent knowledge of political economy, and a background of more than 20 years of participation in socialist struggles.

The Sunday classes, to be held from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M., will be led by several qualified discussion leaders, and will cover Marxism's formative period, political economy, dialectical and historical materialism, the Leninist party, the theory of the state, the Russian Revolution, the rise of Stalinism, war and post-war developments, and revolutionary strategy and tactics (the united front and transitional program).

Those who plan to attend the class should contact Harry Turner c/o VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, P. O. Box 67, Peck Slip Station, New York, N.Y. 10038 for further details.

HO CHI MINH--A BALANCE SHEET

It is as partisans of the Vietnamese revolution, who call for its complete victory over American imperialism, that we approach the task of evaluating the political role of the now-deceased head of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, a figure who led the Communist movement in Southeast Asia for more than four decades.

Form and Content

The struggle of the working class, said Marx, "is national, not in substance, but... in form!" The victory of the Vietnamese revolution will be a blow against world imperialism and its chief representative and gendarme, the US. As such, this accomplishment is in the vital interests of the workers and peasants of the world, of the vast preponderance of mankind. Those who directly lead this struggle are, therefore,

accountable to these masses, and not only to the Vietnamese, just as we American revolutionists who fight against the US imperialist murder machine in Vietnam as an integral part of the struggle against capitalism, are responsible to these same masses, and not only to those who happen to dwell within the geographic confines of the US.

In recognizing the international implications of the Vietnamese struggle, we do not make any concessions to the classless and funda-

mentally reactionary ideology of "third world"ism. This petty bourgeois outlook, which writes off the workers of industrially advanced countries, as no longer capable of revolutionary action, was given a sharp blow by the May-June 1968 general strike of the French workers. The advancing general crisis of world capitalism, in stirring the workers in the advanced countries to revolutionary action, will completely destroy it. The guarantee of the victory of socialism lies in the advanced countries, and in particular in the US. We, the American revolutionists, who still have to build a working class base and a Leninist vanguard party, therefore, bear a particularly heavy responsibility for the fate of mankind. The Stalinist doctrine of "socialism in one country", which not only consigns each workers' state to autopian autarchic development, but which also considers the national bureaucracies to be beyond criticism, is counter-revolutionary to the core.

Stalinism and the CP's

One can only understand the role of the various CP's in relation to the doctrine of "socialism in one country", before and after the expansion of the Stalinist system.

Contrary to Lenin and Trotsky, who saw the victory of the Russian revolution secured through the international revolution, this doctrine, enunciated in 1924, expressed the indifference to and lack of confidence in the international revolution, of a newly arisen bureaucratic caste, and its orientation toward the sources of its power and privilege, "its" workers' state.

Stalin's direction and manipulation of the Communist International, from the first, demonstrated a narrow concern for the security of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the sacrifice of international revolutionary opportunities, and, therefore, the further isolation and jeopardy of the first workers' state.

The bureaucracy's influence in

international affairs was at first subjectively counter-revolutionary. It tied the British CP to the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Council in 1926, when that body had become a fig-leaf of the labor lieutenants of the British ruling class, in selling out the British workers' general strike. In 1927, it tied the Chinese CP to the Kuomintang in a parody of Menshevism, and ensured its massacre by Chiang Kai Shek. Stalin's ultra-left turn in 1929, and the ruinous policies of the "third period" led to the defeat of the German workers by fascism.

From the time of Stalin's right turn to "people's front"ism, the foreign policy of the Kremlin has become openly and increasingly counter-revolutionary.

Only by relating the policies of the CP's to the twists and turns of Soviet policy--to the right-wing policies of Stalin-Bukharin before 1928, to Stalin's ultra-left "third period" phase between 1929 and 1933-4, to "people's front"ism from 1935, to the politics of the cold war, to the neo-popular frontism of "peaceful coexistence", and to the Soviet-Chinese split--can one understand the national policies of the international Communist movement, including that of the Vietnamese CP led by Ho Chi Minh.

[A founding member of the French CP and its first Vietnamese, it was on Ho's initiative that the CP of Indo-China was organized in Hong Kong in 1930] Ho spent the period from 1931 to 1936 in Moscow, where he had fled from British arrest.

[The League for the Independence of Vietnam, from which the name Viet Minh was coined, was organized by Ho and the CP in 1941] after the surrender of the French in World War II.

The Viet Minh was formed as a "people's front" coalition with the aid of the "democratic" imperialist war "allies" of the Soviet Union. Around a program of national independence, a guerrilla war against the Japanese was launched. After the surrender of Japan in 1945, the Viet Minh announced the Democratic

Republic of Vietnam. [As a coalition government, incorporating all "national" elements, the Viet Minh opposed and punished the seizure of land by the peasants, and instead initiated agrarian reforms, e.g., tax reforms and reduction in rents]

[However, Stalin had already agreed at Potsdam to divide Vietnam at the 16th parallel between Chiang Kai Shek in the North and Great Britain in the South. When the British, in September 1945, landed troops in Saigon, the CP, completely subservient to the Kremlin, urged a welcome for their "allies". Trotskyists and others who opposed this betrayal were executed. A week later, the British arrested the Viet Minh leaders, and turned the southern sector back to the French.]

Having gotten Chiang to withdraw from the North in exchange for trade concessions, the French began an all-out assault on the Viet Minh. Using as an excuse, violations of the accord signed by the Viet Minh, which provided for the withdrawal of French troops to Tonkin and the admission of Vietnam to the French Union in exchange for a promise of eventual independence, the French army attacked Haiphong and occupied Hanoi.

Thus began a bloody eight year war which was to end at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 with the surrender of the French army. During these years, the Viet Minh encouraged the expropriation of land from those landlords who had fled to Saigon!

[The 1954 Geneva Conference which was attended by all the big powers, including the Soviet Union and China, again divided Vietnam, this time at the 17th parallel, with the South, which had been almost entirely under Viet Minh control, abandoned to the tender mercies, initially of the French puppet, Bao Dai, and then of the US variant, Ngo Dinh Diem. With the withdrawal of the Viet Minh from the South, a bloody purge was directed against suspected Viet Minh supporters. The land was re-taken from the peasants, and unpaid rent for the eight years

demanded by the landlords]

The spontaneous upsurge of peasant-guerrilla struggles inevitably resulted. [However, it was not until 1960, and the Soviet-Chinese rift, that these guerrilla forces were organized into the National Liberation Front (NLF) by the Vietnamese Communists]

The NLF Program

A program must be judged, not by the prestige of those enunciating it, but on its merits. Those who attack any criticism of the NLF program, regardless of its source and purpose, as coming from "out-siders", have nothing in common with Marxism. We must ask: Is the program a step forward on the road to a socialist revolution, or is it a retreat? Is it in accord with developing objective conditions, and is it an attempt to prepare the masses for their revolutionary tasks?

[On this basis, we must conclude that having organized two betrayals, the Vietnamese Communists prepare a third.] Not the concepts of the Permanent Revolution are put forth in which, as in the October Revolution, the working class, headed by its vanguard party, leads the peasants to the solution of democratic and national tasks through a proletarian revolution, but rather Stalin's neo-Menshevik policy of the revolution in stages.

[The Vietnamese Communists, now resigned to "socialism" in half-a-country, once again prepare to accede to the "peaceful coexistence" pressures of the Soviet Union.] In pursuit of a deal with American imperialism at China's expense, the Soviet Union meters out the minimum of arms required for the "Viet Cong" to maintain a defensive posture, but, as in Spain during the civil war, not enough for more than sporadic offensives.

The Vietnamese CP, North and South, calls for the implementation of the 1954 Geneva betrayal which divided Vietnam in two. [The recently organized Provisional Revolutionary Gov-

ernment of South Vietnam calls for a "coalition government, reflecting national concord and a broad union of all social strata", promises "industrialists and traders...freedom of enterprise", and pledges "to protect the right of ownership of means of production".

It promises "neutrality" in its foreign affairs, and calls for "the peaceful re-unification of the Fatherland" through negotiation. It adheres to the NLF ten point program of reducing rents, of purchasing excess land from landlords at "equitable prices".

"Soft" Wing of Imperialism

This program is acceptable to the liberal wing of American imperialism, because capitalism, guaranteed, not only by the Vietnamese CP, but especially the Soviet Union, will remain in Vietnam, with the US military close at hand, ready to step in and smash any revolutionary developments. The hard wing of American imperialism, at the Paris negotiations, is demanding complete capitulation which does not allow the CP leadership a shred of camouflage. The soft wing, e.g., the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, is willing to settle for a sufficient if less than complete political victory, because of the war's inflationary impact on the American economy, its pressure on the US balance of payments and on the dollar, and, especially, because of the rising opposition to the war with its radicalizing effect on the youth, not excluding those in the US armed forces.

The program of Ho Chi Minh and his heirs ensures that additional rivers of blood will be shed by the Vietnamese masses before they win and consolidate their victory over imperialism, and their "own" landlords, "industrialists and traders".

The peasant-guerrilla struggles in Southeast Asia, now led by their respective CP's must be linked in a strategic and tactical offensive, not only against American imperialism, but against their "own" capi-

talisms. "Things will go splendidly", to paraphrase Marx, only if the peasant war is linked to the proletarian revolution. This requires not agrarian reform, but expropriation of the landlords' estates without compensation for distribution to landless peasants, and a policy of concentrating in the young, growing and increasingly militant Southeast Asian proletariat. However, the CP's of the Maoist as well as the Breshnevist schools of Stalinism are incapable of leading a victorious proletarian revolution.

Only a revolutionary Marxist leadership, which does not have to hide crimes and betrayals from the masses, which has no need to distort, lie and confuse, which understands and can creatively apply Marxist theory and past practice to current reality can produce such a victory.

The victory of the proletarian revolution in the industrially backward countries can only be secured in the advanced countries. American revolutionists must demand, not only the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American troops and the victory of the Vietnamese revolution, but must also build a Leninist party able to lead a working class revolution to end the most malignant menace to all mankind, US capitalism.

PUBLIC MEETING

We initiate our monthly forum series with the discussion, "The Future For Trotskyism", led by VANGUARD NEWSLETTER editor, Harry Turner, Wednesday, October 22, 1969, at Academy Hall, 853 Broadway (near 14th Street), Room 16 B, at 8 P.M.

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NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Trotsky on the Negro Question
--The SWP and Workers League

The Cuban revolution marked the point of qualitative transformation of the SWP from revolutionary Marxism to revisionism. For a number of years, it had attempted to mask its inability to creatively develop Marxism in the face of post-world War II developments, by the incantation of orthodox Marxist formulae. It was able to sustain itself in this manner in the face of the expansion of Stalinism into Eastern Europe and China, and the political quiescence of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, following the betrayals of the Stalinists, and during the long post-war economic upsurge.

The victory of the Cuban Revolution, from a peasant base, with an essentially passive working class, and under a leadership of a left-wing section of the bourgeois Orthodox party, and its subsequent development, e.g., expropriation of US imperialist holdings, domestic capitalist industry and latifundia, planning, convinced the SWP leadership that short-cuts to the socialist revolution were at hand. In a period when the revolutionary "epicenter" would seem to have shifted to the "third world", it would only be necessary to hold onto the coat-tails of a Castro or a Malcolm X, and the arduous task of building a Leninist vanguard party in a as-yet inactive working class in the advanced capitalist countries could be circumvented. Indeed, why not postpone this unrewarding task (to the Greek Kalends) until the "third world" had succeeded in giving a revolutionary impulse to the advanced industrial countries and more favorable objective circumstances ensued? Why not follow behind these new leaders, who were inevitably developing into "revolutionary socialists"?
As an even faintly critical word might result in an abrupt severance

from the coat-tails, it would naturally be necessary, not only to avoid making such a faux pas, but also to ensure against it by providing complete support and applause for every word pronounced and deed performed by these leaders in their inevitable transformation.

Theoretical "Adjustments"

The capitulation to black nationalism by the SWP followed on the heels of the Cuban Revolution, with the necessary attendant theoretical "adjustments".

Trotsky's views on the Negro question were abstracted from his all-embracing revolutionary outlook, and the possibility he foresaw of a national development for the Black people was distorted into a theoretical screen to cover the SWP's present opportunist adaptation.

Thus, the 1948 SWP convention resolution adopted in 1950, "Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism", which appeared in Documents on the Negro Struggle, published in 1962, was omitted from the re-edition in 1967, entitled Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self Determination. The 1957 resolution, "The Class Struggle Road to Negro Equality", is also ignored.

While still projecting the possibility and supporting the right of the Black people to form a separate nation, and although the latter already displays confused and conciliatory attitudes toward petty-bourgeois Black leadership and "third world" conceptions, both documents were written from a class viewpoint, and as a result, contain formulations which today constitute an embarrassment to the SWP.

The former resolution, for example, states the following concerning the utilization of the Black struggle by the US ruling class to promote "separatism":

"Despite all appearances American capitalism constantly increases and intensifies its Jim Crow system...The more powerfully the

Negroes organize and protest, the more capital is compelled to bribe them with special Negro schools ...hospitals...colleges...playgrounds...news films...appointments..."

This paragraph today becomes a sufficiently acid commentary on the SWP's support for black separatist demands for black studies for black students living in all-black dormitories and taught by black teachers.

Black Chauvinism

In discussing black chauvinism and its implications for the class struggle in the US, the 1948 resolution stated the following:

"While it would be a serious error to ignore the reality of racial hatreds which have been injected into the historical development of the American people, not the slightest concession must be made to ideas which do not place upon capitalism the complete responsibility, deliberate and conscious, for the existing situation of Negroes, the spread of racial prejudices in all areas of the United States today...In the Negro movement in particular and often in the labor movement the party will meet Negro chauvinism. While making no principled concessions to it, the party treats it with great caution and makes a sharp distinction between the chauvinism of the oppressor and the chauvinism of the oppressed...This chauvinism of the Negroes contains possibilities of being exploited under certain circumstances by the capitalists and turned into a terrible danger to the organized labor movement".

Applied to the SWP's role in NYC's teachers' strike last year, these words become a scathing indictment. Under the banner of "community control" of ghetto schools, black cultural nationalists, subsidized by the Ford Foundation, and in behalf of NY City and State governments,

attempted to destroy the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). This attack, representing a blow at all City and State workers, was launched shortly after the Taylor Law, which prohibits public service workers from striking was passed. Attacking the strike called to reinstate fired teachers as "racist", and with UFT bureaucrats helping to provide them with ammunition for this attack, the SWP joined the CP and a motley crew of social-opportunists in scabbing on the teachers] ?

Self-Determination

The 1957 resolution presented the SWP's position on the Black struggle and the right to self-determination, as follows:

"Since minority peoples have the democratic right to exercise self determination, socialists would be obligated to support such [separatist/ demands if they should reflect the mass will. Yet even under these circumstances socialists would continue to advocate integration rather than separation as the best solution of the race question for Negro and white workers alike. While upholding the right of self-determination, they would continue to urge an alliance of the Negro people and the working class to bring about a socialist solution of the civil rights problem within the existing national framework... Fusion of these independent political currents should be advocated through a labor-Negro alliance to form an independent labor party based on the unions... If the right for complete equality is to be won, the Negro workers must take the leadership out of the hands of the middle class elements. That task requires the building of a left wing founded on class-struggle perspectives...Above all we have stressed the need for class political consciousness among worker militants, colored and white, as the key to victory for both movements".

Today, and also in the name of Trotsky, the SWP not only gives its blessing to every black nationalist demand, but has even substituted, in effect, its proposal for an "independent" Black political party for the demand for a labor party.

The WL and Trotsky

The WL's Tim Wohlforth, in his "The New Nationalism and the Negro Struggle", in exactly the same manner as the SWP, abstracts the national aspects from Trotsky's discussions in 1939. In so doing, he aids the SWP's deception from the "left"!

Having treated Trotsky's views on the Negro question in metaphysical fashion, Wohlforth can only understand them as an aberration.

[He informs us that, "Trotsky was wrong in proposing the possibility of the Negro becoming a nation"; that Trotsky's "error" resulted from his failure to make "a serious concrete analysis of the actual development of the Negro people within American capitalism; that he had been confused by "a certain 'Carlos' and by "Communist Party Black Belt notions"

St. John informs us that "Trotsky appears to be relying on a totally subjective and psychological basis of analysis"; that his "statements were far from definitive...and often contradictory; that "Trotsky's conclusions appear to be based solely on the need for the SWP to turn to the Negro masses without a clear analysis of the historical, political and social role of the Negro in the US".

Wohlforth, unable to respond to Joseph Hansen's thrust ("The Healyites Begin to Unravel their 'Trotskyism'") that Trotsky's method on the Negro question cannot be separated from that used to elaborate the Transitional Program, counterattacks by charging Hansen with a lack of understanding of the Marxist method, and by a general discussion of the Transitional Program. However, Wohlforth clearly agrees with

Hansen's contention that, on the Negro question, not only Wohlforth, but also "the leaders of the SLL" believe that "Trotsky was no dialectician but only a bungler and dogmatist". And in fact, the review of Lunacharsky's "Revolutionary Silhouettes" by Wohlforth, has for its main purpose the positing of Trotsky's "individualistic" behavior, in order to establish the "priority" of Lenin over Trotsky in respect to "Marxist method", i.e., to counterpose Lenin to Trotsky, to account for his "subjective and psychological" approaches on the Negro question. ("Bulletin", May 5, 1969)

We believe and intend to demonstrate that, not only was Trotsky's essential position on the Negro question, although incompletely formulated, arrived at by the use of the dialectic method, that his approaches on this question are not only in excellent agreement with Lenin's on the national question, but are, furthermore, inseparable from his approaches to the Transitional Program as a whole; that while both the WL and the SWP, each in its own way have abandoned the dialectic for empiricism, for symmetrical and opposite opportunist adaptations to the black nationalist-white chauvinist polarity, Trotsky understood and fought for a synthesis which would unite black and white workers against these opposite reflections of bourgeois ideology.

The WL, despite its desire to pose itself as the revolutionary alternative to the SWP, to present itself as the organizational continuity of revolutionary Marxism to the SWP's revisionism, because of its inability to understand the most fundamental of questions relative to the American revolution, the Negro question, has succeeded only in becoming its mirror-image, with all signs reversed, as a result of its one-sidedness and its tendency to function as mechanistic materialists.

(to be continued)

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