

VANGUARD newsletter

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THE IRISH QUESTION: For a United Socialist Ireland in a Socialist United States of Europe - Part I

The maturing crisis of imperialism has again brought the national question to the forefront in Ireland, just as it has in Quebec, the United States, and Bangla Desh, to mention only a few of the most prominent.

On every continent--with the exception of Antarctica--the national question poses itself in one way or another as an essential, if not the predominant, factor in the struggle for socialism. Therefore, a correct implementation of Marxist theory on the national question is at the very heart of building a vanguard party that can lead the working class to power in both the underdeveloped and developed countries. This is especially true in England with regards to the Irish question.

Ireland's economic backwardness stems primarily from her historical and present relationship with England. With the possible exception of Portugal, Ireland is the poorest country in Europe and wages are the lowest, averaging at best \$38/wk. for men and \$21/wk. for women in the Republic. Conditions are not much better in Ulster where the men, again at best, average \$48/wk. and the women \$28/wk. The Republic has

been running an annual trade balance deficit of about \$250 million on a total trade of around \$1,000 million. And England's own trade deficit will push Ireland's deficit up even more. Britain receives 75% of all of Ireland's exports while providing better than 40% of her imports. No other country in Europe is as dependent on one market as Ireland is on Britain.

Today as world capitalism chokes from the constrictions of its own contradictions, Ireland, like all underdeveloped countries dominated by imperialism, is strangled all the more. Even in good times Ireland was continually cursed with high unemployment despite the fact that immigration, the traditional safety valve, outstripped the relatively high birth rate. (Ireland is the only country in Europe to suffer an actual decline in population for the last half century.) For the past few years, factories

have been closing down at a disastrous rate, the tourist trade has taken a nose dive and unemployment in the Republic has climbed to over 80,000. Unemployment is even greater in Ulster where the two major employers--the linen and ship-building industries--have in the last 25 years cut the work force over 60%, and are still on the wane. Some cities in the western part of Ulster report unemployment rates of up to 20%, primarily among Catholic workers. A 1% rise in unemployment in Britain creates a 6% rise in Ulster. The English bourgeoisie not only extract super-profits from Ireland but also use it as a private dumping ground for their own economic ills.

But the English domination of Ireland is only one side of the coin. The most important surplus Britain receives from Ireland does not show up in the trade statistics. It is labor, as is evident from the chauvinistic slogan popularized by the Wimpey hamburger chain, "We Import More Paddies Every Year." The English have for over a century created conditions in Ireland that produced an immigration of Irish labor into Britain. The importation of that labor is desired for the very fact that it is cheap labor "and this forces down wages and lowers the moral and national condition of the English working class." But cheap labor is not the only benefit the bourgeoisie derive from this immigration as Marx, continuing from the quote above, points out in his letter to Meyer and Vogt, dated April 9, 1870:

"And most important of all! Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland,

thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude toward him is much the same as that of the 'poor whites' to the 'niggers' in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland. (Selected Correspondence, p. 236-7.)

Marx's succinct and accurate description is as valid today as it was then. The Irish are the largest immigrant group in England--up to 1½ million. The huge Irish community in the big cities remain socially unassimilated, with their own pubs, dance halls, churches, etc. The stereotyped drunken "Paddy" and the crude jokes about him and his priest, are only a small part of the folklore which demeans the Irish and his culture and separates him from the English workers. This separation is artificially created and promoted by the bourgeoisie with every propagandistic means at their disposal.

Nor--and most important--are the Irish integrated into the British trade union structure. Most Irish still work in the building trades industry and other forms of non-unionized casual labor. Like the Blacks in the US, the Irish make up a super-exploited section of the working class in England. The antagonism between the Irish and the English worker in Great Britain is as debilitating to working class unity as that between the Black and white worker in the US.

"This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power." (ibid.)

Therefore, in order to advance the socialist revolution in England, the vanguard party must place the

Irish question in the forefront. This must take the form of actually organizing the English workers for the independence of both the Irish Republic and Ulster, not as a matter of humanitarianism or a good will gesture to express international solidarity, but rather as a do-or-die need of the English working class's own emancipation.

Only the Irish working class is capable of leading a real struggle against imperialism in Ireland. History has shown--and the bourgeois government in the Republic of Ireland confirms once again--that the bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries are incapable of leading a struggle to gain and secure independence from imperialism. The bourgeoisie in fear of the masses and social revolution ultimately come to an agreement with the imperialists and turn against the masses in spite of all their rhetoric against imperialism and for national independence. The working class must, independently of the bourgeoisie, take the leadership of the fight for national liberation through a struggle for socialism, winning in the process the mass support of the peasantry.

But unfortunately, the Irish proletariat even supported by the peasantry is not enough to secure victory. For this, the Irish working class must seek an alliance with their only true ally in the fight against the English bourgeoisie and their Irish compradores--namely, with the English workers. Due to their decisive social weight, the English proletariat is the most

important social factor in the emancipation of Ireland.

For this reason the vanguard party of the Irish proletariat must lead a struggle to win the English working class to the cause of Irish independence and criticize unremittingly all those who by their program and/or tactics cut across this perspective. The English workers must not only be won to the side of Irish independence--sympathy is always cheap enough--but they must as well be organized for economic and political action in support of Irish independence. In this process, the English working class will be organized in a struggle for its own emancipation. Here the unique role of the Irish proletariat, in not only the socialist revolution of Ireland but also the socialist revolution of England, becomes clear.

Because it is not simply a question of economic oppression, but also a question of national oppression in Ireland and because of the unique situation of the Irish workers in England, where national oppression takes the form of super-exploitation, the Irish workers are destined, as with the Blacks in the US, to play a vanguard role in not only the struggle for Irish independence and a United Socialist Ireland, but also in the struggle for a United Socialist Federation of the British Isles. The dialectic, however, will not let matters rest there. The vanguard party can only struggle for the independence of Ireland by struggling for the Socialist United States of Europe.

(to be continued)

ANGELA DAVIS ON TRIAL

The defense of all victims of capitalist class "justice" and fighters against capitalist oppression is the elementary duty of all class conscious workers.

It is especially important at this time for American workers to understand that the defense of Angela Davis and all other militants from especially oppressed minorities in the courts and prisons of the ruling class is not an act of benevolence on their part, but a most essential

defense of their own immediate and fundamental interests.

The ruling class is determined to solve the growing contradictions of an American and world capitalist system in crisis through an assault on the living standards of the American working class. To do so, it

must also attack its democratic rights and organizations. The first to feel the repressive blows are the militant representatives of the oppressed minorities who are also the most radicalized, who have become increasingly aware that their oppression is rooted in the capitalist system.

Angela Davis is accused of providing the guns used by Jonathon Jackson in the shootout at the Marin County Court House in San Rafael, California in which four persons, including a judge of the California Superior Court died. Charged with murder, kidnapping and conspiracy, she has now been released on \$102,500 bail after spending 16 months in jail.

The stringent "security measures" which have been instituted at the courthouse in San Jose where the trial is now taking place serve mainly, it would seem, to create an atmosphere in which her conviction will be assured. San Jose, from which the jurors are being drawn, has a Black population of 2%, and is known for its conservatism.

The granting of bail has been hailed by Angela Davis and by the Communist Party (CP) which has undertaken her defense as a significant "victory for the people." The denial of bail served to prevent Angela Davis from active participation in the organization and fund raising needed to prepare her defense. The conditions under which bail has been granted still serve the same purposes. She is not permitted to leave the immediate jurisdiction of the court, appear at public rallies or, through press interviews, acquaint the American and international working class with the issues of her case. Nevertheless, growing mass support for her has been increasingly demonstrated here and abroad.

The CP is using the concession of the Superior Court following the abolition of the death penalty in California as further justification for its civil libertarian campaign for Angela Davis. In order to conduct a campaign for "justice" based on capitalist "law and order," the

CP insisted that the case of her codefendant, Ruchell Magee, which could not be fitted into such a framework be separated from hers. Significantly, Angela Davis has cut across the tactics of the CP by raising the class issues involved. She has called for an understanding of the "forces which led to the deaths," for "work to eradicate them" and has expressed her hope that "the present capitalist economic structure" would be "smashed by a revolution."

The contradiction in which the CP now finds itself is expressed in the person of Angela Davis. It has managed to retain the largest base in the working class and among Black workers of all ostensibly socialist organizations. As a faithful echo of the Kremlin, it was long ago turned into as thorough a reformist and counterrevolutionary organization as any Social Democratic party ever was. Although lacking the mass support of its counterparts in Europe, in the absence of a revolutionary party, its working class base may yet enable it to play a serious role in disorienting the working class in the sharpening class struggles which are to follow.

Yet, the CP's base and especially its Black sector tends to turn and can be made increasingly to turn against it by revolutionary Marxists as the maturing capitalist crisis discloses the bankruptcy of its reformist politics, of its bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie.

American capitalism which was able to afford concessions to a labor aristocracy in the "fat" years will no longer be able to afford either reforms or the reformists in the "lean."

While taking advantage of every legal safeguard which bourgeois democracy yet affords, the militant and revolutionary victims of capitalism can, in the final analysis, only defend themselves and contribute to the defense of other such victims by a revolutionary class defense which mobilizes working class support and which builds revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary vanguard party.

THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE: A "Workers Vanguard" for Students

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER categorized the Spartacist League (SL) in its last issue as a "not very serious student-oriented personality cult around James Robertson."

As we pointed out at that time, although the SL's:

"formal positions do not appear to differ qualitatively from our own...its functioning discloses essential differences in class orientation and application."

As we then also indicated, the SL's functioning can only be understood as "the appreciation of and identification with orthodox Trotskyism" of a petty-bourgeois formation.

Students and, more generally, intellectuals, who have yet to become involved in the class struggle, are won to socialism as an ideology, as a set of more or less abstract ideas. To this milieu in particular, the basis for the continued separate existence of a smaller organization with seemingly "trivial" political differences with a larger appears unprincipled, and perhaps, largely the result of a conflict of personalities.

The SL spokesmen at the meeting which formed the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses seized upon just this theme in repeated attacks on VANGUARD NEWSLETTER. The identical "explanation" is afforded new contacts who request information about the 1968 factional struggle from which VANGUARD NEWSLETTER was to emerge.

The "real" reason for the split? Turner just did not "get along" with Robertson, made an "unprincipled bloc" with Ellens and then "resigned." The previous five years of association and the forced nature of Turner's resignation is glossed over; the political issues involved are vulgarized; the similarity in program is emphasized to "prove" that VANGUARD NEWSLETTER is "unprincipled."

For Marxists, the truth is concrete. Generalizations can be filled with variable content, the

better to hoodwink the gullible. The conformance between theory and practice, not only the formal program as such, but equally the manner in which an organization attempts to carry it out is a measure of its seriousness, of its revolutionary commitment.

The SL, from its beginnings and throughout its existence, has failed to meet the criterion of revolutionary practice. It has been unwilling and unable to root itself in the working class and has shown itself, over a period of years, to be a "not very serious student-oriented personality cult," as we demonstrated in our six-part series, "Trotskyism Today", published from September 1970 through April 1971, in incidental articles, and earlier, in the pamphlet, "Spartacist League Split."

As we have clearly shown and again intend to show, at critical testing points, the SL's theory was also "adjusted" to conform to its petty-bourgeois practice.

The last such test occurred on January 25th, 1972 when the SL refused to participate in a united front of "workers' organizations and working class militants." At the meeting, it fought against the perspective of a transitional organization--an industrial, regional and national network of rank-and-file caucuses--which was to be initiated on a two-point class program: "the independence of the unions from the state" and "an independent workers' party based on the rank-and-file," which correspond to the most immediate and pressing objective needs of the working class.

The objective necessity for the unity of the working class against the ruling class offensive under the conditions of a maturing world capitalist crisis is becoming increasingly clear to workers. As recent strikes in longshore, auto

and communications have shown, an enormous acceleration in rank-and-file militancy is now under way which is increasingly directed not only against the bosses, but also their agents in the labor movement, the labor bureaucracy. A revolutionary Marxist party able to lead the "movement of the present" so as to ensure the "future of the movement" does not now exist.

Given the splintering and proliferation of ostensibly revolutionary organizations and the rising tide of working class militancy, why not utilize the lessons of Marxism, why not organize a united front on a principled class programmatic basis, as did Marx and Engels in the First International? A principled united front does not hinder any organization from posing its full program provided that it does not conflict with the program of the united front. On the contrary, the advance in class consciousness and organization which would result could only enhance the possibilities for revolutionists to win adherents to their program.

But the SL could not care less! As we demonstrated in our last issue, it is solely concerned with advancing its organizational interests in the narrowest organizational manner, to "slice off a member here and there" from other radical formations.

The SL's reaction to the call by SOCIALIST FORUM and VANGUARD NEWS-LETTER to a united front was by no means accidental. Some of our readers will recall that it also rejected, as did the Workers League (WL), a similar invitation to join with us in building a rank-and-file caucus in Local 1199, the hospital workers' union. Our February 1970 issue carried the response of the SL's James Robertson to our call and our rejoinder. While pleading "poverty"--the SL, it seems, had only "marginal contacts in 1199"--Robertson also stipulated as a precondition for joint activities with us that we retract our accusations that the SL and its leaders are "anti-working class," "anti-Negro racists," and "police agents and

informers." We pointed out that he had, in an unprincipled fashion, enlarged upon our charges that the SL's leaders had demonstrated "elitist and chauvinist attitudes" in the factional struggle. We also pointed out that we had not called them "police agents and informers." We had only detailed the SL's public identification of and attacks on Robert Sherwood which was shortly followed by an unsuccessful attempt by the Canadian government to deport him to the US. We let our readers draw their own conclusions about the SL's behavior.

We pointed out at that time, that in offering united front activities to the SL, we had followed the examples of Lenin and Trotsky, who had called for the application of the united front tactic to the Social Democratic and Stalinist traitors to socialism. We are, as they were, incapable of distorting the historical record in order to win "unstable, vacillating and temporary allies for 'united activities'."

Revolutionary Marxists, we informed them, would have determined whether the construction of a rank-and-file caucus would not have objectively advanced the interests of hospital workers. They:

"would have welcomed the opportunity to be involved with workers in struggle, and to win them and, perhaps, some of their socialist opponents, to their views and to their organization. They would have seized upon an opening to unite workers under revolutionary leadership--the entire purpose of the united front."

To both united front proposals, the SL reacted with virtually complete subjectivity, a trait typical of petty-bourgeois intellectuals and not as Marxists, as "scientific socialists" who determine their tasks on the basis of the objective situation.

"...acceleration and delay are very much dependent upon...the 'accident' of the character of the people who first head the

movement."

said Marx, in a letter to Kugelmann dated April 17, 1871.

Both Robertson of the SL and Tim Wohlforth of the WL emerged in 1961 as leaders of the revolutionary tendency in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). As we demonstrated in our series, "Trotskyism Today," Wohlforth, by unprincipled organizational maneuvering under the direction of Gerry Healy of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) of Great Britain and of the International Committee (IC) of the Fourth International, and Robertson, primarily concerned with building his own ego, succeeded in dividing the revolutionary tendency, in disorienting and discouraging potential supporters and in aborting the struggle for the SWP cadre.

Since emerging from the SWP, Wohlforth, by utilizing the mystique of the IC as the only and true inheritor of the mantle of Trotskyism and by transforming dialectical materialism into a cabalistic rite has succeeded in pulling together an organization. But, in spite of all its frantic activity in trying to influence working class struggles, it retains a primarily student composition. The mystique which is so effective with students only serves to repel serious workers.

The organization which Robertson

has built has acquired an almost exclusive student composition--by no means fortuitously. While still in the SWP, Robertson opposed the turn to the working class which Wohlforth had proposed. He was able to prevent the turn to the working class embodied in the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" which Turner had originated, the real basis for the 1968 SL factional struggle.

From its inception, the SL has functioned in accordance with the rhythms and appetites of its leader, James Robertson. It has proven incapable of developing a strategic orientation for the construction of a working class vanguard party based on a scientific assessment of the nature of the epoch and the needs of the working class. It has only been able to react empirically to every development with the formulas of "orthodox" Trotskyism and their logical extension.

The SL still acknowledges the "Memorandum on the Negro Struggle" as its perspective. But, for the past four years, it has remained a dead letter. The "Memorandum" and any trade union activity undertaken only serves the SL as a fig-leaf to cover its nakedness, to enable it to pose as a "Workers Vanguard" to the student milieu, its real concern.

(to be continued)

FUNDAMENTALS OF CAPITALIST CRISIS - Part II

Production and Appropriation

To overthrow capitalism and establish its own rule, the working class must have a Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party.

This proposition, which we have often restated, was proven affirmatively by the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 and negatively by the many defeats suffered by the international workers' movement since.

But the bourgeoisie was able to burst the "integument", the socio-political envelope, of feudalism without a comparable instrument. Why? As many revolutionary Marxists including the American Daniel De Leon have pointed out, having succeeded in amassing property, the

means of production and money, i.e., economic power, the bourgeoisie was also able to acquire the necessary culture, the knowledge and technique possessed by the earlier ruling class, and with these a clear class consciousness of its need for political power.

In its early youth, however, the most powerful members of the new breed of exploiter were the most ready to compromise with the old.

In 1660, an English parliament recalled to the throne the son of a

king which an earlier parliament had decapitated in 1649. In 1689, the bourgeoisie concluded another compromise with the landed aristocracy in the "Glorious Revolution" which deposed James II and enthroned William of Orange as constitutional monarch. Those "to the manor born" are, surely, better-fitted to represent the "nation" in political high office, at "important" social functions and in command of its armed forces than "ill-bred" bourgeois!

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie was eager to strike a political bargain with royalty for another reason. The working class had begun to elbow its way upon the historical stage. It was no longer content to function as an appendage of the liberal bourgeoisie, but instead raised its own class demands. Fearing the working class, the bourgeoisie everywhere pusillanimously bent its knee to its aristocratic enemies in the revolutions of 1848. Not for it were the Jacobin terrors of the French Revolution a half-century earlier.

This experience became a major strand in Trotsky's theory of the Permanent Revolution: the bourgeoisie in countries with a belated capitalist development are incapable of securing either the consolidation of the nation or bourgeois-democratic liberties, as had its progenitors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The complete and genuine solution of bourgeois-democratic and national tasks can now only be accomplished by the working class which leads the peasantry in a proletarian revolution as part of the world socialist revolution.

The property-less working class needs its vanguard party in order, first of all, to understand the world in order to be able to overthrow it. It must understand the contradictory nature of capitalist society. It must know itself and the capitalist class enemy. It must become aware of its historic task to do away with all exploitation and oppression beginning with a socialist revolution. The revolutionary Marxists, who become an in-

tegral part of the working class and its struggles and, thereby, earn its confidence and leadership, are alone capable of linking the "guerrilla war" of strikes and job-actions in the work-place in defense of its standards with the need to overthrow the wages system altogether.

Marxism is based upon the highest cultural achievements of the bourgeoisie, especially in the fields of philosophy, history and economics. It is not absorbed spontaneously at the point of production, but must be brought to the working class by intellectuals originating in the petty-bourgeoisie who are able to overcome their middle class attitudes of elitism and arrogance, and by workers who have mastered it.

Capitalism's laws of motion could only be understood when socialism became transformed from an utopia into a science, when Marx succeeded in penetrating its essence using the dialectical materialist method.

The bourgeoisie "socializes" the means of production. Functioning in accordance with a complex division of labor, hundreds and then thousands of workers are gathered together in one plant to produce goods for a market which becomes world-wide. At the same time, and through the instrumentality of joint stock companies and banks, individual capitals are also "socialized". The day of the "coupon clipper", the stock-holder who collects an annual dividend arrives, and with it, the day of the stock speculator and manipulator.

All class societies use religion and tradition to sanction the exploitation of a majority of the population by a minority.

By exploitation, Marxists mean the expropriation of the surplus product from those who create it. All social labor can be divided into two parts, necessary and surplus labor. The former is necessary to provide the producer with the means of subsistence, including not only food, shelter, clothing and education for the producer and his family, the next generation of producers, but also necessary amenities. The labor in excess produces a surplus

product which is appropriated and utilized by the owners of the means of production.

It is because no social surplus product is realized at the low level of labor productivity prevailing in primitive communal societies that slavery is not practiced. The captured enemy is either killed and eaten or adopted into the tribe. All labor is necessary to maintain the existence of individual and tribe.

In slave society, even necessary labor appears to the slave to be unpaid. Under feudalism, exploitative relations were clear. Serfs worked a fixed part of the time on the lords' lands and the balance on the holdings set aside for them.

But capitalism is the most hypocritical of all exploitive modes of production. The social relation between exploiter and exploited is masked as a relation between things. The surplus product is taken from the wage-workers in the guise of an equal exchange of commodities.

Even assuming that workers are paid "a fair day's wage" for a "fair day's work", what happens? The class of capitalists, who own the means of production and who do not labor, become increasingly wealthier and at a faster rate, while the class of workers, who own no capital and have to sell their ability to labor, are, on the whole, unable to "make ends meet". On a treadmill in "good times", the workers are thrown on the scrap heap, suffer mass unemployment in "bad times", in periods of so-called "recession" or "depression".

How do the capitalists manage to accumulate more capital, while those who work for wages, if and when they find employment, manage only to acquire callouses from their "equal" exchange?

Socialists before Marx understood that a process of exploitation was taking place, but it was Marx who was able to uncover the underlying mechanism.

Under the capitalist mode of production, a profit must be produced for the capitalists if production is to be set in motion or continued, a profit realized on the market

through the sale of products. Goods are produced which have particular use values for their eventual consumers, but not for the "business man." For him, they have only exchange value. They are commodities to be exchanged for money.

But, how much money is a particular commodity worth? How many dollars is it equal to? Why does a car sell for \$3,000, a fur coat for \$300 and a day's labor for \$30? The Latin phrase, *caveat emptor*, which means let the purchaser beware, was coined in the recognition that merchants and thieves have a common "business" morality. But capitalists are also required to buy other commodities for use in production. The advantages of the sellers, if any, would, on the whole, be cancelled out in their roles as buyers. Commodities tend to be exchanged at their values, in general and over a period of time.

Money is also a commodity. It can function as a medium of exchange, as a means of payment, i.e., as a measure of value, only because it is symbolic of the gold commodity. Even though Americans are not permitted to own gold, and the Nixon administration has informed foreign capitalists that it will no longer exchange its remaining gold for dollars, whether at \$35 or \$38 an ounce, gold remains value incarnate.

The present international monetary crisis reflects more fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. As a world-wide industrial crisis, a cyclical crisis of over-production, matures, gold will again demonstrate that, under capitalism, it is, in the final analysis, the basic acceptable measure of value.

How is the value of a commodity determined? By the quantity of socially necessary labor incorporated in it. Labor manifests itself in the concrete in many different forms, but when viewed abstractly, all have in common duration. Labor can be measured by time. Commodity exchange at its inception, as barter, could regularly exchange, for example, a quantity of grain for a garment only because their barterers had recognized the quantity of labor

which had gone into each and could, therefore, assess them as equivalents. They had also learned to assess the different skill levels of different kinds of labor in relation to simple labor.

The commodity which the capitalists buy from the workers, i.e., exchanges money for and has the use of, is not labor, but the power to labor. The value of the commodity labor-power is also determined in the same way as any other commodity by the amount of socially necessary labor incorporated in it, in this case, by the labor which went into training and maintaining the laborer and in rearing his eventual replacement. Labor-power is purchased by the capitalists at the price of the workers' means of subsistence, but the workers create new value far in excess of this value. Only a part of the working day is necessary to replace it. The balance is used to produce a surplus product. The total product is then sold on the market to realize the surplus value.

Thus, in every capitalist country, a small handful of owners of the means of production appropriate the wealth which the multi-millioned labor force produces. "Dead" labor

becomes more capital to exploit more laborers.

It is because, under capitalism, "pauperism develops more rapidly than wealth", and because the bourgeoisie is unable "to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery", and "has to feed him instead of being fed by him", as the Communist Manifesto states, that the capitalist system proves its unfitness for continued existence.

Capitalism creates a vast industrial "reserve" army which allows the ruling class to beat down wages with which workers buy their means of subsistence to an historically conditioned minimum and to increase the intensity of labor, i.e., speed-up, to the limits of endurance.

The contradiction between the social nature of production and capitalist appropriation is the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production. From it flow all the other contradictions of the capitalist system, contradictions which periodically sharpen to the point of explosion in devastating cyclical crises and wars of extermination.

(to be continued)

AN OPEN LETTER TO "MASAS"

We American Trotskyists salute the workers and peasants of Bolivia who struggle against Bolivian capitalism and American imperialism.

Our task is linked: the workers have no country! It is the same capitalist system that arms the Bolivian army to crush the workers and peasants that shoots down unemployed Black youth in the ghettos of the United States. A defeat for you in Bolivia is a defeat for us as well. The victory of the working class in Bolivia would be a tremendous step toward the victory of the workers in the US and in the other advanced capitalist countries which can alone secure the victory of the world revolution.

In Bolivia, however, the international proletariat was not led on the road blazed by Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks toward the conquest of political power. There

are many excuses: the backwardness of the Bolivian economy, the inadequate numerical size of the Bolivian working class, the material difficulties in taking power and holding it. These and many more the revisionists and centrists know by heart. With such excuses, the Chinese debacle of 1927 was prepared; rejecting them, the Bolsheviks succeeded in leading the revolutionary workers to power in October 1917.

The POR is following the Chinese example toward additional and more catastrophic defeats for the Bolivian proletariat. It leaves the working class with no alternative than another Torres regime or the election of an Allende in Bolivia. But the working class in Latin

America has already gone through the experience of such bourgeois democrats, Cardenas in Mexico, Arbenz in Guatemala, etc.; in loyalty to their own class, they set the stage for major defeats of the working class. Those parties in the working class who call themselves Trotskyists and do not resolutely struggle against all illusions in bourgeois governments, in spite of any best intentions, betray the working class. Is the working class of Latin America condemned to repeat the same historical experiences over and over again because its "leadership" never believes conditions are "ripe?"

The "Asamblea Popular" in Bolivia was an historic step forward in the experience of the Latin-American working class. The creation of working class organs of the soviet type is always an historic step, one for which revolutionists must constantly struggle. But "verbal genuflections before the soviets", "vulgar soviet fetishism," or illusions that the soviet in itself possesses "miraculous powers," were all utterly foreign to Lenin and Trotsky. The "Asamblea Popular", like the soviets, could only be "the organizational expression of the strong and weak sides of the proletariat," which in a revolutionary situation "arises as the highest organized expression of proletarian unity", meeting the urgent need for "an organization above parties, embracing the entire class." But, "everything depends on the party that leads the soviets." We use Trotsky's words¹. Thus the whole question of the struggle for power, to continue with Lenin's words², is "very definitely reduced...to one of a struggle for influence within the soviets," through "an immediate, resolute and irrevocable separation of the proletarian communist elements from the petty-bourgeois elements." Not to do likewise, to allow illusions in the "Asamblea

Popular" as a revolutionary organ in itself, is a fundamental betrayal.

For the conquest of state power soviets are not enough. In Russia in 1917 the Soviets were not enough. The Bolshevik party was necessary to lead the Soviets to power. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries also supported the forming of the Soviets but opposed the taking of power. The conquest of state power required a Bolshevik party so steeled that it was not only able to defeat these opponents but, as well, to overcome those in its own ranks who would have irrevocably compromised the struggle for and the taking of power.

Central then to the struggle for power is the struggle against revisionism and reformism. There are those in Bolivia, as in the US and every country, who fill the political shoes of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, no matter what they call themselves. To have led the "Asamblea Popular" to power required a revolutionary party able to conduct an indefatigable struggle to destroy these political tendencies which transmit bourgeois ideology into the working class. We struggle against the ideas of the reformists, revisionists and centrists for the minds of the workers and peasants who are influenced by the bourgeois ideas of these tendencies. The united front tactic was devised to unite the working class in defense of its basic interests. But this tactic is also necessary so that the ideological struggle against revisionism and reformism can be brought out of the theoretical realm and into the living struggle of the class. The very existence of any united front demands that we continually struggle for our political positions against all other tendencies in the united front. We will not be pressured into compromises with revisionists and reformists in the name of "unity." "Masas" has not and does not struggle against Stalinism and revisionism. In accommodation to its Stalinist allies, the POR's organ, "Masas", even fails to report that, at this moment, the Soviet Union, a degenerated workers'

1. The Struggle Against Fascism, Pathfinder Press, pp. 193-9.
2. Collected Works, Vol. 24, pp. 49-51.

state, is assisting the Bolivian military dictatorship with advisers and loans.

Now you have formed an "anti-Imperialist Front" not only with the revisionists and centrists--correct only to the extent they represent sections of the working class and peasantry that we must win to revolutionary politics through the united front tactic--but also with sections of the bourgeoisie itself! Is a section of the Bolivian bourgeoisie going to support a revolutionary socialist program? Of course not! Then what is the program of the "Anti-Imperialist Front"? The program which appeared in "Masas" states: "Unity of all Bolivians to crush the servants of imperialism and to construct a government of the people"--under the "political leadership of the proletariat"?!! There is no such thing as a government of the people--there can only be a government of the exploiting class or of the exploited. Torres and Lechin may believe in a government of the people, but for the POR to agree to such a statement is to deliver the working class bound hand and foot to the bourgeoisie. Such a theoretical concession can only place the POR politically alongside the Stalinists, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries.

It is conceivable that in the struggle against imperialism the proletarian revolutionists and a section of the bourgeoisie might arrive at temporary and limited agreements. But a political alliance? Never! The working class and the bourgeoisie have nothing in common. A political alliance with the "progressive" bourgeoisie of an under-developed country means that the struggle of the working class for power, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, has been postponed to some indefinite time until after the imperialists are defeated. But the imperialists will never be defeated as long as the working class remains subordinated to the leadership of its bourgeoisie or of its petty bourgeoisie. "You shall not mix up the banners, let alone kneel before another banner."

By signing the manifesto of the Frente, you have agreed to place the struggle for democracy first. The socialist revolution will only be posed at a later date separate and apart from the present struggle. We do not agree! There can be no struggle for democracy today which is not united to the struggle for socialism. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat can achieve the genuine and complete solution of democratic and national task. Democracy under capitalism is illusory, whether in Bolivia or in the US. The only difference is that the American bourgeoisie is richer and, therefore, can still afford more freedoms. Rather than adapting to the democratic illusions of the masses, our task is to educate them and expose those who perpetrate such illusions.

A world capitalist crisis is now emerging which will bring in its wake revolution in underdeveloped and advanced countries. But capitalism will not fall by itself. The working class cannot take power without revolutionary leadership. For the victory of the proletariat in Bolivia, the US and throughout the world, an international Trotskyist party must be built. To accomplish this task, a struggle must be waged not only against obvious and open class collaborators and counter-revolutionaries in the working class camp, but also against all those claiming to be Trotskyists who would delay or compromise the truly revolutionary proletariat.

LONG LIVE THE BOLIVIAN MINERS!
LONG LIVE WORKERS' SOVIETS!
LONG LIVE TROTSKYISM!
FOR THE VICTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL
REVOLUTION!

CORRECTION

In rejecting the defense by the Labor Committee of Canada of the Lora POR's failure to provide revolutionary leadership to the Bolivian masses in our last issue, we erroneously referred to Trotsky's The New Course. We meant, of course, his Lessons of October.