

VANGUARD newsletter

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FINAL
ISSUE

CONVENTION CALL

The fusion of the Class Struggle League and Vanguard Newsletter in Chicago, April 20-22, on the perspective and program of revolutionary Marxism on which the Fourth International was founded, represents an important step in the resolution of the crisis of international working class leadership.

The history of the century and a quarter of Marxism is a continuing struggle by its upholders to defend its revolutionary essence within the organizational forms in which it was manifested, and to transcend those forms no longer appropriate to the changed conditions or which had been transformed into fetters from their revolutionary beginnings.

Thus the Communist League of Marx and Engels, which did not survive the defeated bourgeois revolutions of 1848 for long, given the immaturity of the working class movement, was replaced by the First International, the International Working Men's Association.

This united front of Marxists, Proudhonists, Bakuninists and English trade unionists for the advancement of the struggles of the international working class against international capital did not long survive the defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871, given the level of development of the international working class at that time. It, in its turn, was succeeded by the Second International.

The Second International was constructed on the program of revolutionary Marxism first embodied in the Communist Manifesto. However, the years of relative class peace (as "free" competitive capitalism

in the advanced countries developed into imperialism) rotted the Second International and qualitatively transformed it into a counterrevolutionary force with the onset of the first imperialist world war.

Guided by Lenin and Trotsky and with the victory of the October Revolution in Russia which they led as its inspiration, the Third International sought to achieve a world revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class able to win behind it all the oppressed in the advanced and underdeveloped countries. It, too, was transformed into its opposite as the revolutionary wave in Europe receded and a bureaucratic caste arose in the first workers' state. The Third International became an overtly counterrevolutionary force with its class collaborationist "popular front" program of 1935.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

A revolutionary cadre, a "vanguard of the vanguard," was again assembled under Leon Trotsky's leadership, first as a left opposition to the disastrous policies of bureaucratic centrism in the Bolshevik Party and Comintern and then in the Fourth International. After the murder of Trotsky in 1940, and with the destruction of other outstanding leaders during the second imperial-

1st world slaughter, the remaining leadership of the Fourth International became disoriented. Facing the difficult conditions of the class struggle during the war; the post-war expansion of Stalinism into Eastern Europe, China and Southeast Asia; the construction of deformed workers' states; and the re-stabilization (with the aid of the Stalinists) and economic expansion of world capitalism, the remaining leadership of the Fourth International abandoned the program of revolutionary Marxism.

The opportunists who today misappropriate the mantle of Trotskyism also misrepresent as dialectical materialism their empirical, eclectic and impressionistic methodology. Incorporating a fatalistic objectivism, the revisionist outlook of Pabloism seeks substitutes for the "passive," "bribed" and "conservatized" working class in the advanced and under-developed countries. Using the same method, neo-Bernstein revisionists such as Ernest Mandel view the post-war capitalist expansion as a "neo-capitalist epoch" in which, for the foreseeable future, world capitalism can overcome its contradictions. So when these revisionists do orient to the working class, it is with a program based on the maintenance, rather than the overthrow of capitalism.

Ironically, the so-called "anti-Pabloite" formations have only proven themselves to be Pabloists in one or another degree. Today, all these pretenders to "Trotskyism" either direct their attention, not to the working class for the socialist revolution, but rather to winning the favor of petty-bourgeois movements and formations, or approach the workers on a reformist basis. They run after the students, the "peace," feminist, "gay liberation" and Black nationalist movements, the followers of Maoist, Brezhnevist or Castroist Bonapartism, the urban and rural guerrilla movements in the under-developed countries, engage in "popular front" blocs with the liberal bourgeoisie in the advanced and with bourgeois nationalists in the under-developed countries, and/or

court one or another section of the labor bureaucracy.

WORLD TROTSKYIST PARTY NEEDED

Today, the revolutionary program on which the Fourth International was founded is upheld in word and deed in the United States only by the Class Struggle League and Vanguard Newsletter.

We are guided by the dialectical materialist method of Marxism in understanding the nature of the epoch as imperialist, in recognizing that the post-war capitalist economic development now ending was essentially a hiatus in an "epoch of imperialist decay," a breathing spell for world capitalism made possible by the policies of the Stalinist and Social Democratic misleaders of the international working class, and that the present epoch is one of catastrophic capitalist crises, devastating wars--and the eve of the socialist revolution.

We seek to build--we accept no substitutes--a party of the Bolshevik type with ineradicable roots in the working class, a Leninist and Trotskyist working class vanguard party capable of leading the working class (and behind it all the oppressed) in immediate struggles to the victory of the socialist revolution. Such a party will also win the students and intellectuals, but to its revolutionary working class perspective and program.

We seek to form--in Trotsky's words in The Revolution Betrayed describing the Bolshevik party under Lenin and Trotsky--an organization of "the most audacious iconoclasts, fighters and insurgents" united together for the task of "overthrowing the world," whose "seething democratic support" is the basis for the confidence and authority of its leadership. The firm unity in action of a Leninist and Trotskyist organization is assured by its thoroughly democratic practice, by Leninist democratic-centralism, not its bureaucratic perversion (such as the three "holy months" every two years in which minorities in the Socialist Workers Party can discuss their positions) nor by its effective abroga-

tion by bureaucratic cults such as the Spartacist League, Workers League and Workers World Party which pretend to democratic-centralism.

REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN THE CLASS

We build from its inception a US section of and a world party of Trotskyism, an international and not a nationally limited organization. In this epoch, only the Transitional Program concretely and creatively applied can unite the revolutionary struggles of the working class within nations and internationally for the overthrow of capitalism. For us, proletarian internationalism is not mere abstraction, but the understanding with which we strive to imbue the US working class that its immediate and fundamental interests are inseparable from the interests of the international working class: that, in its own class interests, the workers of an oppressor nation must fight for the Leninist right to self-determination; that the working class as a whole must see all struggles against racial, national and sexual discrimination as its struggle; that the US imperialist attacks on the masses in Indochina and elsewhere are also attacks on the US working class; that the workers of an oppressed race or nation must see the revolutionary class struggle as the road to liberation; that in the world capitalist crisis now developing, the working class in the US and elsewhere is faced either with the surrender of its living standards, a new world slaughter and a return to barbarism or extermination, or else the overthrow of world capitalism.

As Leninists and Trotskyists, we seek to achieve the recognition by the US working class that the struggle against the special oppression and super-exploitation of the Black, Spanish-speaking and other minorities and of women is an essential requirement for its unity in the struggle for its immediate and fundamental class interests. We seek to transform the trade unions, the primary mass organizations of the working class, into revolutionary

organizations by winning their rank-and-file to the program of transitional demands, by fighting within them for an alternative revolutionary leadership. We fight for the creation of a workers' party independent of the capitalist parties, a labor party basing itself on the transitional program. We seek to create links to existing organizations, or in their absence build the necessary organizations, of the unorganized, unemployed and oppressed.

Those incapable of defending existing social gains will never win new ones. Just as we unconditionally defend the wages, living standards and the elements of proletarian democracy of the working class under capitalism in preparation for its revolutionary offensive, so also do we unconditionally defend the collective property relations in the degenerated and deformed workers' states. We defend the workers' states from imperialism which directly threatens their existence as we organize the working class in the advanced and underdeveloped countries for the social revolution. We defend the workers' states from the Bonapartists whose power rests on collective property and whose policies of "socialism in one country" and "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism endanger the social gains at home, betray the workers' movement internationally and facilitate the victory of imperialism everywhere, by calling for their removal by the working class through a political revolution.

Those who flinch from the task of rebuilding the world party of proletarian revolution, the world party of Trotskyism--petty-bourgeois "revolutionary" phrase mongers, organizational fetishists who elevate form over content, cynics, dilettantes, inveterate cliquists incapable of leadership in or loyalty to a Leninist and Trotskyist democratic-centralist organization, the disorientated "Trotskyist" cults and sects--will continue to malign and slander the Class Struggle League, Vanguard Newsletter and the coming fusion. They are aware that this fusion, a qualitative leap in the

building of the Leninist and Trotskyist party is the beginning of the end of their "Trotskyist" pretensions.

We call upon all serious revolutionists who are in substantial, principled agreement with the perspective and program of revolutionary Marxism here enunciated to join the fused organization. We welcome

them to the convention in Chicago and urge them to contact the Parity Commission either through the Class Struggle League or Vanguard Newsletter to request observer status there.

FOR THE WORLD PARTY OF TROTSKYISM!
FOR THE VICTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

AN OPEN LETTER TO BOBBY SEALE AND ELAINE BROWN

The Black Panther Party's Bobby Seale is running for Mayor of Oakland; Elaine Brown for city council.

Both have now identified themselves as Democratic candidates after initially posing as independents.

Dear Brother Bobby and Sister Elaine:

As revolutionists you have a responsibility to conduct your electoral campaigns in ways which will promote the consciousness of the working class.

So far you have not done this. In the weeks remaining before the election, you have an opportunity to reverse this course and provide meaningful leadership to the class. Otherwise, you become Black liberals, reformists who sow illusions in the minds of the oppressed, and you set the stage for a disastrous defeat for those you seek to lead out of the quagmire of decadent capitalism.

As you know, the government of the city of Oakland is a form which masks the rule of those who own the means of production. That form is not essential to bourgeois rule. Should so-called "democracy" prove too difficult, the rulers will do away with it just as they have recently in the Philippines. To quote dictator Marcos, "democracy became a luxury we could no longer afford." Truer words could not have been spoken by the most revolutionary Marxist. In your campaigns, you must stress the point that winning office in a capitalist city means relatively little to the working class. Should you win, you can at best out-liberal the liberals. You must point out that if you try to take measures in behalf of the oppressed workers, you will be removed from office by the ruling class. It could mean your imprisonment or even death. If these things are not understood and pointed out in your campaign, the other choice

will be the siren song of fascism. So rule number one is always tell the truth to the class and yourselves.

The content of a working class program is essential. The measures which you have taken so far (while commendable in themselves) do not constitute a program for the class. Every one of the measures you have undertaken has a built-in negative side. This stems in part from a lack of theoretical understanding of the tasks which are required of a revolutionary party. The working class makes the revolution, not the revolutionary party. The party must lead the class. Your "intercommunal" approach reverses this role. Your programs to give away free food, medical care, transportation to prison for families of prisoners, the People's free shoe factory, etc., build illusions in the class that the party will take care of them or that capitalism can somehow be "avoided." There is no survival program under capitalism. It must be overthrown. You must point out that these measures do not constitute the perspective or program of the party. The only possible justification for them is that they are emergency measures taken for a class in full scale retreat. And that, of course, avoids reality. The class is not in retreat.

In the remaining days of the campaign, you must as revolutionists

(that's what you claim to be, isn't it?) point out the fact of the class struggle and offer a program which educates and agitates toward the socialist revolution. You are now in a position to either throw back the struggle or, conversely, to carry it to a higher level. First of all, a sharp break has to be posed with the parties of big business: the Democrats and Republicans. You can do this by calling for a congress of labor elected by rank-and-file members of the trade unions. Such a congress would build a labor or workers party. Part of the program of that party would be full employment by means of a sliding scale of wages and hours (30 for 40), the independence of the trade unions from the state, for a workers' republic. It would seek to implement this program by agitation and propaganda designed to lift the class from bourgeois habits of thought.

In the meantime, the Black Panther Party must build caucuses in the labor movement which would seek to end the super-exploitation of blacks and other minorities on a class basis. That means no reformist slogans like "Hire 20% Blacks but instead make it "Workers Unite, Jobs

for All." Secondly, these caucuses (which would be racially mixed) would fight against the sell-outs, the pie-cards, the labor bureaucrats. Class collaboration must end if workers are to end the oppressive system of exploitation which is capitalism and replace it by socialism.

As revolutionists, you must end your survival program, end your illusions in the government, end your reformism of "taxing the rich more," end your ludicrous scheme to hire more black policemen (black and white workers die just as fast when shot by black cops as white cops), end your program of concealing the truth from the class.

Unless you adopt the program we have outlined above--the Transitional Program--we cannot support your campaign. We call on the members of your party to demand that a revolutionary program be the program of the party. Until this is done, we have no other choice in Oakland but to VOTE NO FOR ALL BOURGEOIS PARTIES--DEMOCRAT, REPUBLICAN, AND BLACK PANTHER.

Fraternally,

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER
CLASS STRUGGLE LEAGUE

MAOISTS SHOW TRUE CHARACTER--DISRUPT UNITED FRONT

The Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY, the Spartacist League's youth arm), called a united front demonstration for Friday, March 22nd in front of the Israeli Consulate in the heart of San Francisco's financial district

The united front was in response to a call by five leftist groups in Palestine who are under attack by the Zionist state. Arrests, torture and intimidation are the responses of a regime cloaked in the mantle of religion when the class struggle can no longer be contained by appeals to "patriotism."

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER (VNL), in principled agreement with the RCY, participated in the demonstration under the following three points:

1. Defend the Israeli Militants!
2. For Unconditional Defense of the Left against Bourgeois Repression!
3. For International Working

Class Solidarity!

The line was rather small (about 50 RCY, VNL and International Socialists). About fifteen minutes after the picket line was set up, approximately 200 people led by the Revolutionary Union (RU) and Arab nationalists arrived. They refused to join the picket line and instead completely surrounded it, marching in the opposite direction. When the RCY attempted to initiate a chant, the Maoists and Arab nationalists interrupted with chants of their own. Thus the whole spirit of working class solidarity was destroyed, providing, no doubt, a chuckle to the bourgeoisie who stood

around in large groups. After making sure they had done their dirty work, the RU and its followers left for a demonstration of their own.

The purpose of a united front is to defend and advance the interests of the working class. Even a small propaganda front such as this serves the interests of the working class. To join a united front is a decision which each working class organization must decide for itself. To disrupt it to the detriment of the

international class struggle is to betray the class and align with the class enemy. The RU has shown its true nature just as Mao has by his long standing practice of betraying the working class, such as in Ceylon, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Vietnam.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER serves notice on the RU and other class traitors that we will continue to participate in and initiate united fronts in the interests of the working class.

LABOR COMMITTEE EXPOSED AS REFORMIST FRAUD by Harry Turner

At a two day convention held at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania, March 31 and April 1, the new "class-for-itself" organization of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC), the National Unemployment and Welfare Rights Organization (NU-WRO) was born.

The highly unstable coalition between the NCLC stage-managers and dissidents from the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), constructed on an openly reformist program, attracted approximately 500, predominantly white student radicals, but also a significant number of Black delegates. Only a handful of trade unionists were in evidence, however, among them, delegates from the farm workers.

NU-WRO had been touted by "New Solidarity," the weekly organ of the NCLC, as the organizational form by which the unemployed could achieve unity with the employed workers in struggle against the attack by the ruling class on the living standards of the working class as a whole.

As VANGUARD NEWSLETTER also calls for the unity of the employed and unemployed against the capitalist anti-working class offensive, we decided to intervene at the convention in order to counterpose our revolutionary program, strategy and tactics based on the Transitional Program of Trotskyism to the NCLC's reformism and elitism.

As is its custom, the NCLC tried to camouflage the reformist NU-WRO program with radical phraseology. The program and the NCLC ideologues talk about the "self-destructive capitalist system," about the need for "common-struggle" of the "work-

ing class" and for "class-consciousness," about the "class struggle" against the "capitalist masters," but at no time at the convention did they pose the necessity of overthrowing capitalism or once mention the words, "socialist revolution."

The NU-WRO program calls for the creation of "useful" jobs, which reflects the NCLC's reformist and technocratic outlook, its call for "productive jobs" under capitalism. To the capitalists, a job is "productive," it nets them a profit. The capitalists are also demanding an end to "non-productive" and "useless" jobs and are increasingly resorting to automation to shore up their mass and rate of profit.

The program also calls for such panaceas as a "Guaranteed Annual Income" which every liberal espouses -- a preferred form of the capitalist dole -- reformist tax schemes aimed at winning middle class support, and the reform of the penal system -- one of the means by which the capitalist state maintains itself in power -- to achieve the objective of placing "the rehabilitated felon back into the ranks of society...."

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER presented the following counter-motion to the proposed "Statement of Purpose" and "Bill of Rights of the Unemployed:"

"That the following program be adopted by the National Unemployed

and Welfare Rights Organization:

- 1) Jobs for all--a sliding scale of wages and hours to eliminate unemployment at a minimum wage to maintain a decent standard of life for all workers and their families.
- 2) A program of public works to build housing, schools, hospitals and other facilities needed by the working class.
- 3) Workers' control of industry, workers' management of nationalized industry and the expropriation of the monopolies, especially the war industries.
- 4) The overthrow of capitalism and the taking of state power by the working class--a workers' government.

"In furtherance of these demands, this convention endorses the strategy of building a network of rank-and-file caucuses in the trade unions which will struggle to become the revolutionary leadership of the organized working class and which will unite with and also build, where necessary, organizations of the unemployed, unorganized and all oppressed.

"At this time, the following three-point program for the network of caucuses is endorsed:

- 1) The independence of the trade unions and all other workers' organizations from the state. Against Phase III and all other attempts to handcuff and place the burden of the economic downturn and inflation on the working class.
- 2) The fight against special oppression of the Black, Spanish-speaking and other minorities and of women; the fight against their super-exploitation in the workplace, in the immediate and fundamental interests of all workers. Support the struggles of all victims of capitalist oppression! Equal wages for equal work! Against the "Equal Rights" Amendment which seeks to do away with protective laws so that working women can be exploited as fully as working men. For free, fully-

- staffed and equipped nurseries for all children of the working class requiring them.
- 3) For an independent workers' party, a labor party based on the rank-and-file of the trade unions united to the organizations of the unemployed and oppressed."

To bar the road of the NU-WRO to the liberal capitalist politicians in the Democratic Party and to "popular front" blocs with them, we presented the following amendments to the proposed constitution:

- "4) Members and representatives of the ruling class--including their political representatives in the Democratic, Republican, Conservative and Liberal and other such capitalist parties are to be denied membership in the NU-WRO.
- 5) In striving to achieve the unity of the working class, the NU-WRO will promote united front relationships with other working class organizations. The NU-WRO or its representatives will not take part in "popular front" blocs with members and representatives of the ruling class in pursuit of its aims."

Although the NCLC and NWRO dissidents closed ranks and voted down the counter-motion and amendments by a large margin, they achieved only a pyrrhic victory. Their readiness to enter into "popular front" blocs with liberal Democrats, as the vote on the amendments demonstrated, can only have made their members--and not only the farm workers who voted for the amendments--question the true nature of these "revolutionary" organizations.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER's representatives not only attacked the reformist program of the NU-WRO at the two-day convention, they also exposed the elitist and idealist nature of the so-called "class-for-itself" tactic of the NCLC which condescendingly characterized trade union struggles as "parochial." Instead of a struggle within trade unions, the primary mass organizations of the working class in order to con-

struct a revolutionary leadership, the NCLC has ignored the historic lessons on strategy and tactics of revolutionary work in the class from the time of the Communist Manifesto and the dynamics of the class struggle to project its ideal conception of a "class-wide" organization, its "embryo Soviets," to which trade unionists are to be invited.

It is this concept that lay behind its earlier "Strike Support Committees." Not a struggle against the bureaucrats in the unions, but rather the hope that a section of the bureaucracy and also workers who might be discouraged by bureaucratic opposition might be won for "class-for-itself" orientation.

Having predictably elicited little response from the employed workers, the NCLC now turns to the unemployed. It has opportunistically latched onto a dissident group within the NWRO whose Office of Employment Opportunity funds have been eliminated and which is now being transformed into a vehicle to convert welfare to "workfare," the Nixon Administration's forced work program to place the unemployed in jobs at far below union wages and as scab labor. The NCLC will now begin its "class-for-itself" organization with this group and convince the organized workers to join it by lecturing them from outside their unions. The fact that unemployed organizations are inherently unstable, that mass struggles of the unemployed isolated from the organized workers cannot win serious concessions in this epoch, the understanding that reforms are only by-products of revolutionary struggles, all these lessons the NCLC eclectic and pragmatic reformers masquerading as revolutionists ignore.

As the discussion in the regional work-shops made clear, the NU-WRO is made up of antagonistic parts pulling in opposite directions. As against a welfare client service orientation by the NWRO dissidents, the NCLC places the need to construct a national organization, which in pursuit of this goal must regrettably ignore these struggles. The opportunism of the NCLC will

not pay them even short-term dividends and can only dishearten and confuse both the unemployed and the would-be revolutionists who are taken in by the NCLC's double-talk.

The unenviable job of trying to hide and distort the role of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER at the convention was assigned to "New Solidarity's" Richard Sober. In the time-dishonored manner of all political bankrupts unable to confront the ideas of their opponents, Sober, in the issue of April 9-13, resorts to vituperation and outright lies. Not a word of or concerning our counter-motion! Not a word of our amendments! Instead, the intervention of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER is linked to that of the Spartacist League (SL) and described as "the clowning of two Shachtmanite 'nut' groups." The dishonest Sober manufactures the phrase, "'take over the (proverbial) union leadership'," and attributes it to us. He manufactures events, such as that SL members "bolted for the nearest exit" upon being rebuked by a Black woman on the platform for --correctly--nailing the omission of a struggle against racial discrimination from the NU-WRO Bill of Rights. Basing himself on the organizational opportunist wisdom of, "If you are so smart, why aren't you rich," the pragmatic Sober lies about the size of our organization. He evidently hopes that his fiction, that VANGUARD NEWSLETTER's, "leader confided that a recent split had left him with only four stalwart comrades," will keep the NCLC members and NU-WRO supporters from considering our revolutionary program and perspective. He and the rest of the NCLC have yet to learn that the revolutionary "idea," as Trotsky taught, is stronger than the strongest organizational barrier.

The SL at first contented itself with leafleting and selling its literature from outside the convention. Only with the Saturday afternoon session, did its adherents take advantage of the open nature of the convention to intervene. It was, however, VANGUARD NEWSLETTER's participation as delegates with a counter-motion and amendments which

served to expose the NCLC and NU-WRO.

In contrast to the SL, VANGUARD NEWSLETTER came to the NU-WRO convention with a strategy to unite the employed and unemployed in struggle, the concept of a national network of trade union rank-and-file caucuses linked to organizations of the unemployed and providing a revolutionary leadership for the employed, the unemployed, the unorganized and the oppressed under the leadership of the Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party. This strategy, the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle," the SL discarded. In its place, the SL poses "militant caucuses in the unions based on the full program of transitional demands." The fraudulent nature of the SL's strategy for the trade unions--in reality its "militant" posturing to the student milieu--is demonstrated by its full--not critical--support to the Militant-Solidarity Caucus in the NMU which does not have a "full" Transi-

tional Program. Evidently, the SL has decided to support an adventure in that union lacking a serious base, in order to convince not the workers, but rather the radical milieu that its intentions toward the working class are serious. Instead it only demonstrates its unseriousness. As with caucuses in other unions it has supported, the Militant-Solidarity Caucus will prove barren of worker-recruits to the SL.

The fusion of the CLASS STRUGGLE LEAGUE and VANGUARD NEWSLETTER at Chicago on April 20-22 will create the embryo of the Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party. Unlike the technocrats of the NCLC and the pretenders to Trotskyism of the SL, we will be able to build a real working class foundation on the basis of a serious trade union strategy, a national network of rank-and-file caucuses which will also unite the organizations of the unemployed under revolutionary leadership.

ON THE FRENCH ELECTIONS - by Harry Turner

As our readers are by now aware, the Gaullist coalition was able to achieve a victory over the Union of the Left, the new "popular front" coalition of the Communist, Socialist and Left Radical bourgeois parties in the second round run-off French legislative elections on March 11.

Although the Gaullist coalition received 46.1% of the popular vote as against the Union of the Left's 45.3%, they managed to win 275 seats to 176. To achieve this victory, the Gaullist coalition had to depend not only on the gerrymandering of electoral districts against the working class, but also on a frenetic "red-scare" campaign to mobilize the peasantry and other petty-bourgeois elements to its side. During that campaign, President Georges Pompidou threatened to refuse to abide by bourgeois legality and relinquish power to a Union of the Left majority.

Thus, French capitalism, resting on the Bonapartist constitution of the Fifth Republic, presents a preview of the fascist methods to which it will resort when the working class threatens its power and when the Bonapartism of capitalist decline is unable to maintain "law and order."

The Gaullist party itself, the Union of Democrats for the Republic (UDR) lost its absolute majority and 84 seats in the National Assembly. Its coalition partners also lost seats but in lesser proportion. As the shift to the left of the French electorate demonstrates, dissatisfaction with the Gaullist regime and with social conditions is widespread.

The SP achieved the greatest electoral gains, a considerable number of workers voting for its candidates, and picked up 48 seats. The CP gained 73 seats, returning to its 1967 parliamentary strength. It has managed, on the whole, to retain its working class electoral support.

The independent petty-bourgeois United Socialist Party (PSU) gained two seats for a total of 3. The Left Radicals won 11 seats in the 59 districts in which it ran candidates.

As to the so-called "Trotskyist" "far left," the coalition of the

Ligue Communiste (LC) and Lutte Ouvriere (LO) received approximately 300,000 primarily working class votes in the 261 districts in which they ran candidates. The LC, which called for a vote on the second round for the "popular front" Union of the Left, ran 92 candidates and received 100,000 votes. LO, which criticized the LC's support for the "popular front," did not allow this "minor" principled disagreement to interfere with the electoral bloc. Having a working class base and also able to get television time, the LO ran 167 candidates and received twice the vote.

The Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI), after prolonged negotiations with the LC and LO for a joint election strategy, broke with both on the issue of the LC's support to the "popular front" and called upon the workers to vote only for the CP and SP on both ballots--as well as for their own 20 candidates on the first ballot--and in no case for the Left Radicals.

The French CP has long advocated a parliamentary road to socialism as does the SP. Concerned to reassure the French "public" about their respect for the institutions of capitalism, the Union of the Left presented it with their Common Program of Government for very limited and moderate nationalizations and also did everything possible to discourage strikes and demonstrations.

For the revolutionary Marxists, not the parliamentary road, but the seizure of power, the smashing of the bourgeois state machinery and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is on the agenda. However, in order for the working class, leading behind it the mass of the oppressed, to take this road, it is necessary to solve, in the words of the Transitional Program, the "crisis of the leadership of the proletariat." The French working class, its organized sector in particular, is led, in the main, by the CP. A section of the working class now also supports the SP. Only 2% of the voters voted for the "Trotskyists" of the "far left."

What was required from the revolu-

tionary Marxists, the Trotskyists of France was an understanding of the electoral policies of Lenin and Trotsky. It seems to this writer that it was necessary, not to "go it alone" in the sectarian hope that the workers would immediately foresake their illusions in the reformists, but to win them by a correct strategy and tactic. It was necessary for them to tell the "Mensheviks" and "Social Revolutionaries" to take the power--without the "Cadets"--to form a government only of these workers' parties. But, at the same time, to say what is and not to sow for a single instant illusions in, nor to soften in the slightest their criticisms of these "socialists," to support them, in Lenin's phrase, the way a rope supports a hanged man and, at the same time, to present a program of transitional demands creatively applied to France and their party as the only revolutionary alternative.

Concretely, it was necessary in this writer's opinion, to critically support the CP and SP on the first and second round while attacking and exposing the new "popular front" and opposing a vote for the Left Radicals. The electoral procedure in France makes it entirely possible to do so. It is, of course, useful and necessary to also, in line with this strategy, run candidates in chosen districts so as to achieve the broadest scope for agitation and to demonstrate working class support.

Unfortunately, there is as yet no Trotskyist organization in France.

The United Secretariat's LC clearly disclosed its readiness to follow the path to open political class collaboration of the ex-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party of Ceylon and of the POUM of Spain. It lacks only the mass support which would make its presence in the cabinets of the liberal bourgeoisie desirable.

The LO again demonstrates its inability to resist an organizational "bargain" at the sacrifice of principled politics. As our readers will recall, it initiated the first stages of a unity with the LC despite its differences as to the nature of the deformed workers'

states--all capitalist to LO--and on its workerist as against the LC's studentist tactics.

The OCI, which did call upon the CP and SP to take the power, "forgot" that in giving "critical" electoral support to reformist, it is impermissible to mute its criticism of or sow illusions in them. It seems to have done both. Henri Weber of the LC's "Rouge" repeats OCI propaganda for a CP-SP government as capable of satisfying the "elementary and basic" demands of the working class.

This position is only a slight variant of that of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) of Britain with whom the OCI until recently was united in the International Committee (IC). The SLL's IC attacks the OCI for not giving electoral preference to the CP over the SP on the first round and for adapting to French Stalinism and social-democracy. In Britain, the SLL calls on the Labour Party councilors to "fight for socialist demands," i.e.,

it adapts to its own labor bureaucracy. The Workers League which is in solidarity with the SLL has looked hopefully toward the most discredited right-wing section of the AFL-CIO to initiate a "Labor Party."

The Spartacist League's (SL) analysis of the French election again shows that it is only capable of ultra-left posturing abroad as at home. It advocated votes for the OCI and LO in the first round--even though the LO was linked, despite its platonic protestations, to the "popular front" through its bloc partner, the LC--and abstention on the second round! Without the candidates of LO, the SL would have been exposed as, essentially, telling the French workers to sit out both rounds!

The French Trotskyist party, still must be organized. It will be the responsibility of the world party of Trotskyism, of which the fusion of the CLASS STRUGGLE LEAGUE and VANGUARD NEWSLETTER is a beginning, to work for its early emergence.

OUR LAST ISSUE AND UNEXPIRED SUBSCRIPTIONS

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER will cease publishing with this issue. The new organization resulting from our fusion with the CLASS STRUGGLE LEAGUE will continue to publish a monthly tabloid newspaper.

A quarterly theoretical journal --in a measure, a continuation of

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER--is planned for the near future.

Our readers will receive the new organization's paper for the balance of their subscriptions. Those who also have a subscription to CLASS STRUGGLE will have the balance of their subscriptions added to that.

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Wounded Knee and the Working Class

Expressing the bitter anger of 12,000 Oglala Sioux on the Pine Ridge reservation against generations of racist oppression, poverty and hopelessness, 300 militants have seized and still hold the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota.

Every revolutionist worthy of the name will defend the Oglala Sioux against the United States government whose federal marshals, FBI agents and troops now ring Wounded Knee.

The dealings of the US government with the Indian people, as the massacre at Wounded Knee demonstrates, is a bloody page in the history of US capitalism: genocidal racism, wanton murder, the cynical breaking of treaties with the Indian tribes, the theft of tribal lands, the penning of the defeated tribes into "reservations," the deliberate starvation and robbery of the Indians by venal agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Today, life on Indian reservations is one of wretched, grinding poverty: a yearly income far below minimal existence, hovels lacking elementary necessities, the highest unemployment, infant and adult mortality rates.

It was Lenin who stated in What Is To Be Done that the working class must be "trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse--no matter what class is affected...from a Social Democratic [Revolutionary Marxist] point of view and no other."

We in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER consider the Oglala Sioux and the other Indian tribes to be part of an especially oppressed and dispersed ethnic or national minority, not a nation. As such, we fully support their struggle for democratic rights, autonomy and for an end to all aspects of racial oppression. We consider the armed seizure of Wounded Knee, however, to be a tactic born of despair which, although calling attention to the plight of the Oglala Sioux, will not materially change conditions for them.

THE UNITED NATIONS OR THE WORKING CLASS?

Even if the Oglala Sioux were a nation, their special oppression could not be ended through an appeal "for sovereignty to the United Nations" as the American Indian Movement (AIM) plans and which the Workers World Party (WWP)/Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF) publicly supports. WWP/YAWF knows full well that, like the League of Nations before it, the United Nations is, in Lenin's words, a "den of thieves." It prefers, however, to tail behind a completely bankrupt bourgeois-democratic illusion.

WWP/YAWF should certainly be aware, but has evidently "forgotten" that the special oppression of the Indian as well as of the Black and Spanish-speaking peoples can only be ended in this imperialist epoch by one means--the socialist revolution! Its leaders once knew that only the working class at the head of all of the oppressed can overthrow the system of capitalist violence, oppression and special oppression, of economic crises and wars of extermination and that any concessions won are only by-products of this struggle.

THE SPLIT IN VANGUARD NEWSLETTER by Henry Platsky

The Politics of a "Highly-Principled" Ego!

Our more observant readers undoubtedly noticed the substantial change in the masthead of our March, 1973 issue.

On March 13, 1973, David Fender appeared at the regular NYC VANGUARD NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE meeting to read a statement disassociating himself, Ed di Tullio and David Jones from VANGUARD NEWSLETTER (VNL).

The action came as no surprise. It was the logical culmination of a personal-bloc which developed around David Fender that sought to disrupt the fusion between VNL and the CLASS STRUGGLE LEAGUE (CSL).

Cdes. di Tullio, Fender, and Jones all shared a common background in the Communist Tendency (CT) in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

In the January 1972 issue of VNL Fender wrote an introduction to the article "In Defense of Trotskyism," There he documented the struggle between the CT and the Proletarian Orientation Tendency (POT) within the SWP. As our readers are by now aware, the POT defended the program of the SWP majority while differing on the question of a proletarian orientation as opposed to the petty-bourgeois orientation of the SWP majority. In defending the basis of the SWP's revisionism the POT came into conflict with the CT which, at least formally, defended a Trotskyist program against the SWP's right-centrist program. The struggle between the two opposing tendencies caused a good deal of personal resentment between the leaders of the two groups. As the struggle in the SWP developed, a primarily personal struggle also divided the ranks of the CT.

As Cde. Fender documented in his introduction, the CT soon degenerated into "a sect, an in-group, self-righteous and self-satisfied," driving away many in the SWP who might have been attracted to its program. Fender throughout, opposed the CT's behaviour. When the CT, after being expelled from the SWP, refused to unite with

VNL, Fender was forced to leave the CT virtually alone (except for Ed di Tullio on the West Coast). While Cde. Fender's isolation was due mostly to personal clique-ties that had developed within the CT, it became clear, after David Jones left the CT a few months later that something else was operating.

A new CT leadership was able to depose Fender (until that time the leading figure) when he extended a vacation for a few weeks without informing his comrades. The CT leadership was able to use the hostility that developed against Fender's indiscipline amongst the rank-and-file to isolate him.

The CT, an unprincipled personal bloc, finally showed its seriousness for building a Leninist Party by dissolving into the IS opportunist swamp. Whatever Fender's personal role in the CT, his political role was a principled one.

Fender and di Tullio came into VNL at a time of great crisis for the organization. Two of the editors, Hugh Fredricks and Robert Davis, resigned to join the CT. At the same time Cde. Turner's serious personal difficulties threw the responsibility for the organization on Fender's shoulders. For a time, Cde. Fender bore this responsibility, showing himself to be a capable and serious leader of the organization.

The activities of VNL in the Committee for Rank-and-File Caucuses, Cde. di Tullio's work on the West Coast, plus the recruitment of Cde. Jim Hays from the Workers League in St. Louis brought VNL into contact with fresh revolutionary forces.

Early in the summer of 1972, a number of leading members of the Spartacist League (SL) left the organization. At the same time we made contact with members

As world capitalist economy again verges on the edge of the abyss, as the struggle among the imperialists sharpen for markets and spheres of influence for commodities, capital and raw materials, each ruling class strives to maintain its mass and rate of profit at the expense of the living standards of the working class. Nixon the spokesman for US monopoly capitalism, has already enunciated a program of aggressive struggle abroad to maintain its power and privilege against its capitalist rivals. At home, he proposes to place the burden of inflation on the backs of the workers through "Phase 3," while curtailing social services to the poor, the sick and the aged.

It is necessary, therefore, to conduct a struggle in the working class to win it for the socialist "point of view" and for opposition to the "tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse" to which the Indian people have been subjected for generations.

A NETWORK OF RANK AND FILE CAUCUSES

How is this to be accomplished? We in VANGUARD NEWSLETTER call for a network of rank-and-file caucuses in the trade unions linked with and also helping to build organizations of the unorganized, the unemployed and the oppressed. We call for this network of caucuses to be built at this time on a three point program: the independence of the unions from the state, the struggle against all special oppression and super-exploitation of minorities and of women and an independent workers' party, a labor party based on the rank-and-file of the unions.

FACTORY COMMITTEES AND WORKERS' COUNCILS

Within the rank-and-file caucuses, we strive to win the workers to our full program of transitional demands. We build an alternative revolutionary leadership in and for the main working class organizations able to lead behind it the decisive battalions of the working class and all oppressed. We see the rank-and-file caucus becoming the factory committee and the network of caucuses becoming the workers' councils at a revolutionary moment. We build a Leninist and Trotskyist working class vanguard party which will be able to lead the working class and the oppressed to a victorious socialist revolution.

The special oppression of the Oglala Sioux and the Indian people as a whole will only be ended on this road.

.....

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of the Leninist Faction of the SWP (formed out of the most serious leaders and members of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency). As prospects for building a serious Trotskyist organization in the US brightened, Cde. Fender's weaknesses again came to the fore. At the end of the summer, Fender extended his vacation without informing the organization (he later claimed that he had not definitely said when he would return) thus repeating his performance in the CT. This act was only a small sample of what was to come.

In August we approached the Leninist Faction leadership in Boston, after the appearance of their basic document "Marxism Vs. the SWP." We informed them that we were in essential agreement with the document and proposed fusion between our two organizations when the Leninist Faction emerged from the SWP as an independent tendency, after an extensive discussion of differences. We made clear that whatever differences existed would not serve as a barrier to a united Leninist organization because of our agreement on program and strategy for this period. The Leninist Faction leadership informed us of their intention to propose fusion discussions with both VNL and the Spartacist League because of the formal agreement between the stated programs of all of the three tendencies.

At that point, the most serious differences between ourselves and the Leninist Faction were tactical. As Cdes. Phil Stein and Harry Turner have explained in the January/February and March issues of VNL, while these differences were important, both organizations now agree that these differences could be easily contained within a democratic-centralist organization. This was the unanimous opinion of VNL at that time. By November, the SL had broken off negotiations with the Leninist Faction/Class Struggle League. This was an important victory for us. This was followed by an intensive negotiating session

with the CSL leadership.

The negotiating committee for VNL, Turner, Fender, and myself, were determined, at this meeting, to dispel once and for all our doubts and suspicions about the Leninist Faction leadership. The upper-most question was whether the LF/CSL comrades had overcome the opportunist behaviour we felt they had displayed within the POT. The CSL comrades, in return, raised questions about our "softness" as Comrade Stein explained in the January/February VNL. At that time the CSL comrades were concerned to know whether this "softness" indicated an opportunist streak on our part. The CSL comrades also questioned the ability of the ex-CT comrades to function as serious revolutionaries. The CSL leaders had known the CT comrades in the SWP. They questioned Fender's lack of seriousness and his egotism. At that time David Jones had just joined VNL and the CSL comrades mentioned several incidents in Cde. Jones's career which they felt would exclude him from a serious organization. We rejected these charges then on the grounds that Cde. Jones vehemently denied all but one (taking books from the SWP bookstore in Boston following the expulsion of the CT. Jones defended, and as far as we know still defends this gross violation of proletarian principle. We told both CSL and Jones that a repeat performance of such an act would bring the most serious disciplinary action from VNL.). The CSL comrades were unable to produce evidence to substantiate their other charges. The meeting was quite a heated one but we left each other convinced that each was dealing with a serious tendency. From that point onward we moved closer towards fusion.

Fender, however, was moving in an opposite direction. The hostility that Fender felt for the ex-POT leaders began to express itself politically. After the aforementioned meeting, it was clear that Fender was determined to undermine the CSL leadership regardless

of their seriousness.

The SL had invited VNL and CSL to participate in a united front contingent in a peace march in Boston. The CSL comrades had agreed to prepare a leaflet for both CSL and VNL. The leaflet produced however was of very poor technical quality. At the NYC VNL meeting of Nov. 16th, Fender and another comrade used the poor technical quality of the leaflet as an excuse to urge VNL to bring its own leaflet to Boston along with the CSL/VNL leaflet. Fender showed his true motivation by also opposing letting the CSL produce placards for the demonstration. Fender was clearly moved by his distrust for the CSL leadership, not a desire for pretty leaflets. Both Cde. Turner and myself criticized the two comrades for ignoring the need to discourage organizational hostility.

At the next meeting, Fender continued his drive against the CSL. By then it was clear that only a 180 degree turn about on the part of either organization could prevent unity. Fender reacted with unjustifiable indignation to a proposal by the CSL to establish a joint paper (a proposal later withdrawn by the CSL after recognizing its impracticality.). Fender stated flatly that he was suspicious of the CSL's motivation and tried to draw a connection between this proposal and their past history in the POT. Again, Cde. Turner and myself criticized Fender and a supporter for their unthinking hostility. Fender reacted as if he were personally struck. He offered to resign from the negotiating committee if comrades felt that his personality was a factor in hindering unity. All of the comrades present assured Fender that this was not the case. In an informal discussion after the meeting, Cde. Turner argued that while he disagreed with Fender's behaviour on the negotiations committee on one or two occasions, on the whole his role had been positive.

Refusing to be confused by facts, Fender shortly followed up his

threat.

A meeting was scheduled with the CSL negotiating committee for Sat. Nov. 25. He informed Cde. Turner the evening before, in a phone call initiated by Cde. Turner, that he was resigning from the committee as of that night! He promised to be home later that evening to discuss the matter further but neither Cde. Turner nor myself were able to reach him although we called early into the morning. He failed to show up for the meeting that day, as well as a joint distribution outside the SL convention. On Sunday he arrived an hour late to a meeting with a representative of Spartacus (B-L) and left the meeting after staying only an hour.

At the next meeting, the NY local voted to censure Fender for violation of elementary Bolshevik discipline.

Fender, in his defense, presented a confused series of counter-charges and excuses. He argued that he had the right to resign from a post without first informing or discussing it with the organization. He then claimed he took such a drastic measure to "insure unity." At the same time he claimed that there was a difference towards the fusion--that VNL was accommodating to the CSL; that if he remained on the negotiating committee he would again be "criticized" for his role; that the VNL "majority" would attempt to silence him, etc. The comrades present pointed out the sheer dishonesty in Fender's position. They exposed his position on discipline as a mockery of democratic centralism. His charge of "accommodation" was exposed as a hastily devised smokescreen to cover his indiscipline and demanded that he make specific any charges of accommodation. They also inquired as to why he had never raised such criticism before. They rejected his claim that he wanted to "insure unity," predicting that his real hostility towards the CSL, which was behind his action, would soon make itself clear.

One can see the confusion that was in Fender's mind at this

point. His personal antagonism to the CSL combined with his inability to withstand criticism forced him into a hasty, indisciplined act. He covered up his act with a "left" attack against his accusers. On the one hand he wanted to insure unity by removing his personality, which, he claimed, the majority saw as a hindrance to unity, (a view that he implicitly supported by resigning!) from the committee. At the same time he accused us of accommodating to CSL without detailing any accommodations. He was thus caught in his own contradiction. If we were the ones in the wrong, why didn't he remain on the negotiating committee to fight our "accommodations" as any serious Bolshevik would? The answer was that Fender was building a case around his own ego and "integrity" rather than expressing a serious political difference with VNL.

Fender was to soon confirm the accusations of the VNL majority. As discussions with the CSL continued Fender opposed; giving the CSL our mailing list, having a VNL member sit on the CLASS STRUGGLE editorial board, selling CLASS STRUGGLE, and finally, at the VNL meeting of Feb. 1, arguing that agreement with the CSL no longer existed and fusion plans, therefore, should be halted. Thus Cde. Fender fought to "insure unity!"

As the differences in NY intensified, Fender's former partners in the CT rushed to his aid. While Fender was protesting VNL's alleged accommodations, di Tullio and Jones were loudly claiming their support for the fusion. On Dec. 19, however, di Tullio authored a statement from the West Coast describing the struggle in NY as a "personal" struggle, thus blurring the whole significance of Fender's actions. di Tullio, who according to a West Coast comrade, "loved Fender like a father loves a son" admitted to Cde. Turner in a phone call that his purpose was to get the NY local off "Fender's back." Two-thirds of the bloc was formed.

Fender had used the first issue of CLASS STRUGGLE as the basis to

claim that it exposed the CSL's "real" position on trade unions; therefore agreement no longer existed. The first issue of CLASS STRUGGLE only exposed the fact that the CSL comrades had never put out a paper before. The CSL itself offered harsh self-criticism for their first issue--to no avail. The Fender bloc was desperately in need of an issue--a straw man--in order to create a "political basis" for their existence. Thus Jones, who replaced Fender on the negotiating committee, stated at a Feb. 3rd Meeting that, while he "supported" fusion, he felt CLASS STRUGGLE revealed the CSL's "real" position on the trade unions--a word for word parroting of Fender! Jones soon sent a letter to NY attacking VNL's "bureaucratic proclivities" and "accommodationism." Thus the bloc was cemented. The threesome went on to demonstrate the kind of struggle they meant to fight. Fender and di Tullio ceased functioning as leaders of VNL. Both refused to write for the paper (di Tullio refused to finish his series on the SL), attend meetings or activities, etc. They claimed that they needed the time to produce a "document" presenting a full explanation of their positions (such a document has not appeared to this day--the minority remains without any written statement's!)

Fender, continued to take the lead in producing "differences" with the VNL majority. At one meeting he asked the VNL majority whether or not they would remain in VNL if fusion was decided against. Cde. Turner and myself made clear that we would not remain in an organization that could not complete a principled fusion. When Cde. Turner turned the question around, Fender replied that he would remain in VNL if it went through with the fusion! The Fender bloc, however, trumpeted Turner's and Platsky's "indisciplined attitude" to the skys. When the membership remained unmoved by this piece of factional nonsense

Fender created another difference at the Feb. 27th meeting of VNL. He put forward a motion to stop interventions into the activities of every radical tendency except the CP-YWLL! When the NY local laughed off this motion, Fender failed to appear at the next NY meeting. A week after that he appeared again to read the statement of resignation. The statement repeated the tired, old charges of accomodationism, bureaucratism, etc., without detailing any specifics. Fender promised to produce a written version of the statement--he still hasn't!

It is our opinion that Fender has proclaimed his dissertation from revolutionary politics. Fender's history in the revolutionary movement has been one of spates of fine, even exemplary contributions (e.g. the "Historical Roots..." document) which eventually peter out under the pressure of his own personal needs. Fender was faced with his final test in VNL--a test he failed. His proclivity towards putting personal considerations before politics transformed itself into a world-view--a political platform based upon his personal hostility towards the CSL leadership (who were, to his dismay, quite knowledgeable about his erratic qualities). Unable to politically justify his position, he used his censure as an excuse

to launch an attack upon VNL. He found allies amongst those who were unable to disentangle their personal loyalties from their political positions. Unable to produce a serious political statement of their views, the minority was forced to leave the organization without leading even the barest beginnings of a struggle. Those who were taken in by Fender's distortions are now faced with a choice: either follow the road of Fender into political oblivion or recognize their error and return to revolutionary politics! For those who choose the latter path, the door remains open!

Our enemies, such as those in the SL, will no doubt gloat over Fender's defection. We repeat that Fender's joining VNL was a principled political act! No one has proven otherwise! As repeated before Fender's early activities within our organization were those of a serious, disciplined comrade. While we have gone to some length to analyse and explain Fender's departure, the SL remains silent on the recent defection of nine of its leading members!

We go forward to consummate the fusion with the CLASS STRUGGLE LEAGUE! A fusion based on revolutionary, Leninist principles! A fusion that will build the nucleus of a real Trotskyist party in the US!

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE DEGENERATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE CENTRISM OF THE SWP - For a Return to the Proletarian Road of Trotskyism
- Part VII

As our readers are aware, this is the last issue of VANGUARD NEWS-LETTER. Those readers who wish to continue following this series may

request a photo-copy of the remainder of the document free of charge, by writing to our address on the masthead.

At the end and immediately after the war, there was an upsurge of the masses through the world which was reflected in the growth of the Trotskyist movement. The RCP in England, for example, had a sizeable proletarian base for its size. Out of roughly 500 members, the RCP was approximately 80% workers. After

the reunification in France the PCI began to grow and was able to recruit a base--even though small--in the working class. Certain sources put the French section at 2,000 strong. In the United States the SWP too began to grow, and by 1946 the party reported a membership of 2,000.

Optimism abounded. Opportunities

seemed to be opening up everywhere. Trotsky's prediction about the war throwing capitalism and bourgeois democracy into a prolonged and aggravated crisis seemed to be coming true down to the last letter. The enthusiasm and confidence of the period was best summed up in Cannon's speech to the 12th National Convention, "The Coming American Revolution," in which he stated:

"Our economic analysis has shown that the present boom of American capitalism is heading directly at a rapid pace toward a crisis; and this will be a profound social crisis which can lead, in its further development, to an objectively revolutionary situation."

The crisis from which the revolution would leap was just around the corner. "Onward to a party of 10,000," was the slogan of the SWP convention.

But the analysis of the SWP and the International proved to be wrong. Nevertheless, the SWP and the International dogmatically clung to what they thought Trotsky had predicted. Long after it had become abundantly clear that the capitalist crisis was not around the corner, they continued to argue that it was on its way. Ernest (Germain), the economic theoretician of the International, confidently defended the International's position at the 2nd World Congress in 1948 against the RCP majority which as a minority of one maintained that the boom would not be so ephemeral. Such farsighted analysis by the British section was, however, branded as disillusioned petty-bourgeois skepticism.

Nobody could defend Trotsky's anticipations of the events down to their last letter. Trotsky, like all the great Marxists, anticipated the future not with the intention of being history's script writer, but of indicating the general development of events given certain preconditions. Sometimes even the general flow of historical development is interrupted by historical accidents. Nevertheless,

Trotsky's prediction of the crisis of capitalism and bourgeois democracy and the subsequent rise of the masses under the banner of the Fourth International, was not without foundation. The rise of the masses did occur. What was missing was a presupposition that was understood in Trotsky's prediction; that the Fourth International would be sufficiently prepared to provide the masses with a revolutionary alternative. In fact, in 1937 he clearly stated, "If in the event of a new war, the masses are not headed by a revolutionary party... a new revolutionary situation would throw society back." But as we have seen, in the most important countries such as in France the sections of the International were incapable of taking advantage of the opportunities open to them. The politically bankrupt sections were unable to provide any valid alternative to the treacherous leaderships of Social Democracy and Stalinism which allowed the breathing space capitalism needed to secure its wobbly legs. But according to the SWP and the International leadership, the Fourth International had not yet had its chance to lead the masses in the storming of the bourgeois bastions and, therefore, the crisis was still around the corner. A dogmatic interpretation of Trotsky--sterile orthodoxy--replace a critical analysis of the objective situation and our own historical role.

To ignore the physical as well as political disintegration of the International during the war was to attempt to build upon a foundation of sand. The results could only be an ever continuing collapse of the structure, politically and organizationally, regardless of how impressive the facade appeared at any one time. The Second World Congress in 1948, however, sanctified the role of the International to that time and posed with optimism about the "more or less rapid transformation" "of our sections" "into mass parties."

In the activities report of the IS, "10 Years of Fighting," adopted

by the 2nd Congress, we find the following sanctimonious excerpts:

"c) In the face of the occupation of Europe by the Nazis and the reactions it provoked among the masses, the International defended the principle of the link between the struggle against national oppression and the struggle for the socialist revolution...."

d) Against the tide of chauvinist propaganda flooding the whole world, the Trotskyists held aloft the flag of revolutionary internationalism...."

While having stated the above the authors felt no compunction in stating further on:

"At first the pressure of the war and of the occupation of Europe by the Nazis completely bewildered the pre-war leadership of the French Trotskyist movement. A few of them deserted the organization and others abandoned all political activity. Among those who stayed, some leading comrades developed positions which essentially constituted a complete retreat from the revolutionary positions of the 4th International...."

Under the heading "The National Question during the War," the report continued, officially stamping as good coin the International's own deviations on the national question:

"The question was to organically combine the masses' national demands with the proletarian socialist program. The sections or tendencies which hesitated to audaciously take the initiative to write the struggle for national demands in their programs or which showed their incapacity to do so, to organize this struggle or to participate in the national movement of the masses (strikes, partisan armies, insurrections such as the Greek one of December 1944) made serious

sectarian mistakes which weighed on their development...."

And we learn that, outside of possible tendencies here and there, the Greek section seems to have been the only one to have raised objection to the International's deviations on the national question, and it was branded as sectarian. The Greek section, however, outside of having been small to begin with and losing its leadership during the war, found itself in three parts at the end of the war. To say the least, it was not able to have any preponderant influence in the International as a whole.

The 2nd World Congress held ten years after the founding of the 4th International maintained that the International was alive and well. The political documents issuing from the 2nd World Congress, however, proved that the International was not well, and even raised speculation as to its total demise. The young International was weak in cadres at its founding, but its strength was not in its numbers but in its unrelenting revolutionary program. The 2nd Congress of the International could brag of an increase in cadres, but the program had for all essential purposes become a religious relic. It had been replaced by a concoction born of social patriotism, enriched by pragmatism and impressionism and couched in sterile orthodoxy. Future events were to prove that the demise of the International was more than mere speculation.

The new leadership of the reorganized European Secretariat and subsequently, in 1945, of the International Secretariat, was personified by Michel Raptis (Pablo) who took over as general secretary of the European Secretariat after the arrest of Marcel Hic in 1943 and his murder in 1945. Leaving aside political considerations, one could not help but be suspicious of this new leadership from the organizational wheeling-and-dealing that was carried on under the guise of reorganization. Negotiations were opened up with the POUM.

Negotiations with the Shactmanites were placed on the agenda for the SWP. A phony Irish section was set up consisting of one individual who turned out to be sympathetic to Shactman. An Italian section was concocted which proved to be largely Bordigists. But these and other organizational gymnastics were only a portent of the organizational and political acrobatics yet to come.

The 2nd World Congress began to take up the most important theoretical question of the nature of the Eastern European states occupied by the Soviet Union. The Congress documents held that these states remained capitalist, that "structural assimilation" by the bureaucracy was impossible except for, possibly, "one or another country," and that the bureaucracy must withdraw under the pressure of imperialism, or "the real destruction of capitalism... take place only as a result of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses." (Here it is impossible to take up the question of Eastern Europe and the many fallacious theories advanced, such as the theory of "structural assimilation." To the present the Eastern European question has not been dealt with satisfactorily.)

One can see from the above how unprepared the International was for the actual events that took place in Eastern Europe. Outside of "one or another" exception, there could be no "structural assimilation"--a thoroughly reformist concept in its own right--in Eastern Europe, and the Soviet bureaucracy remained "compelled to maintain the bourgeois function and structure of the state, not only because its destruction is impossible without a revolutionary mobilization of the masses, but also in order to defend its own particular exploitation (sic) of the workers in these countries." The transformation of the Eastern European countries into deformed workers' states--in process at the time the documents of the 2nd World Congress were being passed--took the Inter-

national by surprise. The underestimation of the capabilities of the world Stalinist bureaucracy in the general framework of the world situation--which itself had been misunderstood--laid one of the bases for the zig-zag which became known as "Pabloism." When it finally decided that the Eastern European countries had been transformed into workers' states--determined precipitously and empirically--the International leadership, without retracting a single comma that appeared in the 2nd World Congress documents, now began over-estimating the potential of the same Stalinist bureaucracy. Both positions showed a lack of understanding of Stalinism and its bureaucratic rule.

The change in the International's position followed the Second World Congress by a matter of weeks. Before the ink was dry on the Congress documents, the International Secretariat (IS) was writing open letters "To the Congress, the Central Committee and the Members of the Yugoslav Communist Party," in which the IS was, according to the British section,

"forced by events to proceed from the standpoint of the British Party, that the productive and political relations in Yugoslavia are basically identical with those of the Soviet Union."

The British comrades continued in their "Letter on Yugoslavia sent to the I.E.C.":

"If indeed there exists in Yugoslavia a capitalist state, then the IS Letters can only be characterized as outright opportunist. For the IS does not pose the tasks in Yugoslavia which would follow if bourgeois relations existed there as the dominant form. The Letters are based on conclusions which can only flow from the premise that the basic overturn of capitalism and landlordism has taken place. The second Open Letter gives several conditions necessary if Yugoslavia

is to go forward with true revolutionary and communist progress. Yet nowhere does it call for the destruction of bourgeois relations in the economy and the overturn in the bourgeois system and regime. "The comrades will remember that the Congress document gives as its first reason why 'the capitalist nature of the buffer zone is apparent,' that 'Nowhere has the bourgeoisie as such been destroyed or expropriated.' Why no mention of this in the Open Letters? Of all the seven conditions given in the Congress document as making 'apparent' the capitalist nature of Yugoslavia and other buffer countries, the IS mentions only one--nationalization of the land. But even here, the question of the failure to nationalize the land is raised, not from the point of view of proving the capitalist nature of Yugoslavia. It is raised to point out, correctly, that the nationalization of the land is necessary in order to combat the concentration of income and of land in the hands of the kulaks. The question is raised in the general context of the Letter, as an aid to the socialist development of agriculture in a country where capitalism and landlordism have been overthrown, but the danger of a new exploitation is still present in the countryside. "Not only are main tasks posed in the Open Letter identical to those to be carried out to cleanse a state similar in productive and political relations in the Soviet Union; but, we must add, that the impression given is that these relations are a great deal healthier than in Russia. "The articles appearing in our international press revealed one thing: the thesis adopted by the World Congress failed to provide a clear guide to the problems that arose from the Cominform-Yugoslavia split and the tasks of the revolutionaries in connection with the regime and its economic base."

It is evident from the quote that

the comrades of the British section, along with their other disagreements, disputed the position of the International on the nature of the Eastern European states. While we cannot agree with the British section's alternative political analysis on the question, (an analysis similar to the Vern-Ryan tendency of the SWP that red army equals workers state) the letter of the British comrades, nevertheless, exposes the International's total disregard, without even the slightest compunction, for their own political evaluation. The letter exposes as well the Secretariat's crass opportunism and is a premonition of the adaptation the IS was going to make, not only in relation to Yugoslavia, but to Stalinism in general.

The attitude that the YCP was on its way to reforming itself, under the leadership of Tito, flowed from what seems to have been the assumption that any opposition to the Kremlin by another CP had, of necessity, to be from the left. The ideas of the British comrades that the Yugoslav "bureaucratic regime, resting as it does mainly on the peasantry, can have no independent perspective between the Soviet Union and American imperialism," and that the struggle of the YCP was a "desire of the Yugoslav leaders to maintain an independent bureaucratic position and further aspirations of its own," were completely dismissed by the International leadership. The IS leadership behind Pablo and Healy, as well as the French section behind Bleibtreu and Lambert, threw themselves into the word of establishing contacts with Yugoslav government officials, organizing work brigades to go to Yugoslavia, and sycophantically praising in their press the "courageous" position taken by the YCP and its leader Tito. Tito's portrait even decorated the walls of the offices of the IS and the French section. The attitude to Yugoslavia was only a precursor to positions that the IS would take in relation to China, Bolivia, Cuba, Algeria, Vietnam, etc.