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SOCIALIST VOICE

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Reconstruct
the Fourth International!

Magazine of the LEAGUE FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The Black Struggle: Which Road Today?



The New Indochina War — A Test of Theory
Carter's Twisting African Policy
On the Gay Question

Contents

<i>Exchange on the Gay Question</i>	3
<i>The Black Struggle: Which Road Today?</i>	9
<i>The Spartacist Tapes</i>	15
<i>On the Nature of the USSR</i>	17
<i>Carter's Twisting African Policy</i>	21
<i>The New Indochina War — A Test of Theory</i>	28

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No. 5 (Fall 1977): The Sadlowski Campaign: U.S. Labor and the Left; RMC into SWP: A Bukharinist Theory of State Capitalism; Letter to Jamaican Comrades.

No. 6 (Spring 1978): Exchange on State Capitalism: Is Nationalized Property Proletarian; Behind the Bakke Case; Oil, Coal and the Energy Program; The Labor Party in the United States.

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SOCIALIST VOICE



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SOCIALIST ACTION

is the bulletin of the City Workers Committee of the LRP. This bulletin covers the crisis in New York City and the response of the working class, as well as world events of concern to the working class. It is an important weapon in the fight to defend all workers from the current attack on jobs, income and vital services, and it crusades for the general strike, the revolutionary party and socialism. At all times it campaigns for working class unity — citywide, nationally and internationally.

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Increased postage and printing costs have forced us to raise the prices of the joint subscription and of single copies of the magazine. Present subscribers will receive both publications for the duration of their subscriptions.

Exchange on the Gay Question

This is the second portion of an exchange of correspondence between the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) and the former Revolutionary Faction of the Red Flag Union (RFU-RF). The first part, dealing with the nature of state capitalism, was published in the previous issue of *Socialist Voice*.

The Red Flag Union was a gay liberation organization in California which divided politically when it began an investigation into Marxist questions. The majority of the group, the Bolshevik Tendency (RFU-BT), joined the Spartacist League (SL), while the minority Revolutionary Faction subsequently joined the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) in the fall of 1977.

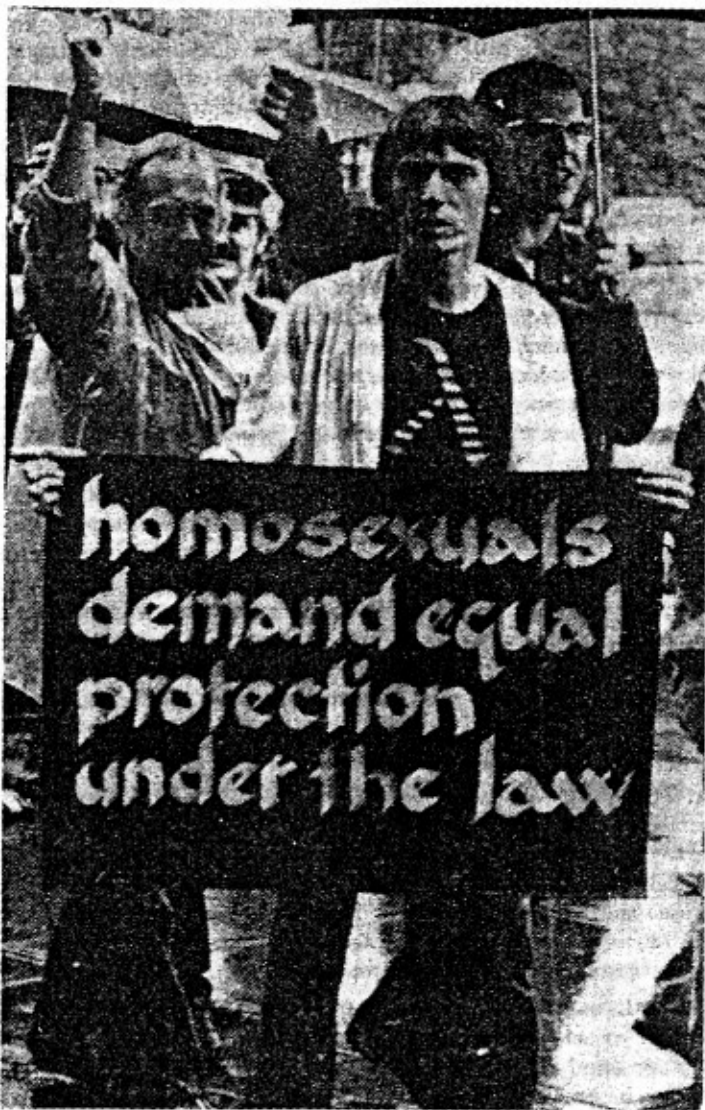
LRP to RFU-RF, July 29, 1977

With you, we believe that to surrender on the revolutionary capabilities of the proletariat will inevitably affect one's positions on the movements of oppressed people in general and thereby the gay movement as well. The Spartacist League reflects the outlook of the labor aristocracy in a radical format. Social formations generally have two political choices within societies in upheaval. On the one hand there is generally a wing which seeks to defend its stratum or class position by taking a hard-line position rejecting the attempts of previously dispossessed groups from sharing its perquisites. There is frequently a more liberal wing which seeks to preserve its status through allowing a change in the status quo when it can no longer be maintained. This wing seeks to incorporate rising elements instead of opposing them head on.

The SL represents one variety of these incorporatist elements who seek to attract socially dangerous pariah groups (in reality only the top layer thereof) and tame them. In domesticating these groups it is hoped that the masses beneath them will be left without a leadership (or more exactly, will follow this domesticated misleadership while under the illusion that capitalism is going to allow all of them to make lasting gains).

The SL in particular is only willing to allow into its radical sector of the aristocratic layer those who will assimilate to the mores of the present occupants. Thus the SL position on "integration" is based upon the need to "educate," that is, domesticate, the blacks. They are total assimilationists who reject the nationalist course which was, under the cover of separation, merely another and more militant-seeming way towards incorporation into this capitalist society. Far too radical in that it advocated mass eruptions, this course was rejected by the SL with great tenacity. It is not by accident that the SL and the RFU-BT explicitly split from what they call Pabloism on the question of "third worldism" alone and not on the question of the petty bourgeoisie's ability to make the social revolution. The so-called "third world" countries are far more volatile than the advanced in that they do not have as entrenched labor aristocracies; this is what the SL fears, not only the wrong guerrillaist strategies. In short, they are willing to accept those of the oppressed who are willing to "pass" in the social sense. To the SL (as we pointed out in our article in *Socialist Voice* No. 3 on Robertson's infamous speech) this means not a surrender of "color," since that is not possible for most, but a surrender of what in their opinion is wrong "consciousness."

Just so in the area of gay liberation, where gays who are willing to "pass" (go into the closet; act straight and speak as if straight) are welcome and others are rejected. Even if the Spartacists, being pragmatists, are unable to explain the links between their gay and black positions adequately, there is a real consistency. It is the consistency of looking at the world from the vantage point of the labor aristocracy. In this epoch, this inevitably means the adoption of a bureaucratic view towards the achievement of goals rather than seeing that



struggle is the means to achieve consciousness and goals. In the black area they point to the need to "educate" the workers away from "lumpen lifestylism." Revolutionaries see "education" as part of the process of struggle, not the imposition of petty-bourgeois norms favored by the liberal dogooders and the SL. In terms of gays, the SL believes that "lifestyle questions" are the problem to be eliminated. In this formulation there is a deliberate amalgam of different ideas, which has the net effect of rejecting both the gay struggles of the past and the consciousness gained from them. Gays, as opposed to black lumpen workers, can simply surrender

the "gay lifestyle" and not go through the process of "education."

The amalgam the SL makes becomes apparent when one sees that gay identity and gay pride are not coextensive with lifestyle. Gay identification and "coming out of the closet" have been intertwined, but it is urgent that we examine them separately.

For example, there are many Jews who have a strong identity with other Jews and as being Jewish without themselves having any overt "lifestyle" manifestations in the form of, for example, ring sideburns, hat wearing indoors, etc. The point is that while the two questions frequently coincide and are related, they are not the same phenomenon. The question is even more obvious with gays in that lifestyle may be discarded but generally gayness cannot be. "Identity" means a positive self respect for one's actual being which cannot be accomplished in isolation but requires a demand for respect from others. Identity by gays to fellow workers can occur through word of mouth or through actions. Gay identity is also projected by individuals when they fight for gay rights in concert. It may or may not be accompanied by overt "lifestyle" manifestations.

The SL show is given away by their identification of gay identity and gay pride with "sissiness." Sissiness in our culture means effeminacy which means cowardice and inability to fight. It is completely clear that the whole concept of gay pride was an *attack* on the ideology of gay cowardice, a false consciousness which has been perpetrated by society and accepted by many gays. The SL purportedly supports the Stonewall eruption. What consciousness could the SL possibly think the gays who fought there had? Sissiness? Perhaps they assume the gays thought nothing positive about themselves while fighting and derived no pride in their ability to fight as a group? Stonewall simply could not have occurred without an awareness of a positive potential for gays, and the struggle could only have produced a more positive identity and consciousness. To reject gay assertiveness is to reject struggle.

No possible struggle could occur for gay rights unless there are overt gays. We have heard those affected by the SL argue that non-gay revolutionaries are as much obligated to participate as gays, and therefore there is no need for gays to be overt. This begs the question since, if the determinant is general opinion and therefore backward opinion, isn't it obvious that the hostile public regards anyone and everyone who marches in pro-gay demos as being gay? It is only necessary to listen to the comments of onlookers.

The SL charges that the RSL refuses to respond to the question of whether it would permit males to wear dresses when speaking for the RSL. We have seen the RSL avoid the question here in New York. We have seen nothing from you to contravene the SL assertion that you also avoid such questions.

If we distinguish between lifestyle and open identity there is little problem in answering. We in general would not allow it, even though in general we believe that our gay members should be open as to what they are. The amalgam accepted by both the RSL and the SL is not accepted by us.

We refuse to tail the consciousness of backward workers and others on questions which affect the conquest of power — that is, political questions. We therefore choose not to violate certain cultural norms because that would hamper us in communicating our message and building our cadre for the revolutionary party. We do not permit in general our members to address meetings while naked. Yet there is

nothing more rational about being clothed (where it is not due to weather) than being clothed in the garb of one sex. Presumably under socialism the self-denial and alienation which necessitates clothing will go into the historical dustbin. Yet even nudist revolutionaries should not put forward this valid-enough lifestyle in public in political contexts, because it does not help us reach the society that will eliminate the problem.

It is necessary to carefully distinguish lifestyle from positive identity, which is political in essence. The SL denies the political character of open identity by gays. They say it is an "individual" question, a question of choice on a "personal" level and not a political one. That is simply nonsense. When hundreds and thousands of people make a choice in the course of a struggle — good, bad or indifferent — that is a political act. Is it a "personal" or a "political" act when an individual proclaims him or herself to be a Marxist? Obviously personal acts of this sort are political acts.

Obviously, as well, when many people display a certain lifestyle or form attitudes about it, that too becomes political. At the beginning of the gay movement — and, indeed, throughout its history — there were elements who asserted lifestyle to be the content of their politics and did indeed identify identity and self-respect with lifestyle. This was of course typical of the New Left, from the "dirty speech" groups to the various student subcultural efforts. Lifestyles of this and other sorts are and can be "personal" in a sense. Once they become part of an open struggle or movement they become political acts. The infusion of this lifestyle question into the struggle was political and was petty-bourgeois. It was aimed at outraging the prejudiced public rather than at any proletarian revolutionary strategy designed to change mass consciousness. It was closely akin to an elitist disdain for the prejudiced workers and general public; seeing them, and not a ruling class nor its system, as the enemy, it openly displayed its contempt instead of trying to win them.

The same identification of lifestyle with consciousness characterizes the dominant petty-bourgeois misleadership of the gay movement, which is equally elitist and blames the masses for the evils of the system. They abjure demonstrative stylism in the same breath as abjuring radical or revolutionary struggles. By lumping the question of lifestyle into the question of struggle they suppress the struggle or attempt to do so. And to deny the mass character of the struggle denies the positive self-image and consciousness which gays have painfully built up.

The SL — and the RSL, and insofar as we are aware, your tendency — have radical versions of the same problem. The SL, by amalgamating lifestyle into struggle-identity, obviously accepts the petty-bourgeois ideology as identical with the mass struggle of gays and therefore rejects the struggle in the course of rejecting the ideology. The SL rejects gay pride because it identifies the struggle with the backward aspects of consciousness which are attributable to the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie. It agrees with the dominant ideology of the labor aristocracy and increasing sections of the gay petty-bourgeois leaderships that struggle-consciousness is a disaster. It does so because it reflects basically the same class vantage point.

This is part of a general pattern with the SL. For example, it distinguishes itself from left bureaucrats in the unions because their politics are insufficiently left-wing. Their basis for non-support to Sadlowski, for example, was that his program was not yet decisive enough in breaking from the bourgeoisie. The assessment that Bolsheviks make in whether or not to give critical support to a reformist and-or pro-

bourgeois misleader is not based on any political agreement. There is no such agreement with petty-bourgeois outlooks. The revolutionary program and all other programs are antagonistic. If there is a point of "agreement" then the direction and purpose of the "point" are opposite — one leading to revolution and the other designed to incorporate. Critical support, like the united front, is designed not to accept bourgeois politics in whole or in any part or to imply any identity with it. It is precisely designed to split, in struggle, the pro-bourgeois leaders from the base they reflect and to win this base to the independent banner of revolutionary socialism. In making the test the question of the politics of the leadership, the SL in reality ignores, rejects and buries the struggle of the masses which the misleaders only reflect in order to capture. The radical attack on the misleaders of movements only implies insufficient agreement for the SL and not the basic counterposition necessary to win the masses in struggle to Marxist consciousness.

The RSL, as we have indicated, accepts the same amalgam. Indeed, its gay position reflects a more general attitude of making some version of political agreement the basis for united fronts, critical support and the like. It basically views its politics as being the extension of the most militant politics put forward by the misleaders. Socialist revolution becomes an addition to the most left petty-bourgeois expression of the underlying struggle. Thus in South Africa, the RSL does not counterpose itself to the present student leadership but advises the extension of the revolutionary process to include the working class. In its SCAA front it seeks to incorporate, rather than counterpose itself to the most militant expressions of black nationalist groups. Thus in the



June demonstration against anti-gay Briggs initiative in California.

gay movement it identifies with the most militant of the petty-bourgeois misleaders, does not counterpose itself to them, and calls for socialist revolution and work in the unions as an extension of their politics.

But the "mass movement" and "militant confrontationalist" leaders in the gay movement who currently oppose the electoralist line which cracked up in Dade County are only replaying the same strategy which led to pro-Democratic Party conclusions in the first place. Revolutionaries must counterpose to such leadership not the need for militant struggle but the explicit need for socialist revolution. We do not simply

add socialist revolution to the most militant posture put forward. Indeed we warn that posing militancy while avoiding the question of state power is a disaster and can only lead to electoralist Democratic Party answers to the political questions raised by the actions themselves.

We therefore feel that the RSL capitulates to the petty-bourgeois consciousness of militant gays. The petty-bourgeois consciousness of oppressed groups (nationalism, sectoralism, etc.) is not equatable with the opposite petty-bourgeois consciousness of the chauvinists and the oppressors, but nevertheless we are always opponents of such wrong consciousness and misleadership. We fight within the struggles of the oppressed to demonstrate the material fact that only internationalism and socialism can secure even democratic rights. Therefore we reject the RSL approach because it too capitulates to the "progressiveness of the petty bourgeoisie" approach. It too reflects a radical version of the petty-bourgeois class outlook. The articles in the *Torch* express no explicit counterposition between the need for a working class leadership and present radical middle class leaderships of the movements of the oppressed, here and abroad. The SL charge of "multi-vanguardism" is not without merit.

LRP to RFU-RF, August 19, 1977

Since we wrote to you last we have had further discussions on the gay question. At the time we wrote to you we still accepted the slogan "Gay Liberation through Socialist Revolution" as the chief demand framing our work among gays at this time. Since then we have adopted two slogans designed to replace this demand as central to our efforts at this political conjuncture. The "Gay Liberation through Socialist Revolution" slogan remains, however, within our arsenal as a goal to be raised where and when we are able to go onto the offensive. In our propaganda we will openly and clearly state this as our intent.

The two demands we raise as critical at this point are: "For a Congress of Labor and the Oppressed to Launch a United Defense" and "Defend Democratic Rights through Socialist Revolution".

Our estimate of the overall situation at this conjuncture is that the democratic movements, as well as the working class in general, are on the defensive. The petty-bourgeois misleaderships have brought the movements of the '60's and the early '70's to an impasse. The right wing is regenerating and is developing its counterattack. Mass struggle has been proven the only source of real gains. Likewise, it has been proven that it is impossible to achieve lasting and fundamental gains within the confines of capitalism. Democracy tied to capitalism not only fails to last but its failure sets the stage for the reactionary alternative which poses as a more real, and more radical, social solution.

Our new slogans are defensive. They are in line with the currently unfavorable balance of forces and the fact that the initiative has been ceded to the forces seeking to roll back the gains of the oppressed and the working class. As well, the slogans pose the need for unity between all the movements struggling to maintain their democratic rights.

Further, the slogans enable us to insist upon the fact that the only progressive unity is with the working class and that the chief arena and vehicle for this effort is the independently organized sector of the proletariat in the unions. Our working class position openly proclaims socialist revolution as *our* goal. It poses the need for an offense to carry out the defensively posed tasks of the moment. It points to the proletariat as key to

this development. It therefore commits us to raising general propaganda as well as additional slogans and activities, where possible, aimed at cracking the hold of the petty bourgeoisie and its bureaucracy over the unions. Our slogans therefore are open to allowing collaboration with forces who merely see the unions and the workers as potential sources of power for the oppressed to ally with. Nevertheless, *our* goal and *our* content — socialist revolution — appear clearly. In counterposition to those who proclaim unity of the oppressed and the workers meaning that the workers should be attached to the petty bourgeois movement on a more radical basis, we say that a revolutionary unity led by the working class and its vanguard party is the only progressive goal possible. To accomplish this goal it is necessary to prove it in practice and for this united fronts and joint actions will be desirable along the way.

In combat with reformists and centrists we argue not for the maintenance of sectoral and parochial divisions but for the need to unite upon the working class basis we have outlined above. We, in contrast to the Spartacist League, do urge armed defense including defense by the various oppressed sectors and groupings short of the achievement of a united working class defense. In contrast to the Revolutionary Socialist League, we do not let our defense efforts nor those of the small radical groups of oppressed people whom we can affect act as an alternative to the real defense and the real goal: united working class defense. Sectoral defense is necessary but not sufficient.

Self-defense organization of the working class is a transitional demand. We make clear our content. The only defense of democratic rights is by a united and fighting proletariat organized in forms which are the embryo of the only lasting defense of democracy, the workers' militia run by the workers' state. Therefore, we emphasize defense demands which are made upon the unions and the workers' movement as a whole. We frame our defense efforts in the form of an attack on the criminal bureaucracy and do not let them off the hook. If the working class as a whole cannot be brought into the defensive fight the oppressed movements will go down. We cannot substitute ourselves nor the actions of small groups for the tasks of the class.

We oppose all stagism. We do not regard the democratic struggle as the immediate aim and the socialist revolutionary struggle as the next stage. We insist that the movement now be launched for the socialist revolution as the only way to retain (and attain) the democratic rights now brought into question. The major task in fighting for the socialist revolution is the reconstruction of its revolutionary international and its American party section.

Since our newly adopted slogans place us at variance with your position at least on the level of slogans, we thought it necessary for us to inform you:

Former RFU-RF to LRP, November 11, 1977

On the gay question: Your critique of the SL's assimilation-domestication approach is very good, but we find your own thinking on the gay issue strangely reminiscent of our early conversations with the SL. In your haste to separate lifestyle from political struggle, you have equated lifestyle with "coming out of the closet" and have counterposed both to the supposedly more political issue of gay identity and gay pride. But this is nearly the SL line! For months during our factional struggle in Lavender and Red Union-RFU and during numerous encounters with the SL, we were told, "It's OK to be

gay identified, no need to feel guilty, but coming out, that is, telling people of your gayness, is an unnecessary indulgence which puts personal lifestyle over politics."

"'Identity' means a positive self respect for one's actual being which cannot be accomplished in isolation but requires a demand for respect from others," you say, quite correctly. Yet this is nothing but a description of the social process of "coming out," which you "urgently" (and hopelessly) desire to separate from gay identification. Although this view has not led you to adopt the SL's "public closet rule," we see no reason why it should not.

We agree that gay struggle requires gay assertiveness, and we go further, saying that gay assertiveness requires not just a private identity but a public (political) declaration, a coming out. While we do not *demand* of gay people to come out, and while we recognize the necessity for secrecy in many situations, the open expression and acknowledgement of gayness is a goal which we seek, knowing that it will not be achieved in a complete sense this side of a socialist revolution.

You admit a willingness to tail bourgeois consciousness on questions which do not affect the conquest of power — that is, secondary questions in the strictly tactical or military sense. You would not, for example, permit males in dresses to speak for the L.R.P. because you "choose not to violate certain cultural norms ...". And the SL says that if workers don't like orange shirts, they (the SL) won't wear orange shirts (a crude analogy to justify their closet rule). When challenged by us they use your very words in response: "It won't help us reach the society that will eliminate the problem." You draw the "acceptability" line slightly further left than the SL, but you draw it still from the bourgeois point of view — not from the point of view of the oppressed.

Your discussion of "sissiness" is a good example. "Sissiness in our culture (whose culture?) means effeminacy which means cowardice and inability to fight." But that is the definition of the male supremacist, anti-gay bourgeois! It is not *our* definition. Most women (the original "effeminate") certainly know that they can fight — and have done so. Similarly with gay men. While gay pride consciousness is an attack on cowardice, it is not and never has been an attack on effeminacy (except by the very same petty bourgeois misleaders who direct activity into Democratic Party electoralism).

You and the SL see gay male effeminacy as one of those stylistic embarrassments which obstruct your communication with the masses. The SL has drawn this all out to a fine degree: closet rule, contempt for "sissies," and a dismissal of the entire gay struggle. We will watch your development with interest.

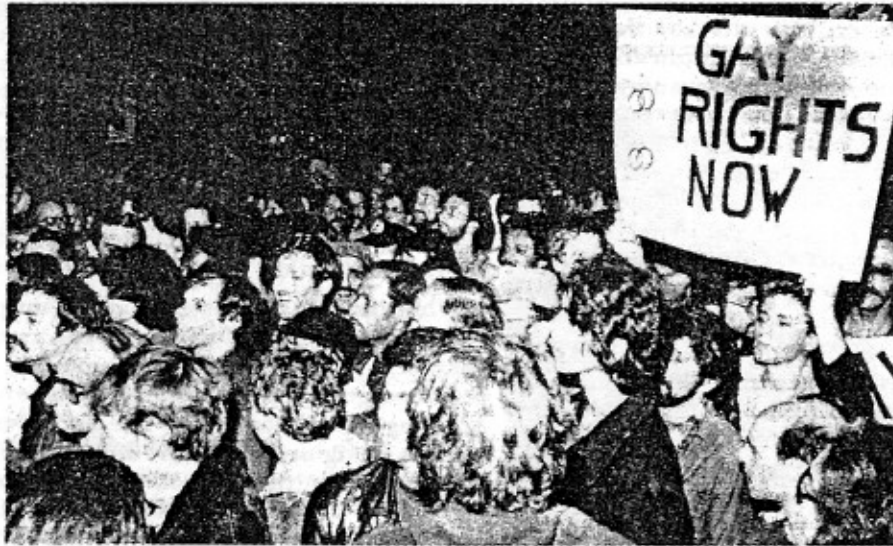
As for males in dresses, our view remains the same. A male member of our group would not wear a dress for shock value or cultural experimentation at a public political event. We seek to relate to people in an honest and dignified fashion, without arrogance or posturing of any kind. But it is entirely possible that we might draw to us working class militants who are transvestites and for whom public appearance in a dress or similar garb would be neither dishonest nor undignified, but a cultural right which we are bound to defend. If you believe this to be an extreme example, and the numbers of such folk to be so small as to be expendable, then you stand with the still numerous parties of the "left" who hold an identical attitude toward gays. For our part, we stand with the oppressed and against bourgeois ideology, however tempting some small popular prejudice may be.

While we have no objection to the two new slogans you have

adopted for work among gays, we feel they are inadequate by themselves. We see no need to retire the "Gay Liberation Through Socialist Revolution" slogan, even though defensive slogans may take a more prominent place in daily work. Your choice of replacement ("Defend Democratic Rights Through Socialist Revolution") is revealing. While this new slogan actually fails to change the tone from offensive to defensive, it does succeed in submerging the special needs and movement of gays altogether. Once again, in the name of unity, gays get shoved under the rug and you appear as a champion of the embarrassed non-gay majority. Need we remind you that it is not gays who have historically resisted unity with the rest of the struggling oppressed? Rather it is any number of other movements, parties, etc. which have hidden, expelled, repressed or scapegoated gays. That is the approach of the bourgeoisie, and we will not join in.

permit a transvestite clad in woman's garb to speak for the RSL. We stated that the LRP would not allow this, no more than we would "permit in general our members to address meetings while naked." We stated that "we refuse to tail the consciousness of backward workers and others on questions which affect the conquest of power — that is, political questions. We therefore choose not to violate certain cultural norms because they would hamper us in communicating our message and building our cadre for the revolutionary party."

The RSL's reply is characteristic: bold words and political evasion. "You admit a willingness to tail bourgeois consciousness on questions which do not affect the conquest of power — that is, secondary questions in the strictly tactical or military sense." They then go on to accuse us of capitulation to bourgeois ideology and culture. At one point where we wrote "our culture," they dramatically interject, "whose culture?"



Reply

The RFU-RSL answer to our letters confirms our view that the RSL position on the gay question is nothing but a militant variant of the radical petty-bourgeois approach. The weakness of the RSL outlook is demonstrated by its need to take refuge in distortion and evasion in order to answer our criticisms.

A central point in our first letter was to separate the "intertwined" questions of lifestyle and overt gay identity (but *not* to separate lifestyle from struggle, as the RSL charges — we explained precisely how the two are connected. The petty-bourgeois leaders of the gay movement deliberately amalgamate lifestyle and open gay assertiveness in order to ward off any radical or revolutionary implications for the gay struggle. We pointed out that the Spartacist League made the same amalgamation so that in opposing certain lifestyle manifestations they also oppose political struggle by gays openly asserting their homosexuality. We also stated that the RSL has a more radical version of the same amalgam, confusing ideology and culture with struggle. The reply offers further proof.

Take the question of males wearing dresses. We referred to the RSL's evasion of the SL's challenge on whether it would

From such resolute words one would expect that RSL to make no concession whatever to either backward political consciousness or American bourgeois cultural norms. One might expect to see at the next RSL public forum an unshrinking, uncompromised Bolshevik comrade addressing the meeting in drag, or even completely naked!

But anyone with such expectations will be sadly disappointed. For the doughty RSL explains, "A male member of our group would not wear a dress for shock value or cultural experimentation at a public political event. We seek to relate to people in an honest and dignified fashion..." Lo and behold! These stouthearted non-capitulators choose not to defy cultural norms. No "shock value" (whose values?); no "cultural experimentation" (whose culture?). They wish to act "in an honest and dignified fashion." But what is dishonest about a transvestite speaking in public as a transvestite? And more to the point, the question of "dignity" is also a cultural question. When the RSL accepts the need for dignity it recognizes the importance of not flying in the face of American bourgeois cultural norms in this case. After all, what is considered dignified in the U.S. today is no absolute human norm. Plenty of non-American, non-bourgeois cultures historically have regarded nakedness in public as

perfectly "dignified." No, comrades, for all your mock heroics, you come to the same conclusion as those you criticize. You refuse only to say so unambiguously, in the hopes of misleading oppressed gays into thinking that you are their gallant defenders without troubling to combat the petty-bourgeois ideology that envelops and misleads the current gay movement.

The RSL's ringing proclamation that "public appearance in a dress..." is "a cultural right which we are bound to defend" conceals another evasion of the question. Yes, appearance in public in whatever garb one wishes is indeed a cultural right to be defended. But the question of a male comrade dressing as a woman while acting as an RSL speaker is not a matter of his "right" to do so but for the RSL, an internally disciplined organization, to *decide*. The RSL, which kept silent on this in its fight with the SL, has now adopted a position designed to tail the present consciousness of the gay leadership — in words. Not in practice, of course, where it would be too embarrassing to violate bourgeois cultural norms.

Now take the question of "sissiness." We attacked the SL for raising the question and amalgamating gay identification with "sissiness." We pointed out the derogatory meaning of the epithet "sissy" in this culture (an American culture, a bourgeois culture, the one we live under) — "sissiness in our culture means effeminacy which means cowardice and inability to fight." We said that was what the SL meant by the charge and attacked them for it. Anyone seriously reading the paragraph from which the RSL derives its charge that we accept the bourgeois view of "sissiness" and femininity can only feel that the distortion must be deliberate.

If the RSL's criticism of us on this means anything at all, then the RSL by refusing to separate lifestyle from consciousness and open gay identification, is insisting that revolutionaries must not simply defend the right to effeminacy as a lifestyle but must endorse it, advocate it, as well. However, there is no reason to do so, no more than there is to endorse any other lifestyle, for it is patently false that only gays who adopt what is called an effeminate lifestyle are capable of fighting against oppression in an open and courageous manner. It wasn't this or that lifestyle which led to the Stonewall struggle, but gay self-identification and self-pride. They fought to defend the rights of people who chose a wide variety of ways to pursue their homosexuality. That is our point against both the SL and the RSL.

On the question of democratic rights, our stress on their defense was based on an assessment of the balance of forces at this conjuncture. For us, the only way to achieve gay liberation is through the socialist revolution, and we say so. The RSL and the RFU made this their chief agitational slogan on the various demonstrations taking place at the time the letters were written. As an agitational slogan this created an illusion, that the necessity at the moment was to conduct a fight on the offense for gay liberation. The growing reaction against the limited gains of gays and other oppressed people, however, pointed to the need for a primary emphasis on defense. The continuing repeal of gay rights measures, as in St. Paul and Eugene, has proven our warning to be all too true.

As revolutionaries our obligation was to show that the democratic defense slogan is linked to the socialist revolution. That is, no matter how strong a defense movement mounts, the struggle will be defeated and the rights gutted overtime if decaying capitalism continues to survive. This point underlies the RSL's first objection to our slogans. They say that the slogans aren't defensive enough if the situation were really to

require defensive slogans. This is a political objection, not simply a question of "tone" as the RSL would have it. The reason for their view is obvious to anyone familiar with the history of the RSL's decay (see "The Struggle for the Revolutionary Party" in *Socialist Voice* No. 1). The RSL separates stages of struggle in a mechanical way: if the gay movement requires a democratic defense at this stage then only democratic demands have to be raised while the question of socialism can be safely left for the next stage. The RSL is willing to adapt its program to the left petty-bourgeois leadership, in this case of the gay movement, who accept only the need to fight for democracy within the very bourgeois society that is undermining democracy.

The RSL's second objection to our slogans makes this point unmistakably clear. "It is not gays who have historically resisted unity with the rest of the struggling oppressed," claims the RSL. On the contrary, the gay leadership, like the leaderships of all democratic movements not guided by a revolutionary party, has frequently done so. The most recent example was a conference in July 1977, attended by the RSL and the LRP, of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights. This meeting voted down a proposal to support the people arrested on looting charges during the New York City blackout several days before. The Socialist Workers Party newspaper, the *Militant*, of July 29 approvingly commented that "the CLGR should focus its limited resources on the big job of winning support for gay rights, not attempt to substitute itself for the many other struggles against injustice."

While the RSL undoubtedly favored the proposal to support blackout victims, it failed to learn the lesson. Unity of all the oppressed with the working class must be fought for against petty-bourgeois leaders (including those in socialist guise). Accusing us of "submerging" the gay movement, the RSL in fact lets its right-wing leaders off the hook. There is nothing more noble in the outlook of the leadership of the gay movement, present and past, than in the views of petty-bourgeois leaders of other movements of the oppressed. The RSL is adapting to gay chauvinism in implying that gayness itself somehow redeems the misleaders of this movement as opposed to others.

Unity on the basis of the proletarian revolutionary program is not "submergence" of any one struggle but the only hope for victory for all. The RSL's championing of the record of the petty-bourgeois gay leadership is not the result of a proletarian strategy but of a "multi-vanguardist" approach differing from the SWP's only in its degree of militancy. It accepts the divisions among the exploited and oppressed fostered by our bourgeois society, our bourgeois economy, and, yes, "our" culture.

The RSL's present use of an offensive propaganda slogan as an immediate demand is merely the flip side of using the most conservative demands when the play-acting takes a different course. It is designed to attract the most militant elements through adventurist tactics and pandering to illusions about immediate results, a replay of the old "new left" radicalism — anarchist one day and liberal the next. The trashers of yesteryear are the Democratic Party statesmen of today. Serious Trotskyists as opposed to warmed-over new leftists know that militancy and armed self-defense are a necessity for any mass struggle — but not sufficient. A political attack on the misleaderships and their bourgeois ideology coupled with honest assessments of the strategic situation is the way to build the revolutionary party as the advanced consciousness of the exploited and oppressed. ■

The Black Struggle: Which Road Today?

It was not the end of the world for American blacks when the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the Bakke case in June. But it was a milestone on the road to that end. The leaders of various political currents favoring black rights generally condemned the outcome. The moderate, liberal and "socialist" groups all had their differing assessments of the impact of the court's decision, but they were variants on a similar theme; they all called for better organization, more militancy and greater self-sacrifice in the struggle to maintain black gains.

The tragedy is that if good organization, fearless militancy and unbelievable heights of self-sacrifice were the answer to black oppression the struggle would have been successfully ended years ago.

The democratic gains made by blacks (and indeed those of other oppressed groups as well) in the past years have not only reached their high-water mark, but they have begun to recede. And under the rule of capitalism they will never return nor will those that still exist long continue. It has never been so clear that a repeat of the old path can only lead to tragedy. A fundamental reorientation is desperately needed. Those leaders who call for the repetition of old strategies are writing a recipe for disaster. A turn toward Marxism is the only hope.

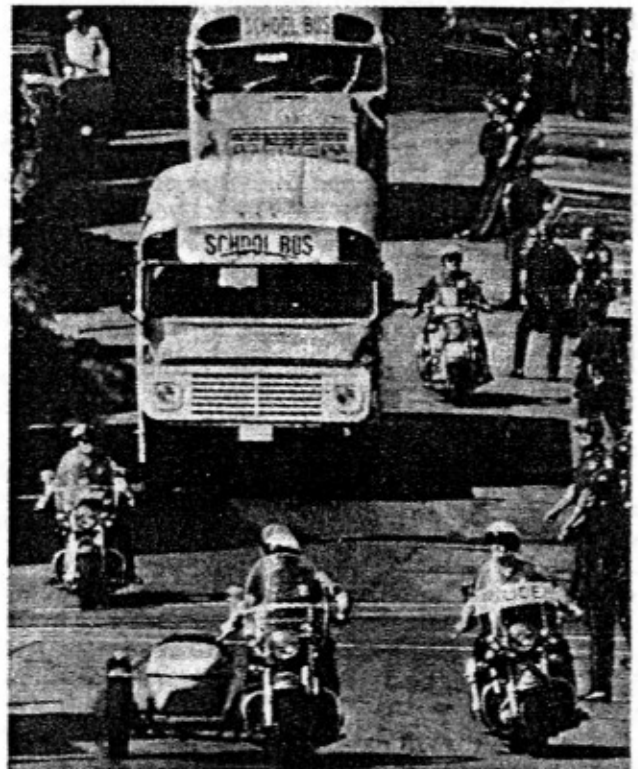
Permanent Revolution Today

The Marxist view of the black struggle is based upon Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, the strategy of the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard in the epoch of capitalist decay. Briefly stated, the theory as we have elaborated it points out that all sections of the bourgeoisie and their petty-bourgeois allies are no longer capable of carrying through on the democratic tasks once rendered possible by the classic bourgeois revolutions. Capitalism in decay is faced with a huge, concentrated and modern proletariat whose fundamental interests are hostile to all forms of private property in the means of production. Because of this threat to its class rule the propertied classes cling to reaction. They fear to carry out promises which are liable to whet the appetites of the masses. Even bourgeois equality is something that capitalism in crisis cannot long allow the working classes. There remains only the proletariat as the sole social force capable of winning full and lasting bourgeois rights in the course of its own struggle for power through the socialist revolution. Socialism is not the consequence of continually accumulated democratic and egalitarian reforms but the only way to secure even minimal gains. As Lenin put it, "We have always said that reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. We said — and proved it by deeds — that bourgeois-democratic reforms are a by-product of the proletariat, i.e., of the socialist revolution..." ("Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 54.)

Furthermore, in a world dominated by the growth of an international economy which has twisted capitalism into its decadent form, imperialism, the necessity for an international

solution has become obvious. No nation, nor any group within a nation, can be an island unto itself; the proletarian solution must be international and interracial. Finally, the proletariat has to be *conscious* of its historical role in order to defeat capitalism. Consciousness is not simply reflective but arises out of practice, the class struggle. The most advanced consciousness within the proletariat must be organized into the revolutionary international and its national sections, the parties.

This Marxist view that reforms and democratic gains of any lasting sort are by-products of the socialist revolution stands in



Boston 1974 program: U.S. court orders black students bused. Result: no better schooling, no more jobs, no greater interracialism.

sharp contrast to the notion that such benefits can be sustained here and now under capitalism. With respect to the question of the black struggle in the United States, the reformist theory goes that gains have been made by at least a large number of black people; with vicissitudes common to all in this imperfect world and by dint of dedication, militancy and hard work, the gains already won can be held and extended to others. The socialistic variants of this theory add only that socialism in the future will complete whatever capitalism leaves undone.

The notion of accumulated black progress-with-more-to-be-done has become near-universal public opinion among both whites and blacks. It takes a wide variety of forms, but the most well-known current expression may be described as a sort of "three worlds" theory of American society. According to it, contemporary America is divided into three separate societies: the whites, the black middle class, and the underworld of poor, marginal and jobless blacks. The Chinese Walls which divide one sector from another are considered to be especially high between the two better-off worlds on one side and the netherworld of the ghetto-dwelling black masses on the other. The whites and middle-class blacks have "made it" and have increasingly more in common with each other as opposed to the benighted and outcast. This reflects the theory's warmed-over traditional populism; society is a contest between the "haves" and the "have-nots," the rich and the poor. The theory is important because there is a material basis in a certain black "middle class" for such a view; however, the conception is a profoundly false ideological refraction of the underlying reality. It is not surprising that much of the so-called left shares the same general outlook, because under the wolfskin of Marxism frequently crouches sheepish liberalism.

The Theory of "Three Worlds"

Let us sketch the broad outlines of the bourgeois "three worlds" view. The *New York Times* ran a series in February and March of this year which described the current racial situation as strikingly different from that predicted in 1968 by the Kerner commission of President Lyndon Johnson, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders which investigated the mass ghetto uprisings of the 1960's. According to the *Times*, "rather than the two separate societies predicted by the Kerner commission, three separate societies have emerged," and it goes on to describe the three worlds we have mentioned. Thus "Middle Class Black America: This segment of society expanded greatly as those with natural gifts, luck or training took advantage of the opportunities that the civil rights movement gave blacks. Their upward mobility has been in the classic American mold, concerned chiefly with material accumulation." And "Poor Black America: The growth of the middle class had the effect of moving many with talent and leadership potential out of the ghetto, leaving it more bereft and powerless than before. The mass of black people mired in poverty describe the bleakness of ghetto conditions — crime, drugs, bad housing, fatherless homes, poor schooling and unemployment..."

Is this theory wrong? A whole section of black people has moved up on the social mobility ladder, and its condition and outlook do seem to resemble those of middle-layer whites. Many blacks believe that they have a stake in the existing society. Nevertheless, the wall between blacks and whites is still there, even if it is not as high as before. The ghettos are certainly with us, and they are now joined by distinct black "middle class" neighborhoods which are for the most part separate from similar white neighborhoods. "Integrated" neighborhoods are fragile and their racial "balance" is unstable. The median black family income rose from just over 50 percent of white family income in the 1950's to just over 60 percent by 1970. Official figures of black unemployment in May were 12.3 percent (38.4 percent for youth!) as compared to 5.2 percent for whites. In reality it is worse.

At the same time, while a reported 28 percent of black families earned an income of \$15,000 or more in 1976 (still under the Labor Department's "intermediate" family budget!), an-

other 31 percent lived below the government's "poverty line." The *Times* summed up its view: "One group is rapidly acquiring more education, better jobs and higher income; another remains mired in poverty, an unyielding 'underclass' with few qualifications and little motivation."

There has indeed been a change of great importance in the relation of blacks to American society, but the "three worlds" analytical construct which attempts to explain it is a dangerous distortion of the reality.

Most obviously, "white society" is not one homogeneous mass even in comparison to blacks. It too has wide extremes of poverty and wealth as well as separate areas of residence according to status, income and background. Whites too are divided into classes, both in the bourgeois sociological sense of income categories as well as in the more fundamental and decisive Marxist sense of group relationships to production. It may seem unfair to tax the "three worlds" theory too heavily for its description of whites, because the essence of the idea lies in its understanding of blacks. Nevertheless, its conception of blacks is a reflection of its fluid class view of white society, the society that blacks are supposed to integrate into or have failed to integrate into. This is the same view that typically describes white workers and unions as middle class. The image of a white world where the lines are not rigid and social mobility is possible is also the implicit assumption about the potential for blacks in capitalist America.

Naturally, all of the "three worlds" analyses studiously avoid a Marxist breakdown of the class structure of the black population. The "middle class" income group of bourgeois sociology and journalism includes a significant layer of the black industrial working class, many white collar workers as well as the distinctly non-working class middle strata professionals and property owners. Seven percent of this "middle class" makes over \$25,000, and a small but socially significant group of black millionaires and capitalists are not "middle class" in any sense and have little in common with the assembly line worker in Detroit. In the "netherworld" category, on the other hand, are lumped together regularly employed black workers with low incomes, marginal and job-seeking workers — as well as the hardened criminals and veteran hustlers who constitute a genuine lumpenproletariat.

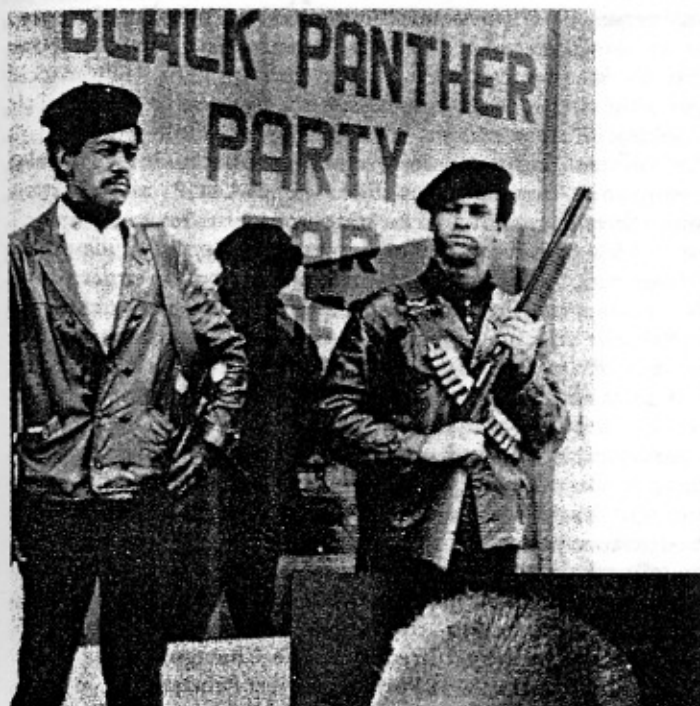
Racism Tied to Capitalism

The "classes" thus conglomerated and misdescribed have different social motivations and act in profoundly different ways. In times of crisis the elements glibly clapped together will fall apart. This social fact is of decisive importance because the one factor ignored by all the analyses, including those of the left, is that the destiny of American blacks cannot be discussed independently of the deepening crisis of capitalism.

Although the bourgeois pundits of today have a field day proving that the Kerner report was wrong, the underlying mistaken assumptions now in vogue are practically the same. Kerner blamed black oppression on "white racism," without, of course, describing the relationship of racism — which indeed is rampant — to the social system that generates it, capitalism. But now that racism-as-its-own-cause has supposedly been mitigated, what is left to explain the persistence of the black "underclass"?

The noted liberal sociology professor David Riesman put it: "The awareness that many blacks have been successful means that the underclass is more resentful and more defiant

because its alibi isn't there." In other words, without racism as an excuse the poor blacks have to face the fact that their oppression lies not with society but within themselves. The theory of white racism has led inevitably, once circumstances changed, to class elitism because it ignored the basic causal factor, capitalism. More precisely, since the white racism proponents recognised that some white people were not infected with this natural disorder (themselves, for example), there must be some transcendent selection process that creates a base for racism: civilized people versus uncivilized, educated versus uneducated or simply good versus bad. In its left and populist versions, it became the good "have-nots" versus the evil "haves."



Black Panthers fought for community control while Roy Wilkins of NAACP sued for integration. Both roads now meet at dead end.

The savants, white and black, have now come full circle. The civilized "have-nots" of a decade ago (naturally including the very same middle-class professionals) have now become the still civilized "haves" of today, not to be identified with the alibi-less underclass. There are still some self-help advocates like Reverend Jesse Jackson who think that the black poor can be motivated to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. But this view is far from universal. "Young black middle-class college kids don't have a social conscience today the way they did back in the '60's," complained John Lewis, the former SNCC leader and today a leading Carter administration appointee.

Of course, these attitudes are sometimes more complex than the simple decline-of-racism argument which leaves the poor blacks to confront their own inadequacies. The problem is compounded by "structural" weaknesses of the American economy. That is, jobs are available for those blacks who have the requisite skills, but there are very few for the large numbers of unskilled and uneducated. The "solutions" advanced from this structural analysis are a medley of affirmative action initiatives, training programs and the pump-priming creation of make-work jobs.

The fundamental problem, however, is not structural but mortal. The crisis of capitalism has returned; the post-World War II prosperity bubble has burst. No amount of pump-priming or propping-up can hide the crippling deformities of the system. The former colonial areas of the world, still oppressed and exploited, face national bankruptcy, famine and overwhelming mass unemployment. Inflation and unemployment stalk the advanced countries as well. Thus West Europe, whose economy pulled in millions of workers from southern Europe, Africa and the Caribbean when it was booming is now dismissing and disgorging these immigrants. The mirage of lasting prosperity and near-full employment has lasted longer in the United States but it is being rapidly dissipated here as well. Indeed, if all American blacks were suddenly bestowed with the full range of industrial skills as if by magic, the unemployment situation would not be significantly altered. Capitalism today is not an expanding system constantly absorbing new waves of workers but one that still relies on a reserve army of unemployed masses and is now in an epoch of decline, which means that the reserve labor army can only increase.

The illusion of structural reforms is coupled with another current social lie, the notion that those who "took advantage of the opportunities that the civil rights movement gave blacks" will be able to keep their new-found status and defend their gains successfully under capitalism. This is the second profound mistake of the "three worlds" analysis. Not only are the different "worlds" themselves false amalgams composed of different social classes, but the "walls" that divide the world of the more successful, working class blacks from that of the poor working class blacks are crumbling. When governments turn to austerity programs, when democratic rights have gone "too far" and are being reversed, when gains are to be withdrawn — it is the oppressed people, blacks in the great majority, who lose first of all. The Supreme Court's Bakke decision was only one in a series of setbacks from the gains won by the democratic movements of the post-war boom period. Another arose out of California's anti-property tax Proposition 13. Thus Carl Holman, head of the National Urban Coalition, states:

"That vote means layoffs, with minority workers who have least seniority losing their jobs; it means curtailed services for poor people, and it

means the crippling of affirmative action programs. If people look carefully at what they are calling the new black middle class, they will find that a large portion of those people are employed in public jobs. Those are the jobs that are imperiled by Proposition 13."

Holman's warnings are correct. His organization, however, is part of the whole middle class milieu which bears a share of the responsibility for creating the illusions that are now crumbling about his ears.

Roots of an Illusion

The false consciousness of the black condition in American society which frequently is expressed as a "three worlds" theory is prevalent not only in the press but also permeates the thought of black workers as well as professionals. The same mode of thought dominates the outlook of nearly all of the left, even of those groups which attempt to reject any "three worlds" type of analysis of blacks. A Marxist attack against such an extensive and dangerous view cannot rest simply with criticizing its mistakes. Such conceptions do not descend from Mount Olympus or even from some academic ivory tower but must be based upon objective material causes. They reflect as well, possibly in a distorted fashion, the needs and aspirations of particular social classes in given historical situations. It is these class interests which a thorough Marxist critique must elaborate.

The "three worlds" outlook arises at a specific moment in American history when there is a highly unstable balance of forces which has been holding, tensely, at equilibrium. As the equilibrium begins to disintegrate it is no accident that a theory which posits permanent gains within society is advanced, and the very pervasiveness of the theory among the middle class layers, both white and black, testifies to a real if transient agreement among a variety of social groups.

Racism persists virulently as a component of the American system; there is no small number of overt reactionaries on the political scene. Nevertheless, it is also true — and unprecedented in American history — that the voices of overt racism are marginal. The Nazis, Klansmen and the like are still tiny groups. The pro-Bakke forces take pains to cover their racist politics with ritual anti-racist verbiage. Even Strom Thurmond, James Eastland and George Wallace make a sickening pretense of harboring benign feelings toward blacks. The amazing fact is not that vicious racism still exists but that most of the swine prefer to hide it. Why?

At this juncture it serves no one's interest (except the marginal fascists') for such attacks to surface. The dominant forces in American society prefer to avoid race war and not to stir it up, despite the wealth of opportunities to do so, such as school busing disputes, unemployment and public service cutbacks. The shakiness of the economy instills a sense of foreboding within all classes and motivates a desperate longing for stability based upon hopes for the return of the still-remembered post-war boom. The white bourgeoisie and its middle-class and labor bureaucracy lieutenants perceive that they have allies despite all their disagreements, in black society. When times appeared to be forever prosperous blacks justifiably were outraged at the system's failure to concede true equality, but with prosperity eroded it is now argued that successful whites and blacks are in the same boat — and had better avoid rocking it too severely. Precisely when the attack on black material gains deepens, the ideological illusion is in-

tensified — for the time being. The bourgeoisie no longer mistrusts all blacks as enemies of the system but is willing to distinguish between the "hardworking" and the "shiftless," the "law-abiding" and the "criminal" — in short, between the two black "worlds."

The "three worlds" ideology is also accepted by a portion of the black "underclass," notably the true lumpen elements who see themselves as outside the workings of productive society and have settled on living as criminal parasites off of black working people. There are also, however, the thousands upon thousands of black youth in the ghettos who pound the streets looking for work, still retaining a measure of self-respect against a system which seeks to discard them. Even this layer lacking a class-conscious outlook, accepts some version of the "haves" versus "have-nots" notion — and this leads directly to the heavy atmosphere of social conservatism which penetrates to even the lowest layers of the working class. The cynicism and growing sense of hopelessness is coupled to an underlying rage looking for a focus. An explosion is building up.

It is not hard to see it coming. The middle-class black leadership organizations like the NAACP are constantly pressing the system and its state apparatus for more remedial action — bills to create jobs, greater outlays of funds to black businesses, more financing for housing, etc., in order to ward off the conflagration. Although large numbers of the "middle class" are still tending their own business and expecting that the system will come through despite the storm clouds, the more politically aware are forced to reject this approach. They are joined by younger and even less well entrenched middle class aspirants who are finding their hopes dashed as open admissions closes, jobs disappear and affirmative action evaporates. These elements, seeking the restoration of the upward avenues for themselves at least, forcefully raise the threat of revived ghetto upheavals in order to pressure the system to yield marginal benefits again. And there is an additional element to the fears. For example, James W. Compton, executive director of the Chicago Urban League, was quoted in the *New York Times* last February:

"Our large cities are in much the state they were in in 1965 when the poor of Watts put the torch to the most accessible symbols of their disadvantage. ... Most sons of poor men will fail to rise above the status of their fathers and most daughters of disadvantaged women will inherit the bitter lot of their mothers.

"Without genuine relief the urban poor can reasonably be expected to rise again, this time against class as well as against race, with blacks of moderate achievement and their property among the most ready victims."

Compton and others perceive not only the danger to the system if concessions are not made but the threat as well to the vested interest of his own social group. The black middle class would face the enmity of poor blacks and could not rely upon the white bourgeoisie not to react against blacks as a whole. Thus Compton argues for an underlying identity of interest between the black leadership and the white rulers. The potential enemy is the black "underclass" which must not be allowed to get out of hand. But it is not just the black poor. The erosion of black gains will peel off layers of the so-called middle class. Some layers of disenchanting student youth are already reawakening. As the situation worsens, both non-working class middle strata as well as the proletarian elements falsely amalgamated into the middle category will find their gains disappearing. All that will be left will be a thin crust of aristocrats and an even smaller surface of black statesmen,

pawns and bureaucrats who rest on it.

The coming movement of blue collar (and even white collar) workers developing on both sides of the crumbling Chinese Wall — that is, the potential of a united working class struggle — is what really shakes the confidence of misleaders like Compton. This movement would have the support of the desperate bottom rungs of the oppressed non-proletarian middle layers once their allegiance is torn away from the puppets. Such an alliance would be the catalyst for an eruption which will be heard around the world.

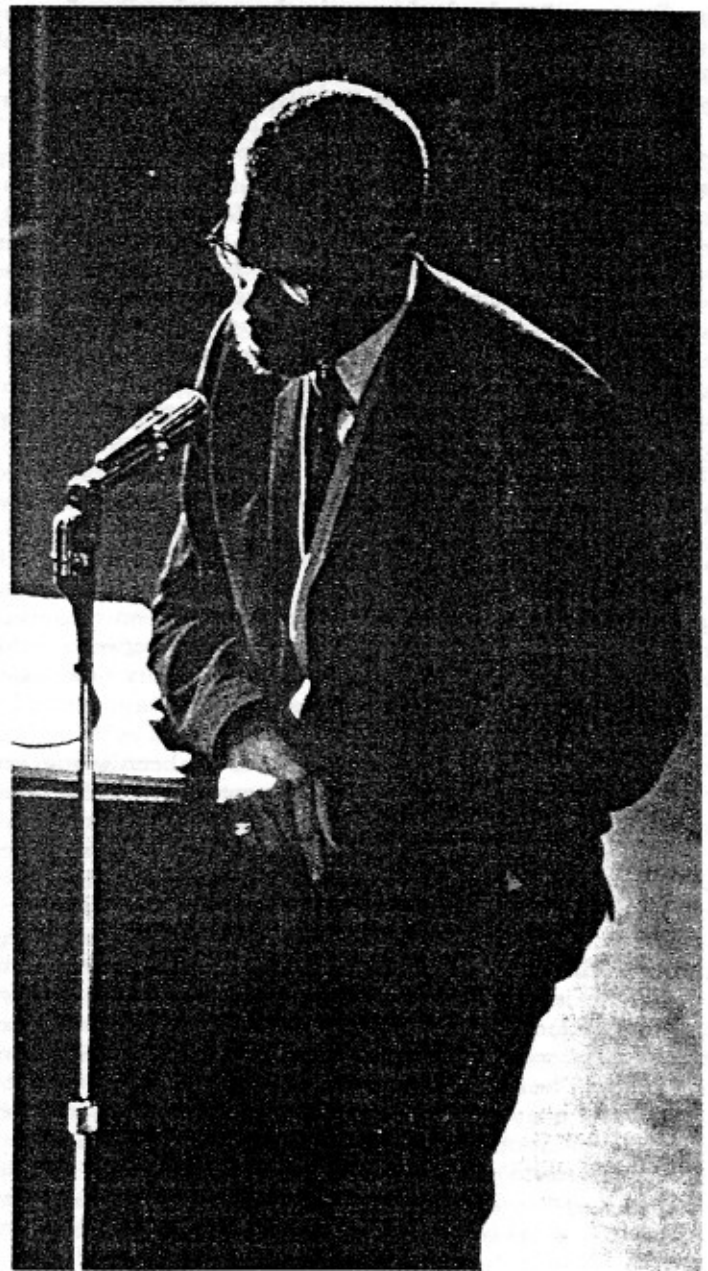
Capitalism's Border Guards

American capitalism has held its sway because the system has historically had the support of many more than the small numbers of big capitalists who constitute the ruling class proper, more than even its immediate hangers-on. The bourgeoisie has always been able to rest upon the larger numbers of petty owners of capital and land, and in this century American capitalism has also had at its disposal a growing propertyless middle class and intelligentsia. Tied closely to these bureaucratic and professional strata are relatively large numbers of workers in the offices, crafts and higher seniority work categories who form an aristocratic layer within the proletariat and have a minimal but material stake in preserving the system.

The existence of a labor aristocracy is of course a relative question. Lower echelons of the American working class, even those on welfare, are better off in certain respects than the bulk of the exploited and oppressed masses of the world, and it is from the exploitation of these masses that the imperialist ruling classes derive the extra surplus-value that pays for the sops handed to the domestic working class. The gradations within this class, however, are so large that the lower rungs of the class maintain a world outlook far different from that of the labor aristocracy in its narrowest sense and are also far more vulnerable to the slightest economic dips.

All of the really aristocratic elements, no matter what their differences with their rulers, generally tend to serve the system's basic interests as long as they are served by it. Of course, capitalism "gave" this layer of workers nothing; the gains they defend had to be wrested from the bourgeoisie through class struggles and threats of deeper rebellions by the class as a whole. Throughout the history of working class struggles many at first went into combat believing that the satisfaction of their own needs might well require fundamental alteration of society or even its replacement. But like the initial waves of barbarians who came to sack Rome, they stayed to become the Empire's foot soldiers, lieutenants and occasionally even its generals. They served to defend the borders against the still vaster hordes who rose to threaten the Pax Romana.

In the past American capitalism's border guards have been overwhelmingly white. Essential to the bourgeoisie's survival has been its ability to divide and conquer, to ingest a critical layer of its barbarian opponents for defense against the rest. But its ability to isolate blacks from the parallel classes of whites has proven so effective that only a tiny number of blacks have ever been made lieutenants. Incorporating the white plebeians by using the threat of the oppressed blacks required that the layer of blacks granted even a toehold had to be small. A very narrow strand of middle-layer elements was tolerated, and this became the source for the tiny corps of black lieutenants, junior grade. This layer, utilized along with the stirred-up hatred of the white plebeians, was enough to hold



Malcolm X, martyred in the cause of black liberation. At his death he was searching for a new road.

back the restless and often rebellious black masses.

After the Second World War this was no longer possible. Not only had the world changed but the strategic location of blacks had shifted as well. Blacks now formed a substantial fraction of the urban population and made up a majority of the productive work force in many industries. The resultant power that blacks had acquired was partly indicated in the massive ghetto uprisings of the 1960's. The Kerner report and similar dire warnings of a racially divided society were designed precisely to avoid that circumstance, and through the ghetto rebellions they "succeeded." The ruling class was forced to yield enough additional crumbs to pacify black middle class elements and the most upwardly mobile black workers in order to avert disaster.

The ghetto riots as well as the increased black participation

in strikes (in some cases leadership, as in the postal strike of 1970) scared the bourgeoisie, which wanted racial peace above all so that profit would not be disturbed nor property endangered. The most liberal and socially aware sectors of capital were painfully aware that society did not have a layer of "responsible" black leadership that could effectively restrain the black masses. Almost all the available "figures" and "statesmen," including Martin Luther King, Jr., proved powerless in the riots. The state and its allies experimented with a variety of techniques for establishing such a leadership.

Widened access to schools was one such device, implemented through affirmative action, quotas and occasionally open admissions programs. Corporations began shopping for token black executives. In the "communities," a semblance of control over secondary questions was granted to local boards. Poverty programs were instituted and funded through philanthropic, commercial and governmental sources; the "povertocrats" made their appearance as a layer within the black middle class. The political structure as well was dappled with black faces to provide the leadership to defend society and also corral the black masses.

To maintain its rule the bourgeoisie has to count on the divisions among blacks as well as the antagonism between black and white workers. With the post-war prosperity now gone capitalism has little choice but to take away the perquisites from its relatively highly paid border guards as well as its ordinary wage-slaves. Those who have already been won over to their masters ideologically are content to serve on credit — their wage is now only the privilege of retaining fading illusions. While the illusion of permanent prosperity and rising gains is now only a shadow, there are others. One, already referred to, is the idea that reason has conquered over racism so that racism in its most vicious forms has been substantially eradicated for good. The truth, however, is quite the opposite. Racism is not basically a product of abstract human nature or lack of proper education, but it rises and falls with the social system which generates — and if need be, regenerates — it. The danger to black gains and black survival resides not simply in economic conditions but in the forces of reaction that capitalism generates under crisis conditions so long as it continues to exist.

The idea that a worsening crisis will not produce a resurgence of racism and a fascism spurred by the bourgeoisie itself, not just fringe groups, is the most dangerous illusion of all. The border guards' job now is to defend such illusions. At the present time the middle class black leadership organizations are treading water, attempting to fight the growing reaction through the courts, legislative lobbying and electing liberal politicians. Their program is the program of the past — the quotas, affirmative action and integration — all of which have proved no answer to joblessness and poverty. They are trying to cool Vesuvius with a few ice cubes. The collapse of their gains and the futility of such limited efforts will drive many people, white and black, into the hands of reaction. And given the underlying racial realities of American society it is the blacks who are thereby set up for slaughter. Even the black border guards will find that the gates of the crumbling fortress are closed to them.

From Integrationism to Nationalism

The failure today of the black leaderships and their false consciousness has to be understood in the context of the struggles that have led the black movement to its present

impasse. The massive black upsurges of the 1960's were no isolated phenomena; their roots go far back into American and world history. In this article we will limit ourselves to the impact of events in the most recent period.

The early civil rights struggle which reached its peak in the beginning of the 1960's gave rise to accelerated expectations on the part of the black masses, expectations which the integrationist leadership could not fulfill. The early leaders came from the professional and student layers of the black community, the educated youth who had been trained to move upward in society but whose path was blocked by Jim Crow practice. The prosperity of the post-war boom dangled in front of them, visible but unreachable. The movement aimed its fire at the legal barriers which stood between their aspirations and accomplishments.

The integrationist middle class operated within the system even when it was engaged in violating laws through pacifist civil disobedience. During its ventures into mass actions it had to swear allegiance to non-violence, a measure taken by no other social force, because of its fear of the justified anger of the oppressed black masses. It found its logical course in court suits and campaigns in the Democratic Party. In the South, the civil rights leaders collaborated with elements of the urban bourgeoisie and their middle class followers (as we have described before; see "The 'New South' and the Old Capitalism" in *Socialist Voice* No. 2). In the North, deals were made with middle class liberals and labor bureaucrats, forming the so-called "Negro-liberal-labor alliance."

The integrationist strategy produced only token gains compared to the real needs of blacks. Certain segregation laws were wiped out, new legislation embodying formal rights was enacted, electoral possibilities were opened up, especially in the South — but the huge black unemployment (always a multiple of white unemployment rates) was not cut significantly, low relative wages were not raised, skilled trades were still beyond reach, job security was unavailable. Ghetto housing, poor education and police brutality persisted. With the masses' hopes raised but reality still unaltered, the ghettos began to erupt in 1963 and 1964. The masses in practice declared their dissatisfaction with the integrationist leaderships and in effect demanded an alternative. The failure of the integrationist strategy led to the growing strength of the black "nationalist" movement, notably the Black Muslims.

The Muslims regarded political and social action as fruitless, proven so by the integrationists' vain attempts to advance through them. The inability to make gains in American society was reflected in the anti-white rhetoric of the nationalists. The quest for a separate black nation, however, was an ideological symbol of militancy rather than a genuine demand for black migration or secession. It indicated the masses' desire for unity and posed a deeply felt need for black self-organization for defense against a hostile society. The Muslims struck a responsive chord by attacking the permeationist deals of the integrationists. But even their solution was for a social mobility program, not in a new nation but in the U.S.

The Muslims tended to favor group-owned black businesses hiring black labor as the solution to the exploitation and oppression of blacks by whites. In the traditional nationalist manner they espoused the learning of industrial arts as advocated by Booker T. Washington and opposed the "professional" strategy of W.E.B. DuBois. The historical integrationists (known as assimilationists) had favored the idea that a portion of the black race would rise in white society through the professions (the "talented tenth"). This would

pave the way for the lower strata, who would emulate the leaders or at least find their condition bettered because whites would come to recognize black capability. The nationalists, on the other hand, oriented toward building a separate black economy. But just as Booker T. Washington's "separate" businesses inevitably became dependencies of the monopolies that dominated the American economy, so too the Muslim enterprises could be nothing but small operations trapped in the web of ruling, obviously white-owned, capital.

The Muslim's major attraction was the Messianic and escapist promise of deliverance into a better world so deeply yearned for. The hard realities of American capitalism, however, made it evident that deliverance could only come from political and social combat with the oppressive system. For this the Muslims had no answer and therefore could not provide a way out for the black masses.

In response to the ghetto uprisings (which by the mid-sixties had broken out in most of the country's major cities), a new development within the "nationalist" trend emerged which became known as the black power movement. Its leaders came from both nationalist circles including the martyred Malcolm X) and from the integrationist wing which provided figures like SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael. Black power combined the idea of a political struggle taken from the integrationist mode with that of black unity and self-organization from the nationalists — but in a more radical way. While Malcolm X was moving in such a direction (and perhaps even further, beyond programs that remained within a capitalist framework) when he was murdered, the black power ideas became best known through the Black Panthers organization.

The Panthers arose in the Northern ghettos, led chiefly by radicalized students and ex-students who had a consciously lumpenproletarian orientation. The social disenchantment of this layer of blacks was of course enormous but its capacity to wield social power was tiny; the Panthers had no real strategy but "the gun," an urban guerrillism which could never hope to topple the entrenched power of capitalism. The Panthers' revolutionary impulses were tragically deprived of a Marxist class understanding of capitalist society. They could only alternate between dead-end alternatives and after a lengthy bout of fratricidal warfare (dozens were also murdered by the police) the Panthers turned the clock back to the Democratic Party and reformist "Breakfast for Children" campaigns.

Crazy-Quilt Equilibrium

The fatal flaw in all the black leaderships that arose in this period — integrationist, nationalist and black power — was not in any lack of militancy but in their class base and their programs. These were all middle-class and petty-bourgeois strategies that sought to find solutions within capitalism. This was true not only of the openly assimilationist programs but also of the nominally separatist ones; separatism could only propose a distinct but still objectively dependent bourgeois sector. It is analogous to the "separate" national economies created through the post-World War II anti-colonial revolts which nevertheless remained trapped in the imperialist world economy; but the American black nationalists could never achieve anything close to the tenuous political independence of "third world" nations. Even the most radical black power outlook which posed the "unity of the black community" against capitalism turned out to be unviable, since it attempted to ally the mass of black working class people behind the inevitably petty-bourgeois leaders of the "community." Rather than a break with capitalism these programs posed the

sharing of power, and a very small share at that. Despite certain privileges for local satraps, they could deliver very little. A black community-run school, for example, without funds and without prospects for jobs awaiting its newly motivated students could only fail.

In sum, integrationism meant the outlook of black middle class elements seeking largely professional goals for mobility under capitalism, rising in largely white-dominated industrial and financial institutions. It required an alliance with the white professional and intellectual middle class and the labor bureaucracy. This alliance was the basis for a popular frontist political strategy which sought to incorporate the black masses into bourgeois mobility programs.

The ghetto rebellions tested this alliance and proved it incapable of satisfying the masses. In their struggles against oppression the masses recognized the need for united defense of the black caste against a hostile environment. In black unity they sought the solidarity that masses of people inevitably demand, but in this situation it meant unity behind sections of the petty bourgeoisie who could offer only radical bourgeois-democratic and power-sharing solutions. This form of class collaboration also collapsed under the weight of bourgeois democracy's inability to provide answers of substance for the masses.

The radical middle class leaders went into eclipse after the 1960's. The mass riots subsided when their limitations had become clear, and the old integrationist leaderships have moved back in to try to regain their sway. The masses organized by residence could not carry the struggle through to a conclusion. Only the working class organized through production could build a new leadership and a new alternative.

Today's equilibrium rests upon a crazy quilt mixture of integrationist schemes and "community control," as in the New York City schools. The variety of devices for attempting to incorporate blacks into the system requires no theoretical consistency but only the pragmatic capacity to entrap. A professor finds one niche, a corporate executive another and a market owner a third — yet all have their posts. The distinctions among them persist, of course, in new settings with new stakes. A good example is Democratic Party politics in Bedford-Stuyvesant and adjacent areas of Brooklyn — a scene of constant quarreling between the backers of Samuel Wright and Shirley Chisholm, reflecting old black power and integrationist bases respectively.

Common to all the elements of the quilt is the illusion that the democratic answers can provide unending social mobility and shared power between black "leaders" and white rulers. Perhaps the most amazing example has been the spectacle of the liberal NAACP objecting to too much (!) government regulation of the oil industry on the grounds that profitable big business means more jobs trickling down for blacks. The economic crisis has made even liberal intellectuals recognize that the name of the game is capitalist profit. This is indeed a practical recognition of reality. Capitalism must either be propitiated ... or overthrown.

In pursuing this goal revolutionaries always make clear that the true interest of the working class lies in the defense of the oppressed even when they are led by capitulators. For example, the workers' movement has to defend black students when they are sent into murderous situations by the busing liberals. The working class will thereby prove itself the best defender of the oppressed and will show that the proletarian alternative is the only answer to the misery of capitalism. Thus it will fit itself to rule and rise to the level history demands. ■

(to be continued)

The Spartacist Tapes

Readers of *Socialist Voice* will recall the infamous speech of James Robertson, leader of the Spartacist League (SL), that was reported on in our Spring 1977 issue (No. 3). As we wrote then, "Robertson delivered a series of chauvinist epithets that insulted the revolutionary capacities of the working classes everywhere and denigrated almost every non-white, non-American and non-English speaking people that got in his way."

We quoted several of Robertson's ugly remarks and then challenged the Spartacist League to make public the tape recording of the speech if they considered our characterization of it to be unjustified. (The account of the same speech in the SL's newspaper *Workers Vanguard* omitted all of the comments which had been attacked by LRP members and supporters of the Communist Cadre organization from the floor of the meeting.) We added, "We frankly doubt that the SL will yield the tapes, if only because they contain even more insults and outrages than those listed here."

Needless to say, the SL suppressed the tapes. Six months later, in reply to a long withheld letter from a former SL sympathizer to *Workers Vanguard* (previously printed in *Socialist Voice* No. 4), the SL produced its only comment on the affair: "If you believe what you read about the Spartacist League in *Socialist Voice*, you will love the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*." We were thus accused not only of misquotation but of a massive forgery and deliberate slander without a shred of evidence.

Pamphlet Vindicates Our Report

The matter has now been settled for all to see. The Communist Cadre group obtained a partial tape recording of Robertson's speech and has published the bulk of the presentation and lengthy excerpts from the floor discussion afterwards in a pamphlet, "What the Spartacist League Really Stands For; a self-exposure by James Robertson" (published at \$1.00 by Workers & Oppressed Unite, 156 Fifth Avenue, Room 416, New York, NY 10010). This publication fully vindicates our original account as well as our assertion that there were further outrages beyond what we reported. In cold print it proves the SL's charge of forgery to be an outright lie. The SL has yet to reply to this publication or even acknowledge its existence. We have naturally demanded that *Workers Vanguard* retract its charge of forgery; months have gone by and the SL can only "stonewall" the question.

There remains the question of how a leftist organization such as the Spartacist League is capable of spouting blatant racism in public. Overt chauvinism on the part of a subjective revolutionary is hard to believe, even for those who were in the audience. The explanation is in dispute among those who spoke out against Robertson. Thus the Communist Cadre pamphlet, after noting that "the reader will soon see that the account in *Socialist Voice* was honest and accurate," went on to comment that "once the LRP got past a simple account of Robertson's remarks, the article in *Socialist Voice* went completely off the track by attempting to explain Robertson's and the SL's chauvinism as derived from the SL's defensist position on the workers' states."

Communist Cadre has not completely understood our point. We did begin our analysis with the SL's Pabloism, its view that

the countries taken over by Stalinism after World War II are workers' states and therefore that the social revolution was made by petty-bourgeois nationalist or Stalinist leaderships. Such a view can only lead to a petty-bourgeois outlook on world events.

But we then went on to explain that most Pabloites "would recoil in anger — to their credit" at such a speech as Robertson's. We pointed out that the petty bourgeoisie is a multi-hued, atomized layer between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which means that petty-bourgeois currents in working class politics take a wide variety of forms. The Spartacist League, originating out of the post-war degeneration of the Trotskyist movement, combines elements of both strands of centrism into which the Fourth International decomposed, Pabloism and Shachtmanism. It retains the Pabloites' supposed orthodoxy on the "deformed workers' states" and uses this to mask its Shachtmanism; its acceptance of the outlook of the American labor bureaucracy from which its chauvinism derives. As we wrote,

"The uniqueness of the Spartacist League, what many leftists mistakenly regard as its 'sectarianism,' is that it does not capitulate to the nationalism of the oppressed nations — because it directly reflects the attitudes of the privileged sections of the American working class. The SL provides a left cover for the labor aristocracy's contempt for and fear of the oppressed workers."

And in a subsequent issue, we concluded a detailed analysis of the SL's viewpoint on the class nature of the USSR by establishing that the Spartacists do not simply defend the interests of the Russian bureaucracy as a whole but of a particular layer, the petty-bourgeois planning intelligentsia. "The SL's 'Russian position' is merely a projection of its desire for a nationalist and rationalist utopia in the U.S." (See "The 'Marxism' of the Petty Bourgeoisie" in *Socialist Voice* No. 4).

What explanation does the Communist Cadre offer in place of ours, which they believe is "completely off the track"? We do not expect them to accept our analysis of the SL's Pabloism, since they believe in the Pabloite theory themselves. But they only hint they give of an explanation is the following interpolation in their pamphlet into the comments of an LRPer speaking against Robertson from the floor of the meeting: "Dahl proceeds to link Robertson's chauvinism with the SL position on the class character of the USSR. While the SL's neo-Shachtmanite hostility to the Soviet Union (accompanied by a formally correct position of defense) is linked to their U.S. chauvinism, it is not in the manner that Dahl suggests. Out of the political blindness to reality that informs the LRP position that the Soviet Union is 'state capitalist,' Dahl projects a 'Pabloite' conciliationism to the Stalinist bureaucracy onto the SL."

Just how is the Spartacists' "neo-Shachtmanism" linked to their American chauvinism, if not in the way the LRP has explained? Communist Cadre tells us no more about the matter. It is our view that Communist Cadre is fundamentally incapable of probing the question to its roots because of the underlying similarity between Pabloism and Shachtmanism that characterizes *not only* the Spartacist League.

It is first of all a bit odd that the Communist Cadre's

comments, both from the floor during Robertson's forum and in their pamphlet devoted to exposing him, do not center on the chauvinist character of the speech but rather on the group's dispute with the Spartacist League over the question of revolution in the Stalinist state. This dispute is a perfectly reasonable subject for polemics, but it has to take second place when someone like Robertson places himself completely beyond the pale of comradely discussion with a performance that only deserves disgust. The Communist Cadre does not even seem to have realized the need to explain Robertson's conduct until this was pointed out by the LRP — and they have contributed nothing towards such an explanation other than to disagree with ours.

The question they dispute with the SL is, nevertheless, informative. The Spartacists' notion of a "political revolution" against Stalinist rule is to destroy the "Stalinist state apparatus." The Communist Cadre replies, correctly so if one

qualitatively different from workers' states also implies that they are ruled by a class that is neither bourgeoisie nor proletariat. In all but words the SL holds Shachtman's early theory of "bureaucratic collectivism."

Fleeing from such a position, the Communist Cadre takes its formally correct understanding of how Marxists view the state and revolution to a horrendous conclusion. They support Russia's crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution, on the grounds that the Hungarian workers had no revolutionary Marxist party and therefore that the destruction of the Stalinist state would mean the end of the "proletarian" state and the "restoration" of capitalism. Their pamphlet *Hungary 1956* states: "Without a party, the proletariat, in the midst of a struggle with a bureaucracy which will employ violent and criminal means, will not see in the state which the bureaucracy commands a historic conquest of their own class to be defended and preserved."



Hungarian workers smashed Stalin's statue in 1956. Logic of Pabloite theory is to defend Stalinist state and let workers be smashed by it.

accepts the assumption that the Stalinist state is proletarian, that the state and its military and repressive apparatus must not be destroyed but reformed and preserved; after all, it is a workers' state. This was Trotsky's view during the 1930's (when the Soviet Union was a workers' state); he called for a political revolution not to smash the workers' state but to remove the malignant bureaucratic growth upon it.

Given the terms of the debate, the Communist Cadre undoubtedly has nailed the Spartacist League on this fundamental point. And in doing so they unwittingly demonstrate a portion of our case against Pabloism. The SL habitually refers to the Stalinist states as "qualitatively different" from genuine workers' states; these "deformed workers' states" are reactionary in comparison to real workers' states because of the bureaucracy's rule but progressive in comparison to capitalism because of the nationalized property forms. This is almost exactly the same conception as that of Shachtman when he was still a Soviet defensist on route to his complete capitulation to American imperialism.

To call for the destruction of the Stalinist state apparatus is to call for a social and not a political revolution, that is, a change in class rule. To consider the Stalinist states

We will leave aside a point which we have frequently made before, that the Stalinist conquest of power in Eastern Europe was not made by (or even for) the working class but *against* it, by crushing the revolutionary actions of the workers. Even if we accept the notion that Stalinist Hungary is proletarian, even if we overlook the imperialist nature of post-war Stalinist Russia, it is hard to see how any revolutionist dedicated to the working class can support the crushing of that class when it has embarked on a revolutionary struggle against its masters.

There is no revolutionary party? Then it must be built. It is the working class in struggle that demands, creates and trains a revolutionary leadership out of its most advanced elements, thereby fashioning the kernel of its vanguard party. Only in struggle do workers learn revolutionary lessons, including the necessity of a vanguard party. The Communist Cadre's solution to the absence of a party is to eliminate the only path through which the understanding of the need for a party can be reached, the struggle against the state.

The upshot of the Communist Cadre position is that at the very point of revolutionary activity of the working class, precisely when the consciousness of the proletarian masses is at its peak, precisely when revolutionists face both their widest

opportunities and their severest tests, then the revolutionary workers have no choice but to abandon their class and support the counterrevolutionary measures of the rulers!

This argument is commendable only in its relentless pursuit of the inevitable conclusions of its (false) premises. But it is not even very original in its method; we have heard the same sort of thing many times before — from the Shachtmanites. It is they who typically argue that the workers' backward consciousness makes it impossible for revolutionists to raise demands (revolutionary, or just militant — as, say, for a strike) that they think are over the heads of the mass of workers — especially when the struggle has come down to the wire. In Hungary in 1956 the Shachtmanites were not concerned to fight alongside the revolutionary workers to build a revolutionary party; they were satisfied to go along with the supposedly prevailing sentiment for democracy, bourgeois democracy. The Communist Cadre approach is not so different: in the midst of revolutionary struggle there is no time to play games with far-out goals like revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary party. When power is poised at the brink, better stick with what is safe: bourgeois democracy on the one hand or Stalinism on the other, both petty-bourgeois agencies in the working class. It is not of such stuff that Bolsheviks are made.

Pabloites and Shachtmanites both view the creation of the revolutionary party as an act exterior to the working class, an accomplishment of the intelligentsia using workers as organizational tools. In the name of the "fact" that workers do not have advanced consciousness, these middle class tendencies produce a policy that would undermine and defeat the practice that transcends the masses' present level of consciousness. They work towards the prevention of advanced consciousness (and its crystallization in the party) by separating it from the struggle out of which it must be born. While a real proletarian revolutionary party will include intellectuals who have broken from their middle class background and committed themselves to the working class, the middle class tendencies see themselves as the decisive element and the intelligent leadership in revolutionary politics. The workers without proper guidance can create only anarchy and bring about the restoration of capitalism, for they are not enlightened enough to prevent counterrevolution

on their own.

All forms of present-day Pabloism and Shachtmanism reflect the defeat of the working class at the end of the Second World War. Their theories reflect as well the period in which the middle classes seemed to dominate the political scene, in particular through the growth of Stalinism and its mighty effort to stabilize world capitalism. These theories are not just the bad ideas of evil people; they have material and class bases in the downturns of the class struggle.

The holders of these theories rarely if ever attempt to probe the material basis of tendencies opposed to their own. The quarrel of the left Pabloites with their Stalinist class-mates is over bad or good ideas, doing destructive things to the workers or doing good things for the workers. Thus the SL typically characterizes its opponents as people motivated by gross "appetites," and the Communist Cadre can do no better. It can provide no explanation for Robertson's chauvinism because it too reflects the petty-bourgeois forces which have preserved capitalism and all its evils. For all such tendencies it is sufficient to show that the world is populated by good and bad people without uncovering the material reasons. Communist Cadre cannot explain why Robertson is Robertson but simply does a creditable job of proving that he is corrupt — and unappetizing.

The Communist Cadre's theoretical underpinnings are thoroughly rotten and will prevent it from carrying out its task as stated in the Robertson pamphlet: "to eliminate this obstacle" (the Spartacist League) in order "to build a real Trotskyist party of mass proportions in the U.S." and "a new communist International on a real Trotskyist basis." It will provide no alternative to the Spartacist League as long as it maintains the same pseudo-Trotskyist political understanding, that of Pabloism and its twin brother, Shachtmanism. The Communist Cadre does have one advantage over the leadership of the SL, its willingness to test its conceptions out to the full and draw the consequences in a honest manner. Its forthrightness over its deservedly unpopular position on Hungary can be compared to the Spartacists' slanders and evasions over the despicable Robertson forum. Nevertheless, honesty and dedication will lead to no good end unless they are based on a Marxism that makes no compromises with the real interests of the proletariat. ■

On the Nature of the USSR

The Marxist analysis of the class nature of the USSR and the other Stalinist states which has been developed in the pages of *Socialist Voice* since our first issue has also been the subject of several forums presented by the League for the Revolutionary Party. An indication of the revived interest in the "Russian" question is that our presentations have come under attack from seemingly opposite directions by two organizations: the International Communist Current (ICC), the Spring 1978 issue of whose magazine *Internationalism* denounces us for considering the USSR a workers' state until the late 1930's; and the Trotskyist Organizing Committee (TOC), which reports on its debate with the LRP in the May issue of *Socialist Appeal* and insists that the USSR is still a workers' state.

Seemingly opposite directions, for although the positions of the ICC and the TOC are widely divergent, the methods they employ to analyze society and Stalinism are amazingly similar. Both tendencies set up an ideal model of a state, proletarian or

bourgeois, and find after a superficial examination of the USSR that it fails to coincide with the model. And both end up crediting counterrevolutionary Stalinism with accomplishments that for Marxists only a proletarian revolution could achieve.

The ICC, for example, assesses the nature of Stalinist Russia by cataloging some of the evils of the degenerating regime: it "proclaimed its commitment" to the theory of socialism in one country in 1924, it joined the imperialist League of Nations and made a military alliance with imperialist France in 1934, it crushed workers' struggles and subordinated workers' interests to the national interests of Russia, etc. These horrors and the others listed by the comrades of the ICC are perfectly true; the Stalinists did them all. But that proves only that Stalinism was not a revolutionary proletarian regime in the workers' state (the LRP has never said, by the way, that the Stalinist *regime*, or government, was proletarian; rather that

the state was). Stalinism represented a petty-bourgeois agency within the working class, at first centrist and vacillating, later consistently counterrevolutionary, that misled and later deliberately betrayed the struggles of the proletariat on an international scale.

It is not enough, if we may paraphrase Trotsky, for a counterrevolution to *betray* the workers' state; it must actually *overthrow* it. And that Stalinism was unable to do, despite its unprecedented crimes, until it destroyed every layer of leadership in the party and the state which even vestigially based itself in the October Revolution and smashed the old Red Army and the remains of the once-revolutionary internal police agencies in the mass purges of 1936-38. Oddly enough, the ICC appears to understand this essential aspect of social transformation when it comes to the overthrow of capitalism by the proletariat, for they state in the same article that "the proletarian revolution is firstly a *political* question — the overthrow of the bourgeois *state* and the organization and consolidation of the *political power* of the working class ...".

Completion of the Counterrevolution

Indeed, and so is the overthrow of the proletarian state a political question, requiring the destruction of the state apparatus. The ICC cites the destruction of the workers' soviets "the very organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat," in its catalog of Stalinist crimes. But the soviets lost their power in Russia well before the 1924 date which the ICC seems to give for the actual culmination of the counterrevolution. Even as it decayed, the proletarian character of the Soviet state remained in its ruling institutions, the Bolshevik Party and the Red Army above all. A real counterrevolution, a civil war in effect, was necessary to demolish the relationship between the proletariat and the state property. The overthrow, the final destruction of the state apparatus, happened in the late thirties and not before — when capitalist relations were re-stabilized, when the degeneration was sealed, not simply when the decay began.

The weakness of the ICC's position is demonstrated by its accusation that the LRP is apologizing for Stalinism when we say that "the great industrialization of the Soviet Union in the 1930's ... was only possible because the Soviet Union remained a workers' state." What is the ICC's alternative? That the industrialization that brought the USSR from relative backwardness to the rank of the world's second military power took place under the rule of capitalism? In what the ICC also claims to understand as capitalism's epoch of decay? That amounts to an apologia for Stalinism, to credit it with accomplishments only possible for the proletariat in this historical epoch. In our view it was not Stalinism but the survival of the workers' state *despite* Stalinism, with all its deformations, that permitted the massive industrialization of the 1930's. All the terror in the world could not have forced such a rapid accumulation without the impetus of October and the centralized and nationalized means of production furnished by the revolution.

The TOC goes much further in apologizing for Stalinism. Their *Socialist Appeal* article credits the Stalinist bureaucracy with planning in the interests of "the needs of the country" as well as the bureaucrats; like all Pabloites, they ascribe the creation of ("deformed") workers' states in Eastern Europe after World War II to the Stalinist parties; and they go so far as to maintain that "it is only the existence of the Soviet Union and the other non-capitalist states which makes it possible for the underdeveloped countries to assert their independence

from imperialism ...", a benefit which must come as welcome news to the masses of Ethiopia and Eritrea, in the case of their struggle against the vicious oppression of the Soviet-backed Dergue, as well as to the people of countries such as Iran and Zaire whose ruling butchers have the warm support of "non-capitalist" China. The Gulf Oil executives relaxing in their Angolan oil concessions guarded by Cuban troops may well raise a ceremonial glass or two in tribute to such "independence from imperialism."

Trotsky's conclusion that the Kremlin was the chief center for world counterrevolution has been completely obliterated. But in a world where Colonel Mengistu can be labelled a "serene revolutionary" and where "Marxist-Leninist" states



Lenin addressing Russian workers in 1918. The Bolshevik Revolution is a beacon for revolutionaries. Stalinist degeneration is a lure for centrists.

threaten each other with nuclear war, there is no reason whatever for the TOC not to call itself the *Trotskyist Organizing Committee*.

The TOC's specific criticisms of the LRP analysis, the reasons it presents to prove that the USSR is not capitalist, are particularly feeble. For example, "investment does not flow into industries with the highest rate of profit as under capitalism, otherwise it would have gone into consumer goods and agriculture." (This is an absurd description of capitalism, by the way; if the bulk of capitalist investment had historically gone into consumer goods and agriculture, industrial society would never have been created!) The TOC also states that the LRP has failed to discuss the relationship between the falling tendency of the rate of profit and cyclical crises under capitalism, and it claims that cyclical crises are impossible in the USSR. (We have discussed these points, in fact, in

Socialist Voice No. 2, pages 18-19, and *Socialist Voice* No. 4, pages 21-22.)

The TOC's factual errors aside, it is their methodology which is chiefly at fault. The Pabloites are eager to categorize the Stalinist states as proletarian despite "deformations" but they accept only the tightest criteria for naming a country capitalist. In reality, the USSR and the other states modeled after it are deformed capitalist states, created in the epoch of capitalist decline out of the world bourgeoisie's desperate need to keep the working classes enchained when the progressive capabilities of capitalism have long since been eroded and its "right" to rule society thereby erased. No, the USSR does not fulfill the ideal norms of classical 19th-century capitalism (and the state monopoly capitalist United States falls short of that standard as well). Its economic laws of motion do, however, match those of decadent capitalism, "a slow rate of growth and lagging labor productivity," in the TOC's words. Hardly the description of a progressive mode of production revolutionizing the productive forces.

Struggle Against the Law of Value

The way to grasp the class nature of the USSR is not to take a snapshot at one moment in time and then compare the result with a model of capitalism or a workers' state which fulfills all the laws in their purest form. The question must be treated historically. The *development* of the Soviet Union is critical, from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 through the entire period of degeneration and counterrevolution. The key turning points are political, the overturnings of previously existing state apparatuses. But the pulse of the workers' state must be measured by assessing the operation of the Marxist law of value, first of all as it has altered over centuries from pre-capitalist commodity production to rising industrial capitalism and the state monopoly capitalism of this century — and then as the struggle against the law of value in the Soviet workers' state was weakened and reversed in the 1920's and 1930's. (This was the burden of our article on "Capitalism in the Soviet Union" in *Socialist Voice* No. 2.)

Any method other than this historical one does violence to Marxism. Laws must be treated dialectically, not as supra-historical categories. The particular forms and appearances of the USSR at any given stage are not unimportant, but they are secondary and cannot be explained in the absence of a deeper analysis. The Marxist method is based on the development, changes and maturation of contradictions in every society (after all, the Marxist laws of capitalism are laws of *motion*) and no other method makes it possible to assess the counterrevolution — whether it has succeeded at a particular stage or not.

Socialism in the Womb of Capitalism

Mechanical "Marxists" who devote themselves to ideal models can never understand social change or process. It is impossible to understand qualitative changes in society without understanding the quantitative changes within categories that are continually in process and finally transcend one category for another. Engels once commented on the beneficial lessons he had learned from witnessing the duck-billed platypus:

"How are you going to get from the egg-laying reptile to the mammal, which bears living young,

without bringing one or both concepts into conflict with reality? And in reality we have in the monotremata a whole sub-class of egg-laying mammals — I saw the eggs of the duckbill in Manchester in 1843 and with arrogant narrowmindedness mocked at the stupidity of thinking a mammal could lay eggs, and now it has been proved! So do not cause the law of value the same affront from which I had to later beg the duckbill's pardon!" (Letter to Conrad Schmidt, March 12, 1895.)

The "concepts" of capitalism and the workers' state also come into conflict with reality, a point unrecognized by the ICC and TOC. This is the epoch of capitalist counterrevolution and decay. The dialectically unified opposite is that capitalism is pregnant with its own destroyers in the form of the socializing means of production and the revolutionary proletariat. Seeing both phenomena at work in a given society, neither group can distinguish which tendency dominates under which state; they cannot tell which class has power; they cannot tell revolution from counterrevolution. Rotten eggs indeed!

Both the ICC and the TOC have demonstrated their lack of a Marxist understanding of the degeneration of capitalism in the present epoch. Both groups attribute historically progressive capabilities to the Stalinist capitalists. And there are other similarities. Trotsky pointed out that those who gave up too quickly on the bureaucratized USSR would soon give up on the bureaucratized trade unions in the West and in reality on the working class itself. Such is indeed the position of the ICC. In a struggle where the bourgeois state tries to destroy the bourgeois unions they remain neutral and thereby let the working class fall prey to its rulers. For Pabloites like the TOC who pretend not to have given up on the workers' conquests, what they have surrendered is their belief in the working class' ability to transform society. They have therefore embraced the Stalinist overturns as good, if marred, socialist coin.

The Centrist Layer

The TOC and the ICC are centrist organizations; they project a revolutionary rhetoric and self-conception in order to cover up their reformist practice and grasp of the world. They are figuratively duck-billed platypuses themselves. An Engels can learn from the contemplation of such creatures, but we suppose that one or two duck-billed platypuses contemplating other contradictory phenomena would learn very little — certainly not to transcend their dedication to laying more eggs.

While we in the LRP believe that our tendency has presented the only coherent analysis of Stalinism that exists today, we are not satisfied that all the necessary basic work has been accomplished. A large share of the responsibility for this, we believe, lies with the multitude of left tendencies who have ignored this central question or failed to treat it theoretically in the light of rapidly changing world events. In short, our analysis has not been adequately challenged — and this prevents us from advancing it as rapidly as necessary. We accepted the challenge to debate the TOC with this in mind (and we were the clear victors in the debate, even according to observers who share TOC's Pabloite views). We also stand ready to debate any political tendency which represents a serious position on this crucial question. ■

Carter's Twisting African Policy

Imperialism in Africa is plagued by unremitting crises. From the point of view of the bourgeois rulers whose job it is to keep every country safe for foreign exploitation, it must appear that instability is seeping out of every pore. No corner of the African continent is free of upheavals, and several neo-colonialist regimes are collapsing under the challenge of mass unrest and secessionist rebellions. Where European colonialism still holds sway directly, the very real threat of a military defeat for the Smith-Muzorewa regime in Rhodesia points up the danger for South Africa itself, the cornerstone of imperialist power and exploitation in Africa. And here is the huge modern black working class, the key to a successful communist revolution throughout the continent.

The reaction of Jimmy Carter to all of this has been nothing short of desperate in recent months. The imperialist chieftain of the West has tried, unsuccessfully, to pin the continent-wide unrest on the Russian-backed Cuban troops who are propping up the Angolan and Ethiopian governments; in particular, Carter worked himself into deeper and deeper quicksand with his accusations that Cuba had supported the Katangan invasion of Zaire. At the same time, he has given open support to the French Foreign Legion's interventions into Zaire and Chad to shore up tottering regimes and to Zaire's surrender of its central bank and Finance Ministry to the International Monetary Fund, both blatant throwbacks to an old-style imperialism that the United States has supposedly learned will no longer work.

Russia's Stabilizing Role

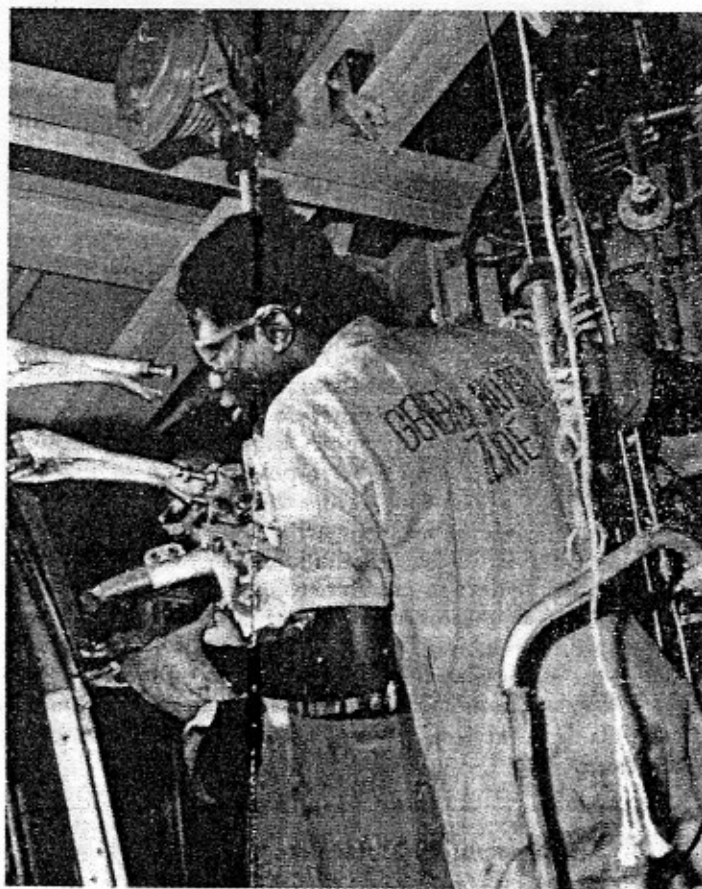
What is the reason for Carter's apparent turn to a more hostile position toward Russia and Cuba? For most of his first year in office, while he peppered the Russians with "human rights" charges both at home and in their East European bailiwick, he pursued a policy of accommodation to the USSR's growing role in the world at large. During and after his campaign he downplayed Kissinger's bleats about the dangers of Communists in government in Western Europe. In October 1977 he invited the Russians to engage in a joint "special responsibility" of the great powers to settle matters in the Middle East. His UN Ambassador, Andrew Young, has several times praised Cuba's "stabilizing" role in Africa with Carter's concurrence. Has Carter really done an about-face, as the U.S. right wing undoubtedly hopes? Has he returned to an "inevitable" cold war strategy, as some leftists believe?

When *Socialist Voice* last analyzed Carter's foreign policy in issue No. 4, we described it in terms of the profound effect that the rise of the "New South" had on Carter's view of the world. He obviously believed that emerging, even "revolutionary," mass forces could be turned into stabilizing elements if they were accommodated with a share in the growing capitalist prosperity. Wasn't this the lesson of the black rebellion in Dixie as understood by the Carters? But the post-war boom is now long over and the revolutionary upsurges occur in a period when the working class is in accelerating motion. Consequently we predicted:

"The stabilization of the moment should fool nobody. Rebellious masses are beginning to move throughout the world. The petty-bourgeois leaderships of the colonial revolutions, including

even the most extreme Stalinists, have demonstrated their inability to escape from the capitalist orbit. The mass struggle has no alternative if it is to succeed but to continue through proletarian socialist revolutions to break free from imperialist super-exploitation, since world capitalism can afford no new plums for its semi-colonial dependencies. ... Carter's strategy of a controlled change — limited accommodation without fundamental change — cannot work. At best it will succeed for a time in Europe but it can only court additional destabilizing trouble in the rest of the world."

Our prediction was right on the mark. That indeed is what has happened. Carter's administration, in contrast to Kissinger, had accepted the role that Russia was carving out



Zaire: General Mobutu reigns while General Motors rules — along with France, Belgium, U.S., etc.

for itself of stepping in to support popular front nationalist movements in order to restrain the masses behind them from trespassing beyond capitalist limits (see *Socialist Voice* No. 1 on Angola). The two state capitalist nations, Russia and Cuba, could influence national liberation struggles in a way that no former colonial power could. Russia's residual if bastardized claim to the October Revolution is coupled with its ability to provide arms; Cuba, a "third world" country itself which had made its own anti-imperialist revolution

twenty years ago, had even greater legitimacy. But Russia and Cuba could not hold every outbreak of the mass struggles, even with the connivance of their nationalist misleaderships, within the boundaries that imperialism can live with.

Europe is in the throes of mounting instability precisely where the Communist Parties are strongest. The French bourgeoisie in the pre-election period earlier this year threatened a major hemorrhage of capital over its exaggerated fear of a popular front electoral victory. Italy totters on the edge of a disaster for the bourgeoisie. In Africa, the debt-ridden neo-colonial regimes preside over economic misery side by side with giant imperialist investments — a deadly combination.

The Carter administration oscillates in pressuring the Russians to loosen up at home, while it takes a more truculent stance in Western Europe and the rest of the world. Its line towards the European CPs hardened. Its initial warmth towards the openings toward economic relations with imperialism on the part of Vietnam and Cuba diminished. Over Africa, Carter vented his spleen against the Russians and Cubans. There are several reasons for this change in stance.

The American press has pointed to Carter's need to appear tougher in order to secure his political base at home. This is true, but it is related to the inability of his policies to succeed in a world in crisis; the reasons beneath his conjunctural electoral needs are more decisive.

The threat of Africa's bourgeois society falling apart brought an urgent need for a renewed imperialist presence in the area. A post-Vietnam, post-Watergate America would hardly support foreign adventures. An intervention in Africa that meant suppressing black revolts would hardly sit well with American blacks. Carter hoped that the threat of a "red menace" would gain some more mileage. Most important was also the impetus given by the Russian and Cuban presence to radical upheavals *despite* the intentions of these regimes. The massive Cuban military presence in Angola and Ethiopia proved that military victories were possible even against what had once been heavy odds. Thus the Angolan MPLA with Cuban aid defeated an invading army from South Africa, and the Ethiopians shoved back Somali forces which had swept over most of the Somali-populated Ogaden region. Wouldn't any African rebel force then believe that it could win its struggle if the Cubans backed it up? Carter undoubtedly wielded his increased bellicosity in order to tighten the screws on the Russians and Cubans and get them to do a cleaner job of stabilizing the region without letting the mass unrest get out of hand.

Castro vs. Carter Over Katanga

For Carter, the invasion of the cobalt- and copper-mining town of Kolwezi in Zaire's Shaba (Katanga) province by the Congo National Liberation Front (FNL) forces based in Angola seems to have been the last straw. He blamed the affair on the Russians and Cubans even after Fidel Castro had forcefully denied any Cuban participation.

But Carter was not even to get the satisfaction of Castro's admission of such a limited responsibility. Castro not only denied aiding the Katangan FNL, but he added that he had tried, unsuccessfully, to stop its invasion of Zaire. What's more, Agostinho Neto, president of Angola, both confirmed Cuba's "innocence" and added that Angola would disarm the Katangan forces based on its territory and send them to refugee camps. Carter's accusations had proved to be not just

false but the opposite of what Cuba had done. Carter had to virtually admit this. Only a small coterie of reactionaries, administration hacks and political charlatans accepted the "proofs" of Cuban-Russian control over the Katangans offered by Zaire's neo-colonial President Mobutu and the CIA. Carter's subsequent claim at a press conference that Cuba "could have done much more" to stop the rebels was a sharp about face from the charges of aid, inspiration and control, but it at least had the virtue of placing Castro on the correct side of the stabilizing fence.

There is some evidence that if the Katangan FNL was linked to any foreign imperialism it was not Russia but Belgium! According to the May 28 and June 12 issues of the journal *Afrique-Asie*, Nathanael Mbumba, the FNL's leader, has stated his desire "not to attack the civilian white community living in Kolwezi but, on the contrary, to install, within the limits of possibility, a climate of cooperation." Mbumba's climate of cooperation went so far as to propose a "revolutionary committee" to run Kolwezi that would include Belgian representatives of Gecamines, the state corporation that is managed by Belgian investors. Other reports indicate that Belgium might have at one point encouraged the FNL in order to depose the disastrously corrupt and incompetent Mobutu regime, against the intentions of their French rivals. One reason for Carter to hype up the "red menace" was to give the United States leverage enough to intervene on its own and not have to rely on junior partners like the French and Belgians whose own interests can blow situations apart instead of stabilizing them. The strongest imperial power has to be able to act as arbiter for the whole system as much as possible and to protect its own exploitation as well.

Covering up his embarrassment over the Cuban role in Shaba, Carter reversed his publicly hostile attitude towards Angola and sent another black diplomat, Donald McHenry, to speak directly with Angolan officials to cement Neto's promises with respect to Zaire. According to a front-page report in the June 28 *Washington Post*, this visit was eminently successful:

"The Angolans told McHenry they were interested in preventing raids by Angolan rebels based in Zaire into Angola. Some officials have said that this concern could provide the basis for a mutual Angolan-Zairean pact not to allow each country to be used as a base area for military forays into the other."

Moreover, the runaway efforts toward mutual stabilization may even have extended to Namibia, the South African colony of Southwest Africa whose rebel movements have traditionally been based in southern Angola:

"Sources said Angola has demonstrated its concern over Namibia by putting new restraints on rebel soldiers of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) who have used Angola as a base area."

Even if these "sources" represent the wishful thinking of U.S. imperialism, the reference is significant. For Neto and Castro's indecent willingness to show which side they were on when the question of African stabilization was at stake must surely have discouraged those liberation movements, such as SWAPO, that still hoped for Russian, Cuban and even Angolan assistance in their struggles. No doubt Cuba will still be willing to back up SWAPO and Angola will still permit it the use of Angolan bases, but there can be no threat to the West of full-scale Cuban military intervention as in Angola

and Ethiopia. Carter, whatever his embarrassment, has won his point.

The U.S. has been particularly worried that Cuban forces will intervene directly in the Zimbabwean struggle against the Rhodesian government, with the danger to white rule in South Africa already mentioned. It is significant in this respect that a widely reported June 6 interview with the Zimbabwean nationalist Joshua Nkomo, in which he was supposed to have admitted the presence of Cuban soldiers training his troops, was vehemently denied by Nkomo on a June 18 U.S. television program. This was just at the time when Carter's Secretary of

Ethiopia. Whereas in Angola they backed a national liberation force, the MPLA, against enemies who were totally dependent on the U.S. and South Africa, in Ethiopia the "revolutionary" Dergue (the ruling military clique) has been opposed not only by the brutally oppressed Ethiopian masses but by national liberation movements in Eritrea and the Ogaden. And it is the Dergue, not the opposition movements, which has the ideological and military support of Russia and Cuba. In these struggles in the Horn of Africa the twists and turns of American and Russian policy emerge in their most elaborate forms.



French foreign legionnaires board U.S. transport plane en route to butcher blacks in Kolwezi. Such dregs of Western civilization are the reality behind Carter's "human rights" fraud.

State Vance began to backtrack on the Shaba affair and announced McHenry's trip to Angola.

Carter's propaganda barrage over Katanga was coordinated with stepped-up overtures to the violently anti-Russian Chinese regime and was part of a general campaign to get the Russians and Cubans to play a "reasonable" stabilizing role. It also served to justify the French and Belgian paratroopers' move into Zaire. Where one stabilizer had failed Carter couldn't be faulted for bringing in another. If the Cubans couldn't be pressured into stopping the Katangans then the French would have to do.

Carter would have had to be a political idiot not to view Cuba in such a role. The Cubans have gone out of their way to make sure that American resources are well protected in Angola. And long before Castro caught Carter in his lie over Katanga, the Cuban CP leader Carlos Rafael Rodriguez had clearly summed up his nation's role: "Cuba does not aid subversion, but on the contrary participates, as the American ambassador to the United Nations (Andrew Young) admitted, in an effort of stabilization, or struggle against subversion" (*Intercontinental Press*, May 29, 1978, citing a *Le Monde* interview in February 1978).

Cuba and Russia do not parade as warriors against Western intervention in Africa except in occasional tub-thumping rhetoric. Rather they claim to favor "revolutionary" changes which will not endanger "peaceful coexistence" or detente with the West. Their role is nowhere more evident than in

The U.S. in the past tried to maintain imperialist dominance by supporting the most reactionary elements in the Horn. Vast amounts of aid were funneled to Haile Selassie's near-feudal regime in Ethiopia to make it a bulwark against the more radical bourgeois nationalisms in the area. U.S. military assistance was indispensable for the regime's attacks against the national liberation movement in Eritrea and the secessionists in the other provinces.

Despite the U.S. aid, Ethiopia was falling apart by 1974, as the Eritrean struggle advanced and the threat of famine hung over the country. The strong Ethiopia that the U.S. rulers had worked so hard to build was being dismembered right before their very eyes.

The deepening economic crisis not only undermined Selassie's regime but frightened the formerly "radical" nationalist regimes in Africa into moving closer to U.S. imperialism. The defeat of imperialism in Angola and the black revolts in South Africa were the final blows forcing the U.S. to accommodate to these forces, now that Selassie and the Portuguese colonialists were gone. The new U.S. strategy was to buy off the moderate nationalists with American aid and create a labor aristocracy with a vested interest in imperialism where there had been none before.

In line with this strategy, the U.S. took a more tolerant line toward the Communist Parties and even the Cuban troops in Angola. But this outlook hinged on economic recovery in the United States and Western Europe and the pacification of mass upheavals throughout the world. When the recovery did

not occur and the number and activity of Cuban troops began to increase, second thoughts arose concerning the new game plan. The ruling class found itself torn between the new and old strategies when Somalia invaded the Ogaden and Cuba sent advisers and troops to Ethiopia.

In the past the USSR had gone along with unchallenged Western supremacy in the Horn. In exchange for American recognition of Eastern Europe as the Russian sphere of interest after World War II, the USSR made it clear it would not stand in the way of the U.S. throughout the colonial world. Nonetheless, when the cold war broke out, the USSR — as the chief rival to the U.S. and the usurper of the banner of the Bolshevik revolution — appeared to be the foe of imperialism.

"Left" nationalists in some former French and British colonies tried to play ball with the Russians to offset the control of their bourgeois economies by the Western-dominated world market. Aid from the USSR was small, but these nationalists were able to use the Russian connection as help in achieving a temporary stabilization of their rule. It was an important political weapon in holding back the independent struggles of the workers and peasants who thought Russia was on their side. African nationalism, styling itself "African socialism," received a certain legitimacy through its link to Russia.

With the return of these nations to the West in search of economic aid, the entrance of Somalia into the Russian orbit beginning in 1969 constituted an important breakthrough for the Soviet Union towards establishing a foothold in Africa. This partnership lasted only a few years. In November 1977 the Somalis sent the Russians packing in the hopes of obtaining arms from the U.S. — after the USSR had turned its warmest attentions to Ethiopia, a more strategic prize.

Ethiopia Switches Sides

The Ethiopian military, disgruntled elements who had no loyalties to the landlord class which had been the backbone of the semi-feudal regime, and who were up in arms over the ramshackle state of the economy, had taken power from Selassie. As rebellions in the cities and the countryside blazed out of control, the oppressed nationalities took advantage of the paralysis in Addis Ababa to win important victories in the Ogaden and Eritrea. The military rulers of the Dergue, trying desperately to restrain the masses, resorted to monstrous repression. Trade unions were banned and thousands of workers, leftists and even Dergue leaders were executed. In the name of "proletarian internationalism" (the Dergue increasingly hid behind socialist slogans), all out war was declared against the Eritreans and the Ogaden Somalis.

In April 1977, the Dergue threw out the U.S. military personnel and turned to the USSR to bolster its leftist image. Russia sent in military advisers. When Cuban and Russian diplomacy failed to patch up hostilities and war broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia, Cuban troops were sent to back the Ethiopians. The U.S., reluctant to throw its weight behind Somalia (not having abandoned its commitment to a strong "united" Ethiopia), counted on the Russians to restrain both sides. Despite the presence of over 5000 troops to reinforce the Ethiopian forces and the military setbacks inflicted on the Eritrean and Somali liberation movements, the situation can hardly be called stable.

The U.S. has hardened its position toward the USSR in the Horn as it has elsewhere. Worried about the untameable economic crisis and the rising mass movements, the U.S. rulers

increasingly believe that the Russian presence accelerates mass upheavals despite the Russians' own intentions. As well, the U.S. must be wary of every short-term Russian advantage.

The Superpower Rivalry

It is the general unrest in the region rather than any specific Russian gains that is of most concern to the U.S. Even if Russia is successful in restoring Ethiopian rule to Eritrea as well as the Ogaden, the U.S. is confident that nationalism in Ethiopia, as in Egypt and India beforehand, will reassert itself and turn to the stronger imperialism. It is the U.S. that will exploit a pacified Horn of Africa. The U.S. for this reason has not closed the door to the present Addis Ababa government.

Carter's foreign policy, in sum, has shifted to the right in the sense that he is making greater demands on the USSR. But he has not shifted so far as to demand that Russia leave Africa as some bourgeois circles in the U.S., China and the Middle East would like. The brunt of his strategy with all of its contradictions is to pressure the USSR through fair means or foul to remember its obligations to "stability," the interests of world imperialism as a whole. And this the Russians and their Cuban junior partners seem to fully understand.

Russia and Cuba have been incredibly conciliatory, almost to the point of humiliation. In the not so distant past, such an attack by a U.S. president would have met a show of strength or a diplomatic incident of major proportions, say over Berlin. But the Russians, for the world's second military power, have swallowed a lot, especially in Africa and over the Jewish emigration issue. The desperation of Russia, Cuba and Angola is due to the increasing dependence of all of them on trade, capital and technology from the West.

Our analysis of imperialism is rooted in Lenin's. The state monopoly capitalists (and the state capitalist sectors) constantly seek political and economic cartel arrangements in the midst of their continuing competition. They seek to maintain peace while making all the arrangements which will lead inevitably to war unless the masses intervene. A Leninist understanding of imperialism is counterposed to Karl Kautsky's notion of "ultraimperialism," the theory that the imperialist powers will subordinate their particular interests to form a single, general and thereby peaceful imperialism. Although Russia (and Cuba and China as well, in differing ways) acts as a counterrevolutionary force defending the interests of imperialism as a whole against the threat of revolution, the interests of the bourgeoisie can never be unified, contrary to Kautsky. Competition and rivalry reflect the inner drive of the system to accumulate. The U.S., although its unquestioned hegemony has slipped in recent years, is still the leading imperialist power. Other powers such as Japan, France and Germany subordinate their rivalry with the U.S. in order to prop it up. They know that if the U.S. falls, the whole imperialist network falls with it.

The differences between the U.S. and the USSR are deeper and harder to contain. The two "superpowers" must constantly attempt to maximize their own diplomatic and military position at any given time. They must compete for allies among the various nationalist and neo-colonial local regimes in Africa and elsewhere. The USSR, however, no matter who it temporarily sides with, must fundamentally act to prop up world capitalism as a whole, which means American interests in particular.

Russia's economy is far too weak and dependent upon Western technology and capital to challenge even the faltering

U.S. The Russians can forge temporary alliances by giving military and diplomatic aid, but they cannot advance any major amounts of capital to bolster tottering national bourgeois regimes or systematically exploit Asian or African resources in the style of a dominant imperialist power. They can attempt to gain strategic positions which affect the flow of raw materials to the West in order to strengthen their bargaining position. They can even attempt to corner the market on some raw materials themselves. But their goals are very modest and the reality is even more so. The USSR's alliances with India and Egypt, for example, collapsed when these nations scrambled over to the side of the American dollar in the deepening economic crisis.

The net effect of Russian policy is to gain temporary advantages whenever the imperialist system crumbles in any given place. Once the area stabilizes, in part because of the Russian presence, Russian influence tends to abate in favor of the dominant American power.

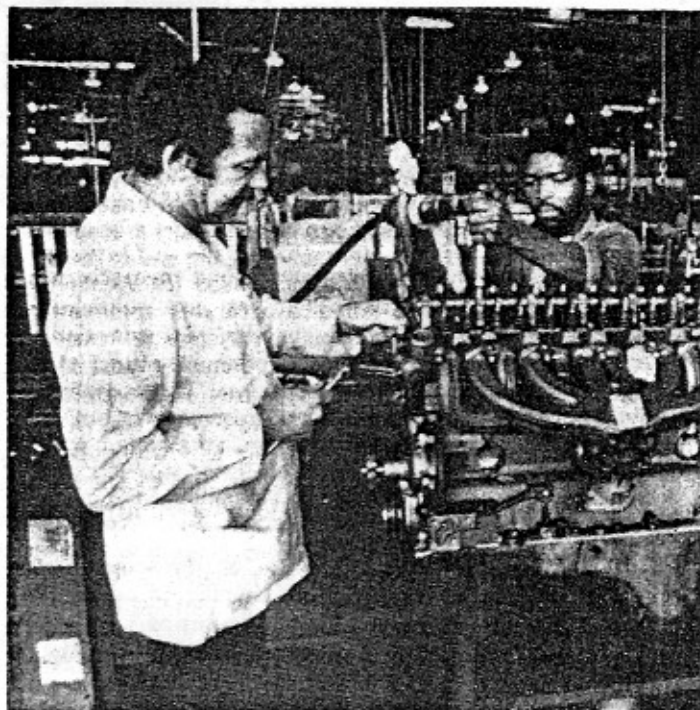
Russia and the U.S. are deadly rivals at the same time that the economically far weaker Russia is forced to prop up American power in order to maintain the capitalist world order. Even in rivalry the powers try to wage their disputes in an atmosphere of detente whenever possible. They must contain and isolate their conflicts in order to avoid head-on clashes that could lead to a major war; thus the Russians have held to their collaborationist line through thick and thin. As the crisis deepens, Washington will attempt to turn the screws on Moscow even more than in Carter's current twist.

The chief deterrent that has delayed a third world war, however, is not the imperialists' desire for peace or even their fear of nuclear war but the undefeated struggle of the masses. The mass misery of World War I showed the Russian workers the way to the Bolshevik Revolution and nearly led to the end of capitalism everywhere; the bourgeoisie was unwilling to take that chance again. World War II got under way only after fascism and the Stalinist counterrevolution had smashed the proletariat's strength in most European countries. It is the undefeated working class in the advanced countries and the continuing anti-imperialist struggles in the neo-colonies that has postponed a World War III.

Maoism Covers for the West

The LRP's analysis of the U.S.-USSR relationship presented in *Socialist Voice* and *Socialist Action* is the only one which has proved capable of accounting fully for fast-breaking world events and the imperialists' shifting policies. It is the only theory advanced on the left which has proved capable of prediction — a necessity if theory and analysis is to have bearing on the class struggle. Unfortunately our theory is essentially unique on the left, where fantasy, rhetoric and dogma reign and Marxism is simultaneously venerated and eviscerated. Two opposing views predominate: one, that Russia is a full-scale imperialist rival to the U.S. (or even a greater menace, according to the official Chinese bombast) capable of replacing America as the dominant imperialism given the opportunity; two, that Russia (or Cuba) essentially plays a progressive role because of its "socialist" or "proletarian" character.

The most disgusting version of the first "theory" was produced by the Chinese-enfranchised Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) whose *Call* claimed that the anti-Mobutu FNLC is simply a puppet of the USSR; its June 5 headline "Evidence Against USSR Mounts" was based upon an-



South African black workers, paid far less than whites, are key to socialist revolution throughout Africa.

nouncements by Mobutu's own press service! The June 19 *Call*, through its "second world" jargon, supported the French and Belgian imperialist intervention by calling it "a good thing when the second world countries of Europe provide aid and assistance to Africa's fight against the superpowers, even though such aid is motivated primarily by the European countries' desire to protect their own interests"!

The Maoist CP-ML is the ugly residue of the early student "third worldist" current which aligned itself with various petty-bourgeois nationalist regimes struggling against the U.S. From sincere subjective anti-imperialists they have now become camp followers of Western imperialism itself through the mediation of their Chinese ties. The inability of Stalinist and third-world nationalists to overcome imperialist domination and the pressure to return to the Western lap is also true of the rightward-moving pseudo-communists in the advanced countries.

Aside from the official Maoists, there has been only one other left paper in the U.S. to accept the idiocy that the Katangan rebels are purely pawns of Russia. The Revolutionary Socialist League's *Torch* (June 15) called the rebels "essentially mercenary" and explained that they had "decided to work for Russian imperialism. The Russians are providing the CNLF with arms and military bases in Angola. If the CNLF can grab all or some of Zaire, the Russians will back Mbumba as their own version of Mobutu."

The RSL writes as if it has detailed inside information. Since even the Senate Foreign Relations Committee found the CIA's claims of Russian and Cuban involvement to be unconvincing, perhaps the RSL will offer to reveal its "sources." But of course it has none. Inflating the Russian-Cuban menace came from faulty political understanding, not facts. The *Torch* added that the Katangans had no mass base of support, a claim that ignores a wide variety of reports of

widespread anti-Mobutu sentiment and support for the FNLC among the Lunda people. This whole absurdity of the RSL's is exactly the consequence of the third-camp analysis and its Shachtmanite theory of state capitalism (and Africa) which we criticized in *Socialist Voice* No. 6. Rarely has a polemical analysis been so precisely verified by events.

The SWP's Twisted Analysis

The most important version of the second theory is that of the Socialist Workers Party, which has just published an unusually comprehensive article in the *Militant* (July 7) written by David Frankel entitled "Behind Washington's threats against Africa and Cuba." This article alters the SWP's positions on certain questions in order to bring them into line with a new interpretation of Cuba's role in world politics. It requires such a warping of both Marxism and recent history, however, that even Carter's course looks steadfast by comparison.

The SWP's thesis is that in contrast to the Russians "the Cubans are playing an important role in helping to advance the African liberation struggle as a whole." In support of this simple illusion Frankel comes up with some noteworthy claims.

1. Cuba, unlike the USSR, is dedicated to struggle against imperialism and not to peaceful coexistence or detente. This is "proved" by quoting an old interview with Fidel Castro. However, the policy statements in favor of stabilization and against subversion by both Castro and Rodriguez which we have cited prove the opposite. While the Rodriguez statement may not be well known (we saw it only in the SWP's *Intercontinental Press*), Castro's and Neto's line on holding back the Katangans has been front-page news for weeks. Nowhere, however, in his six-page article does Frankel see fit to mention it.

2. The South African invasion of Angola in the fall of 1975 "altered the character of the conflict" among the Angolan nationalist groups from a civil war to a threat against the Angolans' right to self-determination. There is truth to this, for the invasion did offer added proof of the imperialist nature of the anti-MPLA side. But imperialism's domination of that side had been apparent well before the South African troops crossed the border, something the SWP does not recognize. Frankel quotes a book by the CIA chief in Angola at the time but neglects to mention that this book documents the CIA's early involvement in anti-MPLA campaigns.

Moreover, in 1975 (and as far as we are aware, until today), the SWP did not recognize the MPLA's struggle as one of national liberation. Thus, in a recent report presented to the SWP's National Committee on January 3, 1976 and reprinted in the SWP's book *Angola: The Hidden History of Washington's War* (advertised at the end of Frankel's article), Tony Thomas stated, "In our opinion, no political support ought to be given to any of these three nationalist groups." In fact Thomas denies not only political support to the MPLA but military defense (the Marxist position) as well, for he adds, "The victory of any one of the three offers no special promise of advancing the Angolan masses toward socialism or toward greater independence from imperialism." (Emphasis added.) This despite what Frankel now sees as the "deadly threat" posed by "3000 South African troops deep inside Angola!"

The sleight-of-hand change of position is designed to bring

the SWP into closer proximity with the policies of the Cuban regime. Russia's role is relegated to giving aid during the period when the struggle was "primarily a civil war." Cuba gets credit for a "progressive, anti-imperialist role." Cuba's acts in suppressing working class upsurges in Luanda and in defending Western economic interests are covered up: "to the extent that the Cubans fail to distinguish (1) between working class and pro-imperialist currents within any particular anti-imperialist struggle they are unable to propel the socialist revolution forward." The Cubans' role, however, is to *prevent* a workers' revolution. That is why they smash workers' movements, not out of some bizarrely misguided understanding of how to help the workers gain power!

The SWP's criticism of Cuba for supporting bourgeois regimes pales in comparison to Frankel's declaration that proper Cuban advice to these regimes could "propel the socialist revolution forward." So anxious is Frankel to crawl into bed with Castro that he later refers to the "socialist camp" of Cuba and Russia. This is a shocking capitulation to the socialist pretensions of Stalinism coming from the supposed standard-bearers of Trotskyism.

3. "It was necessary to support Ethiopia against the Somali invasion" after July 1977 because "the invasion of the Ogaden by the regular army of Somalia — under the orders of the Somalian regime — was not the same as the national liberation struggle of the Somali masses." Here Frankel does acknowledge the SWP's change of policy, but it is a change for the worse. Let us assume for the moment that the SWP's current assumptions are true: that the Ogaden Somalis' liberation struggle has become intertwined with "an aggressive, expansionist invasion by the regular Somali army — aimed ultimately at the advances of the Ethiopian revolution" and that the latter element is now decisive in the Ogaden war. Even so, the right of the Ogaden Somalis to self-determination, which the SWP still accepts, includes their right to merge their land into Somalia since that is their wish and their right to accept aid from the Somalian government. The revolutionary policy to separate the genuine Ogaden Somalis from the "aggressive, expansionist" rulers of Somalia would be to grant self-determination and therefore independence to the Ogaden and thereby eliminate the need for the Ogaden war; if the regular Somalian army then continued to invade Ethiopia proper, its reactionary aims would be proved to the Ogaden Somalis and to the world. But the Ethiopian rulers, and now the SWP, choose to maintain the nationalist suppression of the Ogaden Somalis.

Frankel's reasoning that the Ogaden war was aimed against Ethiopia's advances and not its oppression is based on the claim that "the decisive factor was the encouragement of the Carter administration." His "proof" is particularly feeble: "A country of 3 million doesn't attack a neighbor with ten times its population unless its government has reason to expect substantial assistance." This general truth (which the SWP, for example, does not apply to their assertion that Cambodia took the initiative against the Vietnamese) is particularly inapplicable in the Ethiopian case since Ethiopia was militarily weak at the time, torn by several national and regional breakaways and constant tumult at the center.

Even more crippling to Frankel's argument is an analysis of the actual facts of the conflict. The Ogaden war had begun long before there was any talk of U.S. aid, and the regular Somali army, armed by the USSR, had been covertly involved well before the convenient July 1977 date supplied by Frankel. Moreover, the U.S. aid never came, although Somalia apparently did get arms from the U.S.'s Saudi Arabian and

Iranian allies — not enough to hold the Ogaden, however. The U.S. was simply playing both sides of the street. It wanted to support the Somalis who were coming over towards the West, but it did not want Ethiopia dismembered since it was viewed as the only long-term stabilizing power in the area. Carter hoped to deal with the Dergue and made connections with various elements, including Mengistu. To this day the Somali regime pleads for more tangible support from an equivocal U.S.

The U.S. position throughout the conflict has been for a negotiated settlement mediated by the Organization of African Unity. The OAU condemned the Somali invasion as an act of aggression following its principle that any change in the map of Africa, even a national liberation victory, is impermissible. The U.S. supports the OAU in this because of its fear of the dissolution of the rickety national states. The U.S. has been promoting its ties with Nigeria, the relatively strong oil-backed country which leads the OAU, whose internal situation makes it particularly concerned with the threat of dismemberment. Accordingly, the U.S. joined Moscow last winter to demand that the Somalis leave the Ogaden in return for a guarantee of Somalia's borders. All these facts are forgotten by Frankel in his effort to turn reality upside down.

4. "Castro, to his credit, insists that he supports the right of self-determination for the Eritreans. However, because of his political support for the Mengistu regime, he has been forced into contortions on this question." Indeed he has, for he also considers it "absolutely correct for the Ethiopians to struggle against the disintegration of their country" (*Intercontinental Press*, June 19, 1978); Eritrean self-determination and therefore independence from Ethiopia is impossible if Ethiopia is to maintain its "integral" form.

But the SWP has equally contorted itself by "crediting" Castro with a policy that he does not have. The best that Frankel can say for Castro is that he wants the Ethiopians and Eritreans to negotiate. Such a desire has nothing to do with the right to self-determination, which requires that Ethiopia get out of Eritrea unconditionally. Castro has previously advocated a "socialist federation" of the Horn of Africa, which amounts to a Marxist cover for continued Ethiopian domination since none of the states in the region is socialist or anything approaching that, even in the eyes of the SWP. The real reasons for Castro's "contortions" over Eritrea are his nationalist politics and the mass pressure in favor of Eritrea's democratic rights: Castro is least of all acting under the guidance of Marxist principles, and the SWP is engaging in a pathetic cover up to say that he is.

5. Frankel makes one incontestable point in his effort to distinguish sharply between Russia and Cuba. He goes on at great length to prove that Cuba exercised its own initiative in Africa and is not simply a Russian pawn. This is certainly true, although as Frankel admits one of the factors limiting Cuban initiative is Russia's pressure — strong enough because of the dependency of Cuba's economy on the USSR. Cuba's own anti-imperialist struggle and its "third world" status gives Castro leverage which he didn't use when he backed the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

But that fact that Cuba is not simply a pawn does not mean that Russia and Cuba do not have similar purposes in their alliance. China has a similar (but distinctly unallied) purpose, and its tempo of capitulation is different. Castro as a bourgeois nationalist undoubtedly has aspirations of his own towards greater independence from Moscow; should these come to fruition it would probably lead toward conciliation with the United States. China, after all, once was fashionably

radical too, and then the SWP supported the Chinese line against the Russians!

In sum, the SWP's new version of Cuba's role has little in common with the real world or with Leninist policy. It is a contrived theory that attempts to come to grip with an admittedly difficult problem: how can Russia and Cuba, "workers' states" both, be wedded to a Stalinist foreign policy that for forty years has fundamentally served to stabilize the world in the interests of imperialism? The SWP's particular contortions are based on its insistence that Cuba, unlike the USSR, is an undeformed "workers' state" whose rulers need to be cajoled but not overthrown. Thus Russia's counter-revolutionary policy can be understood, but not Cuba's.

(The SWP appears recently to have resolved a long-standing log jam among its top leaders over the nature of Cuba; now it is engaged in a covert factional dispute with its United Secretariat co-thinkers overseas who for a change have fewer illusions over Cuban policy. In a May 29 *Intercontinental Press* article "Who Are Cuba's Troops Fighting For?", Claude Gabriel concluded: "Yesterday, the Cubans confronted Somalian troops. Tomorrow it could be the Eritreans or activists of the Ethiopian left. Such a policy cannot be supported in any way. It must be condemned." Earlier Gabriel had stated that "discussion of the Cuban policy in Africa is part of a much larger debate on the present nature of the Castroist leadership and on the degree of bureaucratization of the Cuban state." If the majority of the United Secretariat is contending that Cuba is a *deformed* "workers' state" which requires a political revolution against the bureaucracy, against the SWP's long-held view, that would only be fair; for it would amount to a perfect inversion of their respective positions with regard to the Vietnamese state. See the article on Indochina elsewhere in this issue.)

The SWP's new interpretation of African affairs is as much a distortion as the Maoists'. There is one significant difference: the Maoists, consciously or not, have lined up on the side of U.S. imperialism in its struggles with its superpower rival. The SWP, nevertheless, will find itself incapable of fighting American imperialism as long as its politics produce such warped and falsified analyses as Frankel's. To fight imperialism one must understand it. The U.S. above all wants Africa to be stable enough for exploitation. It will let the Russians and Cubans do the job in Angola and Ethiopia if they can, and it will ferry in the French and Belgians to Zaire if they can't. The U.S. cares little about the socialist pretensions of Neto and Mengistu or even Castro — as long as they keep their "socialism" away from the volatile working classes and as long as they keep things especially cool in the vicinity of apartheid South Africa.

In lining up with Cuba's "revolutionary" policy, the SWP in fact acts as a cover for Castro who together with Brezhnev fights for peaceful coexistence and therefore for the U.S.'s imperialist stability. Three years ago the SWP was incapable of backing Angolan national liberation against imperialist forces. Today it has shifted its gears with regard to the Ogaden in order to oppose Somalian self-determination, in league with Cuba, the USSR and the United States. Carter's twisting African policy has indeed met its match.

The answer to American imperialism, its partners and its rivals is the growing revolutionary struggle of the masses of people. Through its struggle the working class is in the process of developing a new revolutionary leadership which will offer a Marxist grasp of world reality and a communist alternative to the blind alley of nationalism and its imperialist backers in the U.S. and the USSR. ■

The New Indochina War -

A Test of Theory

In 1975 the military crushing of the forces of the United States and its Indochinese puppets after three decades of imperialist war both symbolized the long-term decline of imperial power and provided a new inspiration for mass struggles against oppression everywhere. Moreover, the fact that the victorious Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian forces were led by Communist Parties caused many observers to believe that the liberation movements were well on the way to socialism — or, in the case of the “Trotskyist” version of this conception, that “workers’ states” had been created in one or more of the Indochinese countries.

On the last day of 1977, the announcement of the disruption of diplomatic relations between Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Vietnam told the world that the simmering border conflicts between the two countries had reached the point of full-scale war. The two regimes have since gone so far as to accuse each other of greater war crimes than had been perpetrated by the French and American imperialist enemies and have done their utmost to inflame racial antagonism between the two peoples.

We will not attempt here to analyze the causes of this third Indochina war since the end of World War II. We do intend to examine in the light of the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict the Pabloite theories that interpret the coming to power of Stalinist parties as the creation of workers’ states, which revolutionaries are therefore obliged to defend as conquests, however deformed, of the working class. For nothing better exposes the inadequacies of such theories both in their capacity to foresee events and to guide the working class in action.

Our general analysis of the conquest of power by Stalinist parties has been presented in the article “The Nature of the Communist Parties” in *Socialist Voice* No. 3. In Indochina, the national liberation struggles had been captured by the CPs and kept thereby within bourgeois bounds. Thus even where the colonial rulers were ousted and the CPs became the ruling parties, which happened in North Vietnam in 1954 and throughout the rest of Indochina in 1975, the results were not workers’ states but more or less statified forms of capitalism under a statified bureaucratic bourgeoisie in the upper layers of the Communist Party.

The ideology of these parties remained anti-imperialist bourgeois nationalism, and their international alignments were determined by the interplay of their nationalist policies within world power rivalries. Vietnam tended to line up with the USSR in large part because of the resurgence of traditional conflicts with China after the overpowering American presence had been removed. As well, during the war the USSR’s greater military capacity had enabled it to deliver more practical aid. The fear that China would jettison Vietnam in its haste to secure a relationship with the U.S. was greater than similar suspicions Hanoi must have had toward Russia. (Both Russia and China had forced North Vietnam to accept miserable terms at the Geneva conference of 1954.)

Similarly, old rivalries between Vietnam and Kampuchea broke out in the shape of continued pressure by Vietnam to dominate Kampuchea, both through territorial aggran-

dization and the attempt to incorporate Cambodia, along with Laos, in a Vietnam-run Indochinese federation. It was this latter conflict that lies behind the bloody border war. What the Kampuchean rulers must fear was described in the *New York Times* (June 19, 1978):

“Hanoi’s role in Laos since the end of the war there in 1975 has been shrouded in secrecy, though visitors to Vientiane, the Laotian capital, say Vietnamese advisers are now stationed in every government office, including that of the Prime Minister, Kaysone Phomvihane. This is similar to the situation that prevailed in French colonial times, when the French assigned more educated and advanced Vietnamese as administrators in Laos.”

While information on the border war remains cloudy and the sources for it are less than fully reliable, the available evidence does lead to a tentative political position. The League for the Revolutionary Party adopted in February 1978 a position of military defense of Kampuchea’s right to self-determination against the Vietnamese encroachment on its territory. We did so on the basis not simply of Vietnam’s historical attempts to dominate Cambodia, nor the history of Vietnamese racial prejudice against Cambodians, nor of Vietnam’s vastly greater numerical, military and economic strength. Our position was not based on the Kampuchean government’s claims concerning Vietnamese incursions, appropriation of rice crops and interference within the Kampuchean CP itself, but on certain specific reports (from the only sources available) which led to the conclusion that Vietnam had been actively attempting to establish its sway over Kampuchea ever since the United States was forced out.

The *Far Eastern Economic Review* of January 20, 1978 reported: “Western intelligence sources insist that elements of the Vietnamese Third, Sixth and Ninth Divisions have been inside Cambodia since the 1960’s, particularly in the Parrot’s Beak salient where most of the recent fighting seems to have occurred. The apparent refusal of these troops to vacate long-established base camps could have triggered off the series of Cambodian attacks ...” The *New York Times* of January 13 reported remarks at a news conference given by Vietnam’s Deputy Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang to the effect that Vietnamese forces would stay in occupation of Cambodia territory until the Cambodian government agreed to negotiate the differences between the two countries.

Our position was in no way meant to imply any support for the Kampuchean regime nor for its war aims. The reported stream of Cambodian refugees across the borders into Vietnam and Thailand testifies to the horrors the regime has wreaked upon its people, especially the urban masses (including the small working class). The regime’s terror has not been solely directed against the former compradores and puppets of imperialism. Nevertheless, a defense of the right to self-determination is necessary to break the bonds that tie the Kampuchean masses (who seek a better life and independence from imperialism) to their rulers’ disastrous nationalist program. The Vietnamese aggression can only intensify these; as well, Hanoi undoubtedly seeks by this adventure to bind the

discontented Vietnamese masses to its nationalist standard. If revolutionaries do not defend democratic rights of nations and raise the internationalist banner, the people will find no leadership to turn to other than the regimes they are now saddled with.

The Vietnamese "Workers' State"

The most prominent organization which conceives of the Communist Party-ruled countries as workers' states is the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec). Its position on the border war was published in the February 6 issue of *Intercontinental Press* and its analysis has been presented both before and after in articles by Pierre Rousset, the USec's expert on Indochina. The position is based on a theoretical premise which we will examine first: that Vietnam is not a "deformed" workers' state in the sense that the Pabloite groups regard the Eastern European countries as deformed, that is, requiring a political

1933, when the Communist International failed to draw the lessons from and respond to the Nazi's seizure of power in Germany, Trotsky declared that new communist parties would have to be built; in agreement with this, the Trotskyist organization dropped its self-description as the International Left Opposition (within the Communist, or Third, International) and declared itself for the Fourth International. In particular, the Russian Communist Party would have to be replaced as the leadership of the Soviet Union in order to withstand the counterrevolutionary dangers. Contrary to widespread opinion among his would-be followers today, however, Trotsky does not seem to have advocated a political revolution in the USSR at this time. (*Socialist Voice* made this error in No. 3, page 18.)

Under the impact of the Comintern's active and conscious confinement of the Spanish Revolution within capitalist state power, Trotsky again altered his characterization of the Communist Parties. He no longer considered them bureaucratic centrist, that is, vacillating between right and left



Khmer Rouge troops marching into Cambodian capital, April 1975.

revolution to overthrow the ruling bureaucracy and move forward towards socialism. This premise has to be, as a matter of fact, our own interpretation, since Rousset fudges and obscures the basic question. He has stated more than once that Vietnam is a "bureaucratically deformed workers' state." But he has also stated for purposes of comparison that "the USSR of Lenin and Trotsky was a bureaucratically deformed workers' state in 1920," (*International* magazine, Summer 1974, p.14) a statement which brings the entire terminology into question.

There is no doubt that Lenin characterized the Soviet Union of that date as a bureaucratically deformed workers' state, nor that his characterization was accurate. But when Trotsky later stated that the Soviet "Thermidor" had occurred in 1924 and that the USSR from that time was a bureaucratically degenerating workers' state, he meant something far stronger: that the degeneration was a direct threat to the proletarian revolution and was threatening the workers' state with a capitalist counterrevolution. In brief, in Lenin's time the Soviet Union with all its problems was a state in transition from capitalism to socialism. Under Stalinist rule the transition had been reversed, even though the Soviet Union remained a workers' state. (See Trotsky's article, "The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism," in *Writings, 1934-35*.)

There are two other stages in the development of Trotsky's understanding of the degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Stalinized Communist Parties that are important to note. In

and inconsistent in their defense of working class interests, and declared the CPs to be definitively counterrevolutionary. At the same time he adopted the program of political revolution in the Soviet Union, recognizing that a revolution was necessary to overthrow Stalinism and reform the workers' state.

The decaying Fourth International under the leadership of Michel Pablo adopted the anti-Marxist "deformed workers' state" position in the early 1950's: namely, that the countries of Eastern Europe had become workers' states through the nationalization of industry by the petty-bourgeois Stalinist rulers without a civil war and the smashing of the old state, that these states were born deformed because of the absence of workers' democracy, and that therefore a political revolution was necessary from the start to overthrow Stalinism. The United Secretariat's analysis of Vietnam today is meant to be distinguished from this, despite the use of the term "deformed workers' state." Whereas the Pabloite policy toward Eastern Europe is intended to jibe with Trotsky's program for the USSR after 1937, the USec's attitude toward Vietnam is designed to appear analogous to Trotsky's pre-1933 position, when no new revolution and not even a new party was considered necessary. Thus the USec holds that the Vietnamese CP is neither Stalinist nor counterrevolutionary and therefore opposes the program of political revolution in Vietnam. The USec's strategy for overcoming the Vietnamese CP's "poor understanding of the question of socialist democracy," according to Rousset, is to demonstrate through solidarity ac-

tivities and other acts of struggle that "our conception of workers' democracy" is preferable to that of the Vietnamese leaders through "a practical confrontation of experiences." In reality, the USec position has nothing in common with Trotsky's view at any time, which was always uncompromisingly hostile to Stalinism and the degeneration it stood for. The USec specializes in equivocation, apologetics and support with criticisms; forthright condemnation and exposure are beyond its means. Our own analysis, although we differ with Trotsky's dying conviction that the USSR was still a workers' state, is the only one that maintains the trajectory of Trotsky's views as they developed over time. He was entirely correct to see Stalinism as counterrevolutionary and that is the only way to understand it today.

Policy Toward the Border War

This in outline is the theoretical armament on the nature of Vietnam with which the United Secretariat confronts the Indochinese border war today. But its imprecision over Vietnam is outdone by its implacable fuzziness over Kampuchea. The statement on the war refers to "those countries that had overturned capitalism," presumably but not specifically including Cambodia, and thereby suggesting that Cambodia belongs in the category of workers' states. (Previous statements and articles by the USec in its magazine *Inprecor* also fail to be definite on this point. The nationalization of what Cambodian industry has not been destroyed ought to be a sufficient reason for empiricists.) Whether the leadership is Stalinist is also not specified, although the official statement does comment that "the weight of Stalinism internationally and the Stalinist training of the Vietnamese and Cambodian leaderships partly explain the extent of the resurgence of nationalism in Indochina." However, Stalinism's weight and Stalinist training were not enough to make the Vietnamese CP Stalinist, in the USec's view (although the statement does not remind its readers of this fact), so the question of Kampuchean Stalinism is still left unclear.

What is clear is that the USec places the burden of the blame for the border war on the Cambodian rulers more than on the Vietnamese. They do so, however, in a typically evasive fashion, covering their position with criticisms of both sides. "The rejection in principle by the Cambodian leadership of any form of real cooperation among the three Indochinese countries, the sealing of the country's borders, and the intense nationalism of its political line, are the most extreme reflection of this, and certainly bear a share of the responsibility for the violence of the current conflict. However, each of these regimes is characterized, to one degree or another, by strong nationalist traits." The statement adds that "the interests of the working masses of Indochina are bound up with the establishment of growing cooperation on all levels — economic, military, and political — among Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos." This last point expresses the viewpoint of the Vietnamese CP and is in opposition to the Cambodians. Finally, the USec concludes with an attempt at a hard-hitting declaration that remains, inevitably, imprecise:

"But the most pressing issue raised today by the outbreak of this conflict is the need for an immediate suspension of the armed clashes. It is still impossible to make a final judgment as to the direct responsibility borne by each of the parties for the deterioration of the border dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia. The total control imposed by each regime over news reports, and

their consistent use of secret diplomacy — both of which are in opposition to Leninist traditions — clearly present sizable obstacles to making such an assessment. But those who were the first to take up arms in the past — and would do so again in the future — must bear the responsibility in the eyes of the Indochinese masses and the world wide workers movement."

Rousset makes clear in a subsequent article (*Intercontinental Press*, February 27) just which side was the "first to take up arms": "...the initiative in the military and polemical escalation of the conflict ... seems to have come in most cases from Phnompenh." Why this unmistakable but indirect accusation of the Cambodians? Why does the USec find it impossible to make a judgment when they have such a high estimation of the Vietnamese CP and a low one of the Cambodian, and when they stand for the Vietnamese position on the question of Indochinese "cooperation" which is at issue? The United Secretariat is leaning precariously toward support for Vietnam in the border war — yet it draws up short of a conclusion and confines itself to denouncing secrecy and pleading for peace.

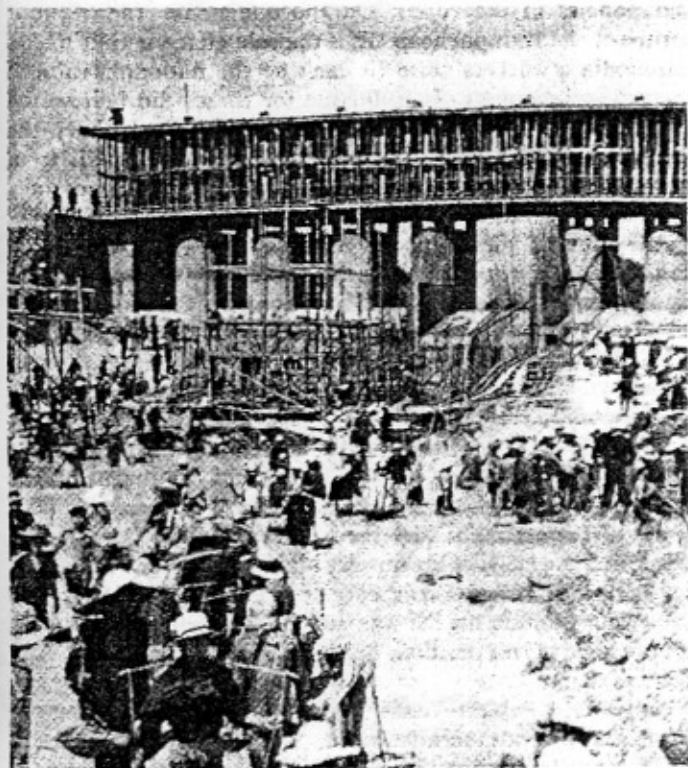
Rousset's February 27 article is even more abject. He calls for a "democratic federation linking these three countries" and the "abandonment of the total political monopoly exercised by each Indochinese CP leadership in its own country." Rousset actually seems to believe that these "non-Stalinist" regimes will yield their monopoly of power in favor of democracy if only they are sufficiently pressured by public opinion! That is the guidance the USec is able to offer to "the Indochinese masses and the worldwide workers movement" whom it wishes to win to its banner!

The reasons for the USec's pusillanimity are not hard to find. Two of its patented political trademarks have come into conflict. On the one hand, there is its notorious softness towards "third-world" Stalinism, such as its refusal to recognize the Stalinist nature of the Vietnamese CP (as it once refused to recognize the Stalinist nature of the Chinese CP) despite the fact that everything the USec complains of concerning the border war is part and parcel of Stalinism. On the other hand, the USec believes that what it calls workers' democracy is the solution to all the ills of the deformed "workers' states." To support Kampuchea, given its sensationistically advertised brutality, would be unfashionable in the chic radical circles where the USec fellow-travels. To support the Vietnamese side, however, in the face of the right of the Cambodians to exercise self-determination and not join a Vietnam-dominated federation, would be too great a breach of democratic standards. For an organization that has cast its entire strategy in this period on bourgeois-democratic lines such a rupture would be too discordant.

This contradiction within the USec's "theory" derives from a more fundamental problem. The Kampuchea-Vietnam battle pits two modest "post-capitalist" societies against each other. While the war is certainly no "proxy war" between Russia and China, as Brzezinski once suggested using more hope than fact, any war between the smaller countries threatens to involve their big brothers. The rapid deterioration of relations between China and Vietnam (and consequently Russia) over the overseas Chinese population in Vietnam highlights this fact. The very thought of taking a stance which could affect its position on the mounting struggle between the "proletarian" colossi brings out every weapon of obscurantism in the USec's ample armory.

The USec once leaned toward Mao's China when its ap-

parent intransigence toward imperialism made it the darling of the progressive intelligentsia who dote on third-world patronization. Today it leans in the other direction, toward Russia's orbit and away from China's because of China's pro-U.S. turn and Russia's continuing popular-front orientation to the liberal wing of Western capitalism. The USec capitulates in situation after situation to popular frontist politics. But it still seeks to maintain its organizational and political independence, the now-bastardized legacy of Trotskyism; thus it cannot join the popular front movement openly. Never-



Labor-intensive construction project in present-day Kampuchea.

theless, it poses as a left-wing advisor to the Eurocommunist leaders just as it does to the Stalinist rulers of Eastern Europe (see our polemic against Ernest Mandel in *Socialist Voice* No. 2, pages 29-32.) Its friendly, democratic advice-from-a-distance to the Vietnamese rulers chimes in perfect harmony with the tunes it once sang to Tito and now croons to the Elleinsteins, Claudins and Carrillos. Its real program is pluralist democracy, which "requires the abandonment of the total political monopoly exercised by each Indochinese CP leadership in its own country."

If the USec were to take its analysis of the "revolutionary" CPs seriously it would have to give up the privilege of carping from outside and join them; pluralism can be begged for from within just as well. It clings, however, to its Trotskyist facade, not recognizing that its "independence" is nothing more than sectarianism, given its insistence that no class difference separates it from the CPs. And if the USec really were to take its deformed workers' state position seriously and try to find material roots for the "proletarian" character of the Indochinese states, it would have to recognize that the only basis for such a characterization is the Vietnamese working class, the only sizable working class in Indochina (especially so after the depopulation of the Cambodian cities). But no such attempt is made, for it would come up against the Marxist

reality that the Vietnamese proletariat was not the class that led the anti-imperialist struggle; in fact, the working class was betrayed and defeated by the Stalinist CP in the aftermath of World War II. Such an investigation would be too dangerous to the USec's underlying Pabloite assumptions.

The Lessons of Pabloism

Other Pabloite tendencies fare no better with their alternative versions of the same essential world outlook. The U.S. Socialist Workers Party, which is affiliated to the United Secretariat but heads a minority tendency within it, starts with different assumptions yet ends up with the same indefinite but neutral position. For the SWP, Vietnam is a deformed workers' state in the traditional Pabloite sense: it is ruled by Stalinists whom the SWP believes must be overthrown in a political revolution (although in deference to public opinion, it rarely said so when the Vietnamese leadership was widely admired on the left during the Vietnam war). Kampuchea, as far as we can judge from the SWP's infrequent written positions on the question, is not yet a workers' state. (Why not? Probably because the crimes of the Cambodian rulers mean that it would be too deformed even for those who can accept the idea of workers' states born out of petty-bourgeois leaderships and defeated working classes. Such is the empirical nature of this "theory.")

Under the assumption that Vietnam is a workers' state and Kampuchea is still bourgeois, the SWP's policy in the border war ought to be clear. But it isn't. The SWP's *Intercontinental Press* has published an article or two aside from the USec majority's statements, but these are singlemindedly devoted to cataloging the facts and avoid any temptation to take a political position on the war. The reasons are undoubtedly the same as for the USec majority, coupled with the hands-off attitude prevalent within the liberal-labor milieu in the U.S. to which the SWP adheres. The openly bankrupt character of Pabloite "theoretical" pyrotechnics is thus revealed; in a war between a workers' and non-workers' state, the SWP supports neither side. When a "theory" reaches such conclusions Marxists would at least have to re-examine their assumptions. But Marxism is the Pabloites' Angkor Wat, the relic of a forgotten science.

In the July 3 *Intercontinental Press*, the SWP's spokesman on Indochina, Fred Feldman, deals at length with recent changes of policy in South Vietnam. He cites the regime's "anti-capitalist" measures in taking over the property of thousands of private businessmen, despite the CP's history of promises to preserve private ownership. He then concludes: "Taken as a whole, the measures constitute a positive resolution of the contradiction between the regime ... and the surviving capitalist property relations."

Feldman does not explain how such an achievement was possible for a Stalinist bureaucracy which the SWP considers to be class-collaborationist and counterrevolutionary, nominally following Trotsky's last analysis. And after his glowing description of the Vietnamese CP's progressive advances, it comes as a thoroughly unconvincing afterthought when Feldman insists that a revolutionary overthrow of the ruling bureaucracy is needed for Vietnam to advance all the way to socialism — because the CP leaders are "trained in the Stalinist school and committed to buréaucratic tutelage over the masses." As Feldman himself proves, it is actions that count, not just training and commitments. Those who believe that Stalinism can not only overthrow capitalist rule but can

continued on page 32

New Indochina War

continued from page 31

continue as well to crush capitalist economic relations have not a shred of a reason left to argue that it will stop short of socialism.

A comparison with Joseph Hansen's analysis of the Cuban "workers' state" in the previous issue of the same magazine is instructive. Hansen cites Cuba's increasing bureaucratization, its growing cooperation with the USSR's foreign policy and its consequent complicity in the reinforcement of capitalism in Angola and Ethiopia as well as its "hesitancy" in the suppression of the Eritrean national liberation struggle (he does not mention Cuba's unhesitating suppression of the Somali struggle in the Ogaden). But he concludes that there is no need to overthrow the Cuban bureaucracy by revolutionary means. The Vietnamese CP, despite its anti-capitalist advances, must be overthrown. The Cuban CP despite its pro-capitalist acts and Stalinist bureaucratization, no. This method is not just a travesty of Trotskyism — the Pabloite assumptions are that already — but an insult to common sense. Both Cuban and Vietnamese CPs are Stalinist, whatever their training. Both are active in the Russian foreign policy orbit, and therefore both stand for the stabilization of world imperialist relations. It is the SWP's historical investment in the Cuban revolution, in the "non-Stalinist" character of the Castro regime as much as Cuba's independence of U.S. imperialism, that has taken precedence over all theoretical consistency.

The other leading Pabloite tendency in the United States is the Spartacist League. The SL considers both Vietnam and Cambodia to be Stalinist-ruled deformed workers' states in the standard Pabloite mold — even though it believes that in Cambodia "the tiny proletariat was destroyed" (*Workers Vanguard*, January 6). That must be some sort of record for cynicism even within Pabloism: a "workers' state" so deformed that the working class is not only suppressed but is non-existent! As well, the Stalinist heads of Cambodia are "an extremely thin layer at the head of a peasant army, fearful of their ability to control any social organization above the village level," and the real force behind the Cambodian savagery is "recrudescent peasant atavism under the Khmer Rouge regime."

If Cambodia is a workers' state by the skin of its teeth, overrun by a peasant army which is barely controlled by the CP and whose hatred of urban life led it to destroy both the cities and the proletariat, and if Vietnam is the only country in Indochina whose working class can be the basis for socialism (as the SL argues), then the SL's policy in the border war must be to defend the proletarian base. The danger of peasant fury ravaging the proletariat throughout Indochina has to be warded off; the SL should have no choice but to support Vietnam. But it does not do so. "Despite the more extreme brutality of bureaucratic rule in Cambodia, revolutionary Marxists oppose both sides in this border feud waged by qualitatively equivalent regimes in Hanoi and Phnom Penh."

The SL bases its decision not on what it sees as the class

relations within the countries and their international expression but on the fact of "qualitatively equivalent regimes;" both are Stalinist. The defense of the working class in war is a consideration secondary for the Spartacists to the character and policies of the rulers. On the one hand, the Stalinist nature of the Kampuchean CP is the sole element that makes Cambodia a workers' state (it can't be the nationalization of the industrial means of production for those who believe the proletariat to have been destroyed!); on the other, the Stalinist nature of the Vietnamese CP prevents the SL from defending the Vietnamese side. Not even the existence of a proletariat makes a difference.

All three of the Pabloite tendencies we have considered should, according to their own variants of the same basic theory, have supported the Vietnamese side in the border conflict in order to defend the underlying interests of the proletariat. That none of them did so (and as of this writing we are unaware of any Pabloite tendency that did) is an indication of the uselessness of the theory in drawing lessons and guiding the actions of the working class. The theory actually misleads its followers as to the character of Stalinism. In the case of the USec, this emerges in the form of Rousset's continual disappointment over the misdeeds of the Indochinese CPs which the USec holds "in very high esteem." In the case of the Spartacist League, its theory of Stalinism both leads it to the wrong position on the war and prevents it from carrying out the logic of this position. But it still does not end up on the right road.

None of the Pabloite tendencies is capable of supporting the Cambodian right to self-determination. This is not a question of the availability of information, for the responsible course is still to inform the working class of the necessary tasks even when the facts are limited or questionable, as the LRP has done; should new evidence surface the position may have to change. Bourgeois suppression of evidence is a constant, still Marxists must act.

What hamstringing the Pabloites is their politics, especially the theoretical outlook with which they approach the Indochinese events. This outlook prevents them from even considering the defense of Cambodia. The Vietnamese drive for "federation" under a regime which the Pabloites could recognize as bourgeois would be seen for what it is, the attempt of a regional power to dominate its neighbors and exploit them (in order to better resist the exploitation of the full-scale imperialist powers). But the Pabloites' illusions in the proletarian powers of the CPs have blinded them to the extent that they see the embryo of a "socialist federation of Indochina" where there is only Stalinist aggrandizement.

Even the worldly-wise, super-cynical Spartacists cannot see beyond their Stalinist-colored spectacles. "Despite the more extreme brutality of bureaucratic rule in Cambodia," they resolutely refuse to support Vietnam; but the extreme brutality does scare them from taking up the question of supporting Kampuchea. The SL, of course, is by now notorious for its insensitivity to national oppression and its disinclination to accept a Leninist position on national self-determination struggles. It is the most devastating indictment of the Pabloite tendencies generally that their theoretical assumptions have brought them to the same impasse as the Spartacists. ■