

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

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NYC TRANSIT--WORKERS AND RIDERS

As the final hours of 1969 wore on, the biennial cliff-hanger between the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) was again presented.

This year, the stage was set by the "bargainers" to achieve two effects: convincing the riding public that the TWU's "exorbitant" demands made a 50% increase in the fare necessary, and enabling the Guinan leadership to submit a sell-out contract to the TWU members as "the best that could be won".

The TWU leaders began the negotiations with demands for a 30% wage increase, a four-day, 32 hour, work-week, a cost of living escalator clause, and additional wage, pension and welfare benefit demands for the 35,000 transit workers.

They accepted a wage increase of 8% for the first three-quarters of the two-year contract, with an additional 10% to begin on July 1, 1971.

The demands for a shorter work-week and a cost of living escalator, never seriously intended, were soon discarded, as were most of the other demands for improved wages and working conditions.

A cost of living escalator clause is an urgent necessity if workers are to be kept from carrying the burden of the Vietnam war-induced inflation. The Guinan leadership's knuckling under to the City and State is nowhere more thoroughly

exposed than by its discarding of this vital demand.

Massive lay-offs are now beginning with Black and Spanish-speaking workers, the last hired, most affected, as the ruling class attempts to curb inflation and cut wages by increasing unemployment. In these circumstances, the demand for a four-day work-week takes on the greatest urgency, in order to prevent the capitalists from using the unemployed to destroy union wages and working conditions.

The rank and file is in motion against the "pie-cards", as the old "business unionism" shows its inability to maintain, let alone win real gains in living standards.

But there are those who believe that the struggle for revolutionary leadership within the trade-union movement can be by-passed.

The SDS Labor Committee, for example, which, together with assorted social opportunists, has formed a "popular front" with "reform" Democrats on the fare issue, believes that the working class can become a "class-for-itself" by convincing socialist-oriented workers to function outside their unions in "broad" organizations which will unite them

with the Black "community". In the hope that the bureaucrats will not prevent it from winning influence among trade-unionists, the LC has even curried favor with "pie-cards" like Guinan and Shanker in its agitational material.

The "Rank and File Committee" led by Joe Carnegie, now poses itself as a dual union to the TWU. It hopes to win Black and Spanish-speaking workers, now 80% of the TWU membership, and has exposed discriminatory treatment by the largely white TWU bureaucracy.

But to attempt to split the union on racial lines (while posing as a new bi-racial union), and immediately prior to contract negotiations, to demand the de-certification of the TWU for failing to comply with the union-busting Taylor Law's requirement of a no-strike pledge, are tactics which could not have been better designed to completely destroy the influence of the "Rank and

File Committee" among transit workers, than if Guinan himself had chosen them.

It is necessary to work patiently within the unions to build rank and file leaderships with a revolutionary outlook. Revolutionists must recognize that, as the crisis of US and world capitalism matures, the consciousness of the workers will also be transformed, and must learn to pose demands in a transitional way, e.g., the labor party, so that workers can see the connection between their immediate demands and their fundamental class needs.

The get-rich-quick schemers can only wind up on the outside of working class struggles. It is only the Marxist program, and the revolutionary party which formulates and fights for it, and for the tactics to implement revolutionary strategy in the changing conditions of the class struggle, which can lead the working class to victory.

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US CAPITALISM AND REVOLUTIONARY BLACKS--Economic Facts and Social Unrest

by Harold Robins

∟The second half of Cde. Robins' article is presented for discussion. The first section appeared in our November issue.

∟In this article, Cde. Robins has emphasized the obligation of white revolutionists to support the right of self-determination of the Black people, or any of the other oppressed minorities, who may exercise this right to demand separation.

∟As Cde. Robins has made clear, the demand for a separate state can only be implemented in a revolutionary way, requires a revolutionary transformation in the outlook of white workers, requires the solidarity of Black and white workers against capitalism.

∟As the white workers recognize, in the process of struggle, that their basic class interests require

them to fight for the rights of Blacks, including their right to separate, as they prove that they are revolutionists who will fight against the special oppression of Black people, including the super-exploitation of Black workers, to that extent, a united struggle against capitalism can be forged.

∟But a corresponding change in attitude of Black workers toward whites will also take place, diminishing or eradicating the desire for a separate state--precisely what the Leninist position on the right to self-determination was designed to accomplish.

∟We believe that the unity of the Black and white workers, on which the success of the American revolution depends, can only be forged in this manner.∟

* * * * *

In discussing the Rockefeller report, our earlier article stated that, "...more than \$100 billion was spent by US imperialism ..for the Vietnamese war."

This most conservative underestimate of the money spent for this very profitable business and mass murder project, should be compared with the miserable government appropriations for raising the "socio-economic levels" of millions of American Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans and American Indians.

How much more than \$100 billion was spent? How much of this vast expenditure provided employment for some tens of thousands of these traditionally discriminated-against minorities?

War expenses did provide an unreported number with employment in industry and in the military services. Employment in the direct military interests of US imperialism was provided for draftees, but also for mercenaries who enlisted because the war afforded them pay, loot and opportunity for other criminal activities in Vietnam.

War expenditures also provided some fuel for capitalist enterprises outside the borders of the US, and, thereby provided employment for a similarly unreported number of Latin American workers in mining, transportation and oil industries, along with an increase in capitalist profiteering and in soaring interest rates to the benefit of bankers and speculators.

Despite the fact that some of the wealth put into circulation by this means filtered-down to some of the poorest people, the Rockefeller report tells us quite truthfully that in Latin America, "Unemployment is high, especially among the young, ranging as high as 25 to 40%..."

Capitalist "Prosperity"

These unemployment levels are easily matched in many American slum areas in cities and countryside. These figures tell us a great deal about the limitations of capitalist

prosperity in the richest nation in the world, operating at record high economic levels. Capitalist society is unable to provide even a decent, minimum standard of living for tens of millions of unemployed and underemployed working people in the most prosperous nation known to mankind.

About half of the depressed economic layer in the US is made up of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans and American Indians. American capitalism has provided prosperity of sorts to tens of millions of American workers, to immigrants from Europe and from Cuba, whose counter-revolutionary refugees generally are absorbed into the prosperous fabric of American society, but the historical record also tells us quite clearly that the traditionally discriminated-against minorities have been excluded from a share in the benefits. This is one of the most obvious "peculiarities" of American capitalist development. Is it any wonder then, that Black revolutionaries such as the Black Panthers, and fighters for Black equality such as Robert Williams, late of Monroe, North Carolina, Cuba and China hate the profiteering oppressors of these specially oppressed masses?

"Improving" the Conditions of the Most Oppressed

According to the NY Times, Dec. 19, 1969,

"The major item in the bill above the President's request is an appropriation for education programs that is more than \$1 billion over what Mr. Nixon sought. These funds resulted from an intense coordinated lobbying effort by educational interests ranging from teachers to book publishers."

[emphasis added]

The Times goes on to report Pres. Nixon as saying:

"I cannot at this critical point in the battle against inflation approve so heavy an increase in the Federal spending', Mr. Nixon wrote. He said he felt this way, 'as much as one may sympathize with some of the bill's objectives.'" [emphasis added]

It would seem that some of the backers of American "liberalism", responded to the lobbying efforts of the school book publishing industry, to the tune of an extra billion dollar appropriation for educational assistance to the minorities. None of these capitalist politicians and business interests proposed diverting the war expenditures to provide adequate social care and employment programs for the benefit of the victims of capitalist discrimination.

The US Senate's proposed billion dollar educational increase has to be compared with the billion dollar expenditure made available to the military-run government of Thailand to provide one division of its soldiers for service in Vietnam. According to capitalist economic theorists, if the billion is spent in the US for the means of life, e.g., food, goods, homes and other services, this would feed inflation.

If, however, the billion is given to the "democratic Thai government" to provide mercenaries for the Vietnam war, and even though a vast part of that billion is used to buy American arms and other supplies, this expenditure is not considered "inflationary". That "liberal" ex-president, Johnson, whose record on civil rights legislation was far superior to all other "liberal" capitalist politicians in power, was never so free with a billion dollars for the "under-privileged" as he was with the same billion secretly given to the Thailand militarists for use in the Vietnam war.

While we are in complete agreement with those Black Panthers who call for the overthrow of the capitalist system because of its monstrous crimes, especially against

the Black people, we disagree with their tendency to characterize the capitalists and capitalist liberals as "mother-fuckers". We need scientific terms which reflect the real content of a reactionary and anti-social system, which has perpetrated the most monstrous discriminatory and repressive policies in the US and elsewhere for hundreds of years.

Social Meaning of \$100 Billion

If \$100 billion had been spent to improve the educational and living standards for the 5 million most economically deprived, instead of US imperialism's war in Vietnam \$20,000 would have been available per person. There would have been no war profits. The great mass of the killed, wounded and permanently mutilated victims of the Vietnam war would still be alive and tolerably healthy; the draftees would not have been forced into the dirty business of slaughtering a people fighting for freedom; the mercenaries would have had to work for a living like honest men, and could have been re-trained for socially useful labor; and the country would not have expended so much of its treasure and young people for destruction. But then, capitalism would not be capitalism, i.e., a vicious and destructive system, which allows a few to grow rich while reducing tens of millions to the most miserable and brutal conditions.

Right of Self-Determination

During this time of prosperity for American imperialism, Black and other minority groups have been kept in conditions of extreme poverty and at the minimum educational level needed to provide a plentiful supply of cheap labor for the drudge tasks required by the most rapacious capitalist exploiters. Civil rights fighters are hounded, beaten, jailed and murdered for trying to help the most oppressed victims of capitalism get equal treatment with whites.

Robert Williams, one of the most devoted and heroic Negro leaders in the South, who first posed the issue of Black self-defense in the fight for equality, is hounded by federal, state and local governments in the US. Is it any wonder that many revolutionary Blacks, seeing the continued power of racist, American capitalism demand that a section of the US be set aside for a separate Black nation to finally emancipate the Black people from white racism?

The demand for a separate Black nation is absolutely justifiable. Those phoney radicals who oppose this demand are, in effect, trying to tell the centuries-old victims of brutal enslavement that they shall not have the choice of democratically determining their own right to form a separate nation.

The right of self-determination for Blacks must be supported by radicals as it is supported by every real Trotskyist. It should be quite clear to everyone with a minimum of intelligence that the right of self-determination for Blacks, or for Indians, or for Mexican-Americans will never be given by the white-racist imperialist politicians and capitalists who run America today, and can only be won when the imperialist power is smashed. There is no alternative save a revolutionary one.

US imperialism will never be smashed until the social relations which keep the organized workers tied to capitalist political parties are radically undermined.

Sharpening Class Struggles

Most Black nationalists believe that the prevailing social relations will continue. One has only to look at the effect on the working people of rising prices and taxes which have cut the "real" wages of most factory workers throughout the unionized and non-union sections of the country. The workers have been getting wage raises, but their standard of living has been steadily declining. Today's sharpening class

struggles result from the worsening of the living standards of the American workers. There can and will be no chance for self-determination of oppressed peoples in the US until the social peace is turned into its opposite. Profiteering, currency and price inflation, favoritism to capitalists, and ever rising high interests rates, more and more taxes to pay interest to bankers and capitalist speculators who push the costs onto the backs of the workers, are producing this transformation before our eyes.

White and Black class solidarity will be needed to fight off the capitalist exploiters. Working class racial attitudes will also change as the economic conditions compel workers to change their over-all social-political outlook.

The right of self-determination for Black workers? Yes! Black capitalism? No! We shall soon see that this is the epoch of social liberation in the advanced capitalist countries. Capitalist greed, capitalist inflation, capitalist taxation at the expense of the workers are bringing this about and the evidence is there for every intelligent person to see. Change, profound social change, is on the order of the day. All former, relatively fixed conceptions are being undermined by the developing, financial crisis of the major capitalist countries, with the US in the lead.

Socialist values and socialist property relations must replace the rotten capitalist order of things. Mankind is being forced to move forward to this higher social order through the class struggles now developing.

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NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

The Arab-Israeli Question --Introduction

Marxian socialism is, and can be nothing other than, a world outlook. The watchword of the Communist Manifesto, "Workers of the world, unite!", sums up its fundamental proposition, that the struggle between the workers and their exploiters transcends national boundaries, is international, in consequence of the world market brought into being by capitalism, by the international division of labor, and that socialism cannot be achieved, let alone maintained on a national basis, but only through the united struggles of the international working class.

Marxism, from its beginning, is required to wage an unceasing struggle against all varieties of petty-bourgeois socialism, and, especially, against their nationalist proclivities.

In his "Critique of the Gotha Program", Marx directs his severest criticism against Lassalle, who,

"...in opposition to the Communist Manifesto and all earlier socialism, conceived of the workers' movement from the narrowest national standpoint...to be able to fight at all, the working class must organize itself at home as a class...its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle. In so far its class struggle is national, not in substance, but as the Communist Manifesto says 'in form'."

Marx and Engels were so concerned over the unprincipled concessions made by the Marxists, the "Eisenachers", to the Lassalleans at the unity congress at Gotha in 1875, and particularly, at the dilution of internationalism, that they seriously considered, not only severing all political relations with the newly formed "Socialist Workers Party of Germany", but also, of publicly attacking the program.

They refrained from so doing, only because the nature of the theoretical retreat had been obscured by radical-sounding language, and the political predominance of the Marxists over the Lassalleans in the new organization, made possible the

repair of the theoretical mischief. [Engels withheld the publication of Marx's "Critique", and his own letter to Bebel attacking the Gotha program, at the behest of Bebel and Kautsky, who feared that the sensibilities of Lassalle's disciples would be affronted by their sharp criticisms of him.]

Opportunism

In 1891, following the revocation of the anti-socialist "Exceptional Laws", and alarmed at developing tendencies toward opportunism and accommodation to bourgeois nationalism in the newly-named "German Social-Democratic Party", [Engels, despite the vehement opposition of Wilhelm Liebknecht, Bebel and Kautsky, insisted on publishing Marx's "Critique"] At that time, Engels also began to submit articles to the "Neue Zeit", the organ of the German Social-Democracy, attacking the opportunism organically linked to the "superstitious worship of the state", which was rapidly infecting the party, in the period when capitalism was enjoying an ascending economic development, and in the heady atmosphere of peaceful and massive growth of the party membership, of working class organization, in a proliferation of periodicals and newspapers, and in the winning of parliamentary seats.

As Trotsky pointed out in The First Five Years of the Communist International, the betrayals of 1914 derived from the development of the Second International as a federation

of national parties; from the elevation of some national socialist movements above others, movements which had to be sheltered from attack by their "own" states at all costs.

An increasingly serious menace now looms for the Middle Eastern masses --and perhaps others--as this area becomes a staging ground for imperialism, and for the cynical maneuvers of the counter-revolutionary Soviet bureaucracy.

The conflict between the state of Israel and the surrounding "Arab" states must be examined by Marxists from the vantage point of the broad historical interests of the international proletariat, while taking into account the historical development of this specific question, as well as the immediate national antagonisms.

The Jewish Question

The Arab-Israeli question, however, cannot be adequately understood unless the Jewish question as such is examined in its genesis and development.

Abram Leon's book The Jewish Question, A Marxist Interpretation, written in 1941 in Europe during the Nazi occupation, is an extremely valuable contribution to Marxist theory.

Leon was born in Poland, and emigrated to Belgium with his family. Originally a member of "Hashomer Hatzair", the Zionist socialist youth movement, he became a Trotskyist, and helped reconstitute the Belgian section of the Fourth International (FI) in 1940, in the difficult circumstances of the second world war. Leon was captured by the Nazis in 1944 while helping to prepare a European conference of the FI, and died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz at the age of 26.

Starting from the few scattered references by Marx on the Jewish question, Leon, utilizing the sources available to him at that time, traced the history of the Jews from antiquity, and concluded that,

the Jews were among the earliest merchants and traders in the commodities of the ancient world, slaves, cattle, precious metals, etc., and that it became their social function to provide merchant and loan capital to the nobility and monarchy in the natural economy of feudalism.

Leon, following Marx, attempts to explain thinking by being, and not the converse, as do the idealists. Although the super-structure interacts with and influences the economic base, it is the latter which ultimately determines the former. It is not the religion which, in the final analysis, preserves the Jews as a people, but rather its economic function as a people-class, its character as a distinct social formation, which enables it to maintain a religious identification over the centuries. Those Jews who cease to perform a special social function, also tend to be assimilated into the surrounding peoples, to lose their identity as Jews.

In the 12th century, with the rise of capitalism in the West, the Jewish merchant capitalists, also functioning as usurers, tax and rent collectors, begin to lose their reason for being. As a native merchant class, a Christian bourgeoisie develops, Jewish mercantile and usurious capital is eliminated from commerce, and the Jews are degraded into petty-usurers, petty traders, peddlers and second-hand dealers. They retreat into Eastern Europe, where they are welcomed by Polish royalty as a rich source of revenue, and where, until capitalism penetrates this more backward sector, the Jews continue to play their traditional role. However, as the bourgeoisie becomes the only important financial power, royalty everywhere loses interest in the Jews, and actively assists in pillaging and persecuting them.

Those relatively few Jews who remain in Western Europe, and take part in the creation of modern capitalism, also tend to become assimilated, and only the emigration of

Jews from Eastern Europe to the West in the 19th century, keeps Judaism from completely disappearing there.

Used by the feudal rulers as a means of accumulating wealth, repeatedly despoiled of their profits and driven into exile, the Jews also function as lightning rods. The anger of the peasant and plebian masses is turned away from the ruling classes to their visible agents, the Jews. Pogroms follow the Jewish people relentlessly throughout its history.

Jewish Working Class

With the further development of capitalism, the Jewish people-class, thrust into the ghettos of Europe in the 15th century, ferociously mistreated, objects of derision and abuse, also differentiates and develops a working class. [The Jewish working class, however, is atypical compared to the non-Jewish. The vast majority of Jewish workers are to be found in consumers goods industries, in light industry and in white collar trades, with few in heavy industry.]

The combination of decaying feudalism with a recently arrived but already senile capitalism, produces an extremely precarious situation for the Jews of Eastern Europe. Their mass migration, along with their influx into the socialist movement, begins, as they are increasingly eliminated from economic positions, as the hopeless position of the Jewish masses becomes clear.

[Modern Zionism begins with Herzl, who, generalizing from the anti-semitism in France at the time of the Dreyfus affair, concluded that the Jews were an unassimilable people who required a territory where they could function as a nation.] Appealing to national and imperial self-interest, Herzl and his followers attempt to enlist the support of the Turkish sultan, the German Kaiser and the British crown.

It is also the rapidly worsening empirical situation, in the period of capitalism's general crisis,

which becomes the starting point for an attempt to unite Marxism to the Zionist variety of petty-bourgeois nationalism.

The "Inverted Pyramid"

[Instead of the normal social composition of a large working class base in the vital sectors of the economy, in heavy industry, followed by layers of handicraft and white collar workers, with a small layer of "businessmen" on top, a reverse condition obtained among Jews. Therefore, concluded Barochov, before the Jewish proletariat could play a revolutionary role, the "pyramid" had to be re-inverted. A "normal" Jewish society had to be created, which would be possible only in a national state of its own, in Palestine. Only then, could the Jewish workers wage a meaningful struggle for socialism. Only then would the Jewish question come to an end,

Thus, by abstracting the Jewish question from all other questions, from the entire course of international working class development, labor Zionism comes into being. The Jewish question is first to be resolved within the confines of capitalism. This Zionist reactionary utopia in "socialist" dress was to acquire a greater currency among socialist-oriented Jews, in the aftermath of the fascist holocaust, with the destruction of five million Jews--almost all the Jews of Central Europe, and more than a third of all the Jews of the world at that time. [But the Zionist "solution" was to produce other and sharper contradictions. The two and a half million Jews of Israel are again faced with annihilation, surrounded as they are by 80 million embittered "Arabs", in an age where increasingly efficient weapons of mass destruction are in existence.]

(to be continued)

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