

# **VANGUARD** newsletter

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## **Our Electoral Position: Vote Socialist in 1972--WITHOUT ILLUSIONS**



**The British Dock Strike**

**"Neo-Capitalism" Versus Leninism**

**Historical Roots of the Degeneration  
of the Fourth International  
and of the Centrism of the SWP**

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CORRECTION: The Answer by "Masas"

Part of point 4 of the answer by "Masas" to VANGUARD NEWSLETTER was, unfortunately, garbled by us to read, "It is not true that the Front which the POR forms a part of includes parties which call themselves Marxist...." It should have read, "It is not true that the Front, which the POR forms a part of, includes the bourgeoisie. It does include parties that call themselves Marxist but have their roots in nationalism."

VOTE SOCIALIST IN 1972--WITHOUT ILLUSIONS!

The overwhelming majority of American workers will vote for the national tickets of the main parties of capitalism in 1972, the more liberal Democrats or the more conservative Republicans.

In a number of states, "independent" capitalist parties will be on the ballot and will appeal for working class support. In New York State, the liberal Liberal adherents of the Democratic Party will echo the dilute McGovern "populist" appeal while the right-wing Conservative supporters of the national Republican party will voice a more subtle variant of racist Wallacite "populism." Dr. Spock's "radical" reformist People's Party, sounding a "populist" appeal slightly to the "left" of the Democratic and Liberal parties may also achieve ballot status. In southern states, the American Party of Wallace will advance a directly racist "populist" appeal to the voters.

Also on the ballot in many states

will be avowedly socialist national and local candidates of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) and the Communist Party (CP).

Even in its heyday in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Populist movement of resistance to the rise of monopolies was, as Lenin pointed out, "reactionary in its economic basis." Today, the "left" or "right" appeal to the petty-bourgeoisie and the working class to return to the "good old days" of lower taxes, lower welfare roles and "law and order" is either a caricature of reformism at a point when decaying capitalism can no longer support it or of a developing Bonapartism to enforce class "peace" by hamstringing the labor movement.

The "strong" executive ostensibly balancing above classes either of the Roosevelt or DeGaulist type will inevitably give way to a fascist regime to destroy all workers' organizations when the ruling class sees no other alternative to the maintenance of its property "rights" in the absence of a successful socialist revolution.

Regardless of temporary economic improvements which may still take place, the growing crisis of American and world capitalism is now clearly visible in international monetary crises, in continuing inflation and high unemployment and in worsening national balances of trade and payments.

On August 15, 1971, Nixon announced with the wage freeze that the "concessions" to the American workers which had been possible in "good times" are at an end. No matter which party of the ruling class occupies the White House, the attack on the wages and living standards of the workers will continue apace.

The "anti-war" presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, George McGovern, speaks for that section of the ruling class which wants to "end" a politically and financially costly imperialist adventure in South Vietnam on world Stalinist guarantees of the maintenance of capitalism there and elsewhere. McGovern has recently stated his conviction that the endless war in Indochina diverts American military strength from the task of maintaining American imperialism's preserves on a world scale.

Nixon, the incumbent Republican president, also wants to "end" the war, but with "honor," i.e., with the stronger guarantee of its puppet regime securely installed in South Vietnam.

The sharpening struggle for the world market between US, Japanese and German imperialism can only lead to commercial, industrial and eventually, to military war. The fundamental contradiction between capitalist property relations and the collective property relations of the Soviet bloc, China and Cuba can only become exacerbated by the

crisis. American and world imperialism will seek to return the collective property of the degenerated and deformed workers' states to capitalism. American capitalism in the epoch of imperialism means war whether under the auspices of the Democratic or Republican parties.

The need for an independent and revolutionary party of the working class was posed by the Communist Manifesto in 1848 and has been fought for since by the revolutionary Marxists. The creation of a revolutionary working class leadership today is more than ever a vital necessity to resolve the "crisis of humanity."

From its inception, VANGUARD NEWSLETTER has called for a labor party, an independent workers' party based on the rank-and-file of the trade unions. This giant political step forward would enable the American working class to halt the present capitalist offensive and to launch a counter-offensive in behalf of its class interests.

In the process of advancing working class socialist consciousness, the revolutionary Marxists will build its vanguard to lead it to a victorious socialist revolution.

In this election, it is the position of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER that, in the absence of a serious independent working class party, a vote for the ostensibly independent socialists--including also the candidates of the Communist Party--by advanced workers and the "left" in general is preferable to the abstention advocated by the Spartacist League, assorted pro-Maoist and petty-bourgeois radical formations.

At the same time, we warn against placing the slightest confidence in any of these parties as in any way capable of advancing the cause of socialism.

Those who vote for the national candidates of the CP, SWP, and SLP in preference to McGovern, Nixon or even Spock demonstrate a subjective commitment to socialism. A policy of abstention would not permit hundreds of thousands of American socialists to indicate that, in fact, they do exist.

Abstention, as Trotsky pointed out to Burnham, is not the most revolutionary of policies. There may be times when conditions do not permit an alternative policy. Under conditions in which a working class party has a secure and large base in its class and elections are so thoroughly rigged as to make any vote a mockery, a boycott may help expose the election as a farce. However, the present advocates of an electoral boycott will certainly not convince workers to abstain from voting and, in all likelihood, not even a substantial part of the "left." All that the abstainers can hope to achieve by this tactic is the warm inner glow arising from the knowledge of their own pristine purity.

Whenever possible, revolutionary Marxists must utilize the electoral machinery, the courts and other elements of bourgeois democracy to advance socialist consciousness and to prepare the socialist revolution. It is our intention to use the 1972 elections to the extent that we are able to present our own perspective and program and to contrast them to reformist, centrist and sectarian essence which lies beneath the formal socialist labels of the CP, SWP and SLP.

Of the independent socialist parties on the ballot in 1972, the CP is undoubtedly the most reformist. It is, however, more than likely that it will receive the largest socialist vote. The CP is still the largest socialist organization and, moreover, the only one to have retained a large base in the working class and among the most exploited Black and Spanish-speaking workers.

In 1936, Browder and Ford, the candidates of the CP for President and Vice-president respectively, conducted a "lesser-evil" campaign for Roosevelt and against Landon. The CP was then executing a difficult tactic in emerging from the ultra-left "third period" with the rest of the world Stalinist movement to class collaboration and the promotion of its "democratic front"- "anti-monopoly coalition." Too abrupt a shift to an open en-

dorsement of the "social-fascist" Roosevelt might have resulted in the loss of members and supporters. Besides, CP backing would have been an embarrassment and a liability to Roosevelt.

Today, the CP has, essentially, taken a leaf from its own discreditable history. It is again presenting an independent national ticket, Hall and Tiner, while calling for the victory, not of the "lesser-evil" but of the "progressive" and "anti-war" candidate, McGovern. Again, it has not officially endorsed McGovern in the evident recognition that it might be the "kiss of death" to the capitalist "underdog." It, no doubt, also recognizes that considerable reluctance exists in the radical movement to the "lesser-evil" approach after the inglorious experience with the CP's support for Johnson as against Goldwater in 1964. In amassing a sizeable vote for its ticket, the CP also hopes, no doubt, that its hand will be strengthened in the "popular front" bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie and, perhaps, create the possibility of its open acknowledgement by its bourgeois allies, as in Europe.

The centrist SWP has moved even more rapidly to the right toward outright reformism since the Cuban revolution and its adaptation to the Castro Bonapartist regime.

It had abandoned a serious orientation to the working class years earlier. With the emergence of the Cuban deformed workers' state, its opportunist appetites until then held in check by Trotskyist "orthodoxy," was unleashed. It was able to consummate a reunion with the more overt opportunists who besmirch the name of Trotskyism in 1963 as a result of their similar opportunist politics. It has become the "left" cover to the popular front "peace" coalition with the CP and the liberals. It has adapted to every petty-bourgeois "third world" movement in existence. Its old labor party demand has long been superseded by the demand for petty-bourgeois Black and Chicano "people's" parties, which, to the extent that they are realized, serve

only to further divide the workers and unite them with their "own" bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

The SLP, undoubtedly the most principled of the three, for more than half a century has followed a peculiar sectarian line which guarantees its complete isolation from the working class, from its Black and Spanish-speaking especially oppressed layers and from the struggles of women and youth.

The workers are to abandon their present bureaucrat-ridden unions for the pure and revolutionary "socialist industrial unions" which exist only in the minds of SLP members. They are to vote in socialism "democratically" and in a "civilized" manner--to be sure, the workers are advised to be ready to back their votes with their control of the means of production, if the capitalists should prove recalcitrant.

In greeting the dissident De Leonist Northeast Regional Conference of Socialist Committees of Correspondence (see attachment to our February 1970 issue), VANGUARD NEWSLETTER presented its perspective for work in the trade unions, as follows:

"We have advocated the formation of bi-racial rank and file caucuses, united around a program of transitional demands, and linked in industrial, regional and national bodies, which can become, at a revolutionary moment, the factory committees and workers' councils through which the workers can take and hold power. We have, in other words, posed an operational perspective for the revolutionary struggle in this country, whose end-product clearly resembles the De Leonist "Socialist Industrial Union," but which is based on the living dynamic of the class struggle in the United States, and not on the ultimatism of the SLP."

Together with Socialist Forum, VANGUARD NEWSLETTER helped form the Committee for Rank and File Caucuses (CRFC) on a two point class program: opposition to the integration of

the trade unions into the capitalist state and for an independent workers' party based on the rank-and-file.

The sectarian--the opportunist turned inside-out--constructs impenetrable barriers to ward off temptation and achieves a self-isolation from working class struggles, as is the case with the SLP. Ultra-militant posturers, such as the Spartacist League, who are only concerned to impress the student-radical milieu, reject our perspective of working within CRFC to win its individual caucuses and the entire network of caucuses to the full program of transitional demands. CRFC is "opportunist," they insist in the name of Trotskyism, because it does not require the entire "Transitional Program" at the beginning as a condition for the caucus.

As if in direct answer to the SL, Trotsky had the following to say about applying the "Transitional Program" in discussing it in 1938 (Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1938-39, Pathfinder Press, p. 44):

" Then we have the question, how to present the program to the workers?...We must combine politics with mass psychology and pedagogy, build the bridge to their minds... For some time we must try to concentrate the attention of the workers on one slogan: sliding scale of wages and hours.

" The empiricism of the American workers has given political parties great success with one or two slogans, single tax, bimetallism.. Now we can present one which is honest, part of our entire program, not demagogic, but which corresponds totally to the situation. Officially we now have 13, maybe 14 million of unemployed, in reality about 16 to 20 million, and the youth are totally abandoned to misery. Mr. Roosevelt insists on public works. But we insist that this, together with mines, railroads, etc., absorb all the people. And that every person should have the possibility to live in a decent manner not lower than now, and we ask that Mr. Roosevelt with his brain trust

propose such a public works that everyone capable of working can work at decent wages....

" I believe that we can concentrate the attention of the workers on this point. Naturally this is only one point. In the beginning this slogan is totally adequate for the situation. But the others can be added as the development proceeds. The bureaucrats will oppose it. Then if the slogan becomes popular with the masses, fascist tendencies will develop in opposition. We will say that we need to develop defense squads. I think that in the beginning this slogan (Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours) will be adopt-

ed....In reality it is the system of work in socialist society.... But if we present the whole socialist system it will appear to the average American as utopian, as something from Europe. We present it as a solution to this crisis which must assure their right to eat, drink and live in decent apartments. It is the program of socialism, but in very popular and simple form." (VNL emphasis)

It is because we do not find a position of critical support to be warranted for any of the socialist parties on the ballot in 1972 that we recommend that our readers vote "socialist...without illusions."

### THE BRITISH DOCK STRIKE - by Henry A. Platsky

British workers have written a new page in history--have provided an example of solidarity, second in this decade only to the French general strike of 1968.

The British ruling class has responded to the economic crisis facing the world capitalist system in classic and predictable fashion by trying to destroy the effectiveness of the British trade unions in order to reverse the trend towards a declining rate of profit by slashing wages and benefits.

The result of this offensive by the British ruling class has been the Industrial Relations Act--an act similar in design and purpose to the Taft-Hartley Law in the US. The act among other things, sets up a National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), an agency designed to tie the British trade unions hand and foot to the capitalist state.

While trade union and Labor Party officials have limited themselves to verbal protest, the recent struggles of British workers have shown that rank-and-file workers are ready and eager to break from the political stranglehold of Britain's "labor lieutenants of capital."

The struggle of British dock workers comes on the heels of an important wage victory won by the British mine workers. The mine workers were able to win an increase far above the guidelines set up by NIRC by

wageing a militant, intransigent struggle, using such tactics as roving pickets to disrupt Britain's fuel supply and force the Tory government to give in.

No doubt, this victory had a lot to do with the fighting spirit of the British dockers who, like their brother longshoremen in the US, have been wageing a battle against automation of the industry. When dock workers took up the tactic of picketing cargo depots which they thought they should work, the NIRC issued an injunction against the picketing. When dock workers refused to call off the picket lines, the court ordered five workers jailed. This took place on Friday, July 21st. By Monday, every major port in Britain was shut tight as rank-and-file workers spontaneously demonstrated against this act of bourgeois tyranny. Along with the dock workers, miners, newspaper workers, auto workers, truck drivers and aircraft workers joined the strike.

It was at this point, no doubt, that the British ruling class began to feel the ground moving under their feet. Government officials squealed about the "rule of law," "bullying tactics," ad nauseum.

Things would have indeed been bleak for the master class were it not for the Herculean effort of the Trade Union Congress and Labor Party leaderships who worked overtime to derail the British workers' struggle.

On the same day in question, Monday, July 24, a joint union-management committee issued its proposed solution to the dock crisis. Among the proposals agreed to was a plan to give the dock workers higher severance pay! One should hardly be surprised that the dock workers could see little in this offer that promised job security. We will return to the case of the less than magnanimous offer later.

By Tuesday, London's bus drivers and conductors had voted to join the mounting tide of labor protest. Other workers were demanding that their unions join the protest. Workers battled police outside the House of Commons and at Pentonville Prison where the five dock workers were being held, workers blocked the main road to the prison with commandeered buses and a truck. Under the increasing pressure of the rank-and file, the trade union and Labor Party bureaucrats struck a "militant" posture. The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers which has one and a half million members threatened a protest strike for the next week. The Trade Union Congress General Council met again to reconsider a proposal for a one day sympathy strike which they had rejected the previous day. Meanwhile, Harold Wilson, ex-Labor Prime Minister, promised in the House of Commons that a Labor government would do away with the Industrial Relations Act.

But the resources of capitalist legality seemingly have no end. By Wednesday, the Official Solicitor, a minor court official, had obtained the release of the five workers and, lo and behold, the militant posturing over the Industrial Relations Act disappeared as if by magic.

On Thursday, July 27th, the dock workers' leadership aided by the Labor Party officialdom was trying to shove the aforementioned "solution" to the job security question

down the throats of the dock workers. Delegates from the local unions rejected the offer, however, and demanded a contract that insured job security. This, despite Labor Party leader, Harold Wilson's endorsement of the pact.

By Wednesday, August 16th, a majority of the official delegates of the dock workers had been convinced to end the twenty day strike, but not without an explosive expression of bitter contempt for the leadership. The General Secretary of the union, Jack Jones, was punched, a mental ashtray barely missed his head and a glass of water was thrown in his face by furious dock workers who stormed into the delegate meeting after the settlement was announced. According to the "New York Post", one dock worker shouted to Jones, "You are a leper! Where is your yellow armband?"

Although the militant ship stewards fought to continue the strike in major ports such as London and Liverpool, a majority of these dock workers, recognizing that their ranks had now been divided, also voted to return to work.

What should have been, at the very least, a general strike by all of Britain's workers against the Industrial slave labor act was prevented by a quick maneuver on the part of the British courts which enabled the Labor Party and union officials to cool off the workers' anger and get them back on the job. The role of these class traitors has never been clearer.

However, clarity does not enable the blind to see. For instance, it seems that those armed with the method of Healy, Wohlforth, and company have dispensed with such trivial aids as clarity in arriving at their "ultimate" solution to the problems of the British working class. In the June 26th "Bulletin", in an article describing the struggles of the British dock workers, the Workers League (WL) echoes the line of the Socialist Labor League (SLL):

"The central task facing the British workers today is the poli-

tical defeat of the Tory Government and its replacement by the Labor Party pledged to socialist policies."

Details on how the British workers are to go about finding this mythological creature--this Labor Party pledged to socialist policies--are provided in an earlier edition of the "Bulletin": commenting on the SLL's policies during the earlier miner's strike, Melody Farrow writes:

"...the SLL fought for the mobilization of all sections of workers behind the miners for one central purpose: to create the conditions to force the Tories to resign and for general elections to return the Labor Party to power."

In the February 15th issue of "Workers Press" the SLL wrote:

"This can best be carried out in the struggle to force the Labor leadership to adopt socialist policies under conditions in which they are exposed for their inability to do so...."

"The working class is confronted with the question of power. Its immediate task is therefore to force the Tories to resign."

Were the workers of Britain indeed faced with the immediate question of power, i.e., the workers' had a revolutionary-socialist consciousness, then the tasks of the SLL would be, to paraphrase Lenin, to overthrow a Labor government at once!

While the British workers have only general socialist inclinations rather than a real socialist consciousness, it is correct to call for the victory of the Labor Party over the Tories--but only in the process of exposing the Labor Party leadership as being anti-socialist and political agents of the enemy class, Marxists, of course, do not engage the British workers in a futile struggle to "socialize" the Labor Party a la Healy any more

than Marxists embellish right-wing labor leaders in the U.S. a la Wohlforth.

There are very obvious parallels between the adaptation to the Labor Party bureaucrats by the SLL and the blatant adaptation to the right-wing of the labor bureaucracy by the WL. The recent attempt by the WL to make Meany and Abel's opposition to the Democratic Presidential campaign into something progressive is, quite simply, a blatant lie to the workers.

The role of the Meanys, Wilsons, etc., is to disarm the workers ideologically and to hold them to the rule of the capitalist class. If Marxists must temporarily find themselves in a Labor Party with the Meanys or supporting a Labor Party against the Tories, it is only a tactic in the overall strategy to drive the aforementioned from the workers' camp. The difference between this policy and any other policy that seeks to convince the worker's that the labor bureaucrats can be "forced" to play a progressive role is the difference between a Leninist-Trotskyist perspective and the perspective of would-be advisors to "left"-bureaucrats.

No doubt the SLL and the WL think that these maneuvers will somehow move the workers, through negative experience, with the bureaucrats, in a revolutionary socialist direction. But by confusing the workers as to the role of the labor bureaucracy the SLL-WL will only destroy all that they claim to want to achieve.

The British workers have shown enormous initiative and energy in the struggle against the ruling class offensive and the self-defeating policies of the Labor bureaucrats. But unless a revolutionary leadership can win them away from the politics of the Labor Party--unless revolutionaries can show them that the role of the Labor Party is to block the road to socialist "policies"--that such policies can only be carried out when the workers have a party determined to win state power rather than political office--the courageous

British workers will have to suffer even greater setbacks in their living standards

It is for this reason that the most important question now facing the British workers (a question

facing all of the workers) is the building of a Leninist-Trotskyist party-which will lead them on the only road to liberation-the socialist revolution.

### CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editors:

May 10, 1972

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER's characterization of the Spartacist League as a "workers' vanguard" for students, and as a radical petty-bourgeois formation, is accurate but puzzling, since you seem to have endorsed the same position in stating that "Marxism...must be brought to the working class by intellectuals originating in the petty-bourgeoisie..." (VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, March, 1972, p.32

I'm aware of your qualifications, that these must be intellectuals who are "able to overcome their middle class attitudes...", and that Marxism can also be introduced by "workers who have mastered it." But, wouldn't SL also make such verbal qualifications?

The working class today reads and writes, and even has its own intellectuals. It really doesn't need petty-bourgeois coaching in order to understand Marxism. I believe, in fact, that the most immediate task of the working class is to rid itself of petty-bourgeois and para-capitalist "radical" leadership, so that a proletarian lead-

ership and initiative can emerge.

Proletarian leadership does not naturally structure itself into elitest cadre formations, however, and when it is forced into such formations it is easily overwhelmed by the petty-bourgeois intellectual radicals, who are so much more skilled at word games and factional fighting.

This does not mean that proletarian leadership is unequal to the needs of the class struggle, but simply that it must find its own struggle formations and directions.

Chuck Doehrer,  
Chicago

Dear Comrade,

One can instinctively sympathize with your feeling that the working class "really doesn't need petty-bourgeois coaching in order to understand Marxism."

However, ultimately one must realize that this feeling comes from an emotional revulsion towards the intelligentsia and what it has often come to represent, rather than from a Marxian analysis of social groups and the role that they can play in the struggle to overthrow capitalism.

The very fact that we acknowledge the need for a vanguard party, i.e., a party to lead the workers, means that we must also acknowledge the fact that the proletariat is unable to spontaneously generate the type of organization needed to overthrow the bourgeoisie when the time is right.

We are all too well aware of the instances in history when the working class has had a revolutionary consciousness but was lacking a party capable of leading it.

Learning from the positive example of the victory of the working class under Bolshevik leadership and the negative example of its defeats without a party of this type, the question for us is, how is this party to be built? If the working class had been historically unable to give rise to a vanguard party in the period of revolutionary crisis, then this type of party must be

built before the revolutionary crisis and therefore, before a majority of the proletariat has attained a revolutionary consciousness.

A party must be built that can assimilate the experiences of the past, relate these experiences to its ultimate task and prepare itself to lead the working class when that class as a whole is ready. The leaders of this kind of party must, therefore, have a wide and deep understanding of the laws of history, i.e., of Marxism. While we in no way underestimate the ability of workers to master Marxism to an extent that would enable them to lead a party, we must not forget that every circumstance in a worker's life mitigates against this possibility. Authoritarian upbringing, educational and religious institutions, physically (and therefore mentally) fatiguing work, family obligations, etc.--all of those influences that flow logically from a society designed to maintain a privileged class--stand in the way of a worker assuming the role of a revolutionary leader. It is the comparative freedom in the life of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia that enables individuals from this strata to study fully and comprehend the laws of history.

You are quite right in saying that, generally, petty-bourgeois intellectuals are "more skilled at word games and factional fighting." But this is only because they are better educated and, therefore, are more comfortable in the world of ideas. It is the separation of the petty bourgeoisie from the means of production and distribution, that often, in fact usually, give their "word games" an abstract, confused and egotist quality. This is the reactionary aspect of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals. But we should not get caught in the trap of believing that the freedom of ideas so common to the intellectual is, in and of itself, bad. It is only through hearing ideas discussed that people learn to use ideas. The intellectuals can debate, argue, criticize better than workers be-

cause they are more used to doing it. It is a natural part of their lives. It is more likely that, at first, leaders of a Marxist party will develop from a group fostering this ability than from a group in which it is stifled.

Trotsky was always concerned to ensure that the vanguard party achieved and maintained a working class composition and that the voice of the intellectual did not drown out the voice of the workers, whose clear class instincts, organization and fighting spirit united to revolutionary consciousness alone can succeed in overthrowing capitalism. The working class vanguard party, the Leninist and Trotskyist party, has to become a school for scientific socialism in the developing and training of working class leaders. The Leninist party is a dialectical synthesis of theory and practice and, in this process, of intellectual and worker. It is an anticipation of the worker-intellectual in the communist society of the future. Only with this integration can a party of the Leninist type be built to lead the working class to power.

But as you say, "wouldn't SL also make such verbal qualifications?" Yes, they would. But the question goes further than this. We recognize the contradictory nature of the intelligentsia--the ability to think, debate and criticize on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the difficulty in using this ability objectively--both equally flowing from the social existence of the intellectual. We therefore look to win over only those intellectuals who "are able to overcome their middle-class attitudes--that is, to use their mental skills in the service of the working class. This is exactly what the SL leaders cannot do because their politics flow from their own inability to break from their middle-class outlook. They have tailored their politics to suit this outlook. This is why they have changed some of their positions (see our series on the SL) with the stated objective of being better able to win over students. Their positions on trade union work

--e.g., you must organize caucuses of the full program of the vanguard party, you can never, under any circumstances, support one bureaucrat against another, etc.--all have the distinctive odor of petty-bourgeois moralism. We say that in building the party revolutionaries will be recruited from all strata of society. However, they will be recruited not to petty-bourgeois moralizing, but to revolutionary proletarian politics and action. The job of the cadre of the future party is not that of sideline commentators and kibbitzers, but rather that of revolutionaries who are an integral part of the working class and its struggles. In this way, and only in this way, can one hope to win the advanced layers of the working class to the cause of proletarian revolution, to build a vanguard working class party that will be able to take full advantage of every capitalist crisis. The

SL envisions building the party with the petty-bourgeoisie and therefore adopts a program suitable for the petty-bourgeoisie. Later, they say, when they have truly built a party, they will have a different approach. This mechanical and, in reality, opportunist approach, we feel reveals the most essential difference between the SL and ourselves.

History has proven that the party of Lenin and Trotsky can only be built by those workers and intellectuals who will be intransigent in defending the party and program of proletarian revolution. The willingness to change a program even slightly in order to make organizational gains is the road towards building a POUM or an SWP. We have chosen the road toward building a proletarian party on the model of the Bolshevik party.

Fraternally, Henry A. Platsky for  
VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

#### FUNDAMENTALS OF CAPITALIST CRISES - Part V

##### "Neo-Capitalism" versus Leninism

It might have been expected that, having depicted a new post-imperialist stage of capitalism, "neo-capitalism," Ernest Mandel would have contrasted this new stage to Lenin's "outmoded" conception.

Alas, the readers of Mandel's pamphlet, An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory, written in 1964, will search in vain for any reference whatsoever to Lenin's writings on imperialism. An introduction written by George Novak in 1969, in which Lenin is also entirely ignored, is, doubtlessly, meant to reassure them.

Mandel, it seems, did not wish to "rely on quotations or paraphrases from standard Marxist works" and strove instead for a "fresh" and readable approach" to avoid the "dullness" of exposition, evidently of the kind to be found in the works of Lenin and Trotsky on economics. His more pretentious and earlier work, Marxist Economic Theory, written in 1960, in which he had arrived at the essence of his "neo-capitalist" theory without as yet coining the term, also completely avoids

discussing Lenin on imperialism.

Mandel is, clearly, not concerned to demonstrate the continuity of his thought with theirs. He is, on the contrary, required to separate his "contribution" from theirs, and, at the same time, to camouflage this separation, because he has presented a "revision" by the method, not of dialectical materialism as he would like us to believe, but of empiricism and eclecticism in continuation and justification of the entire course of post-World War II Pabloist revisionism.

To revisionists such as Mandel impressed with the current "reality," the present segment of the historical curve is viewed essentially in isolation from the total development. Upon this segment, assessed as a more or less straight line and projected into the indefinite future, a theoretical perspective is devel-

oped which, in its essentials, breaks with the perspective and program of Marxism.

It was Lenin who observed in The State and Revolution:

"In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclectics for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving people. It gives an illusory satisfaction; it seem to take into account all sides of the process, all trends of development, all conflicting influences and so forth, whereas in reality it provides no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all."

What is missing in the Mandelian school of "Marxism" is precisely an "integral and revolutionary conception." Nor are Mandel and fellow revisionists such as Sweezy and Marcuse historical accidents. As we have already pointed out, Lenin exposed the roots of opportunism in general and of Kautskian centrism in particular in the crumbs of the super-profits of imperialist exploitation and oppression. The material basis for the post-World War II revisionist school was present in the seemingly endless capitalist expansion.

Initially, perhaps inadvertantly but by no means simply as a verbal accident, Mandel, in his pamphlet, borrows from Kautsky, who, it will be recalled, defined the "earlier" imperialism as a policy of the ruling class of the advanced capitalist countries. Mandel also at first presents "neo-capitalism" as policy made possible by the expansive "long-term cycle" and the "close collaboration between the bourgeoisie and "the conservative forces of the labor movement," nurtured by "a rising trend in the standard of living of the workers."

Proceeding further, Mandel defines "neo-capitalism" as a capitalism "whose predominant characteristic", beginning with the second world war, "is the growth of intervention by the state into economic life" for "anti-cyclic or "anti-crisis"

purposes in order to guarantee capitalist profit and the redistribution of "the national income in favor of the leading monopolistic groups."

Social insurance and social security provide a fund of "deferred" wages which are also used by the "neo-capitalist" state as under the "Nazi-regime" to "dampen" or "amortize" recessions. As part of its "drive toward a managed economy", the state engages in "economic programming;" acts to coordinate the "investment plans of private firms" and also to integrate the "trade unions into the capitalist system," for trade unions to become the "guarantor of social peace" in aiding the bourgeoisie hold down wages and in preventing strikes.

But, were not fascism, the American "New Deal" and, in fact, the growing Bonapartist characteristics of capitalist regimes whether of the "left" or "right" variety which Trotsky had analyzed over decades also forms of "intervention by the state into economic life?" The difference, according to Mandel in 1964, was that fascism was a product of "social, economic and political" crisis, whereas the "neo-capitalist" epoch, resting upon a world-wide economic expansion exhibits the same "idyllic detente in social tensions" of which the "New Deal" was the "experiment," and the "foreshadow."

Although Mandel then conceived of "neo-capitalism" as having had its beginnings with World War II, by 1968, he evidently found his new stage inadequately grounded. In his article, "Workers Under Neo-Capitalism," in the November-December 1968, "International Socialist Review" Mandel found "neo-capitalism" to have arrived "either with the great depression of 1929-32 or with the second World War." It would therefore seem, according to Mandel, that Trotsky, by continuing to insist, as in the "Transitional Program", that the nature of the epoch is imperialist, and that its continuing decay threatened all humanity with a return to barbarism was simply "blind" to the "new"

possibilities then developing within capitalism which Mandel's "genious" had finally comprehended.

Mandel found in the same article, that the "main sources of monopoly surplus profits" have been transformed from the colonial "to the imperialist countries" therefore making "the giant corporations both more independent and more vulnerable" "in the third stage in the development of monopoly capitalism."

It is of course obvious that the world has not stood still since Lenin defined the imperialist stage of capitalism and that its further development would see a modification of its specific "structural" features. But that is why Lenin as a Marxist presented a "composite picture" of imperialism in his pamphlet Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. At that time and as we have shown Lenin understood that not only the super-profits of the colonies but also the "spheres of influence" of the developed countries were at stake in the first imperialist world war.

The possibility that "moribund" capitalism in the epoch of imperialism could still expand was explicitly acknowledged by Lenin, as we pointed out in our June issue. In October 1970, in Part V of the series, "Inflation and the Economy: The Nature of the Crisis," VANGUARD NEWSLETTER also quoted from Trotsky's world economic report to the Third World Congress of the Communist International in which he projected the theoretical possibility of a period of "capitalist upsurge" if the working class failed to overthrow capitalism, allowing the bourgeoisie another "two or three decades" of rule.

The conception of the "Russian economist Kondratief", which Mandel has embraced, of an endless series of "long-term cycles of 25 to 30 years," of a "high growth" cycle followed by a "lower growth" cycle was, however completely alien to Lenin and Trotsky. Basing themselves on the theoretical foundations of Marxism, they had concluded that capitalism had entered its

"moribund" imperialist stage with the first World War, whatever partial and even "long-term" stabilizations and expansions were still possible to it. Its re-stabilization and future expansion, as Trotsky pointed out in 1921 would only be accomplished "after a new world division of labor" had been "established in agony for 15, 20 or 25 years." The alternatives "socialism or barbarism" which Trotsky posed in the "Transitional Program"--today, as a result of the continued growth of the productive forces since 1938, extermination also becomes possible --is again on the order of the day as the crisis of world capitalism matures.

Lenin had shown that the imperialist stage had emerged from the stage of free competitive capitalism on the basis of the laws of capitalism uncovered by Marx when the concentration and centralization of capital had produced the giant monopolies and the merger of industrial and banking capital, finance capital. The quantitative changes taking place within the earlier stage had produced a new quality monopoly capitalism, imperialism.

The intervention of the capitalist state through wars, fascism or the Bonapartism of capitalism in decline were political expressions of capitalist economic necessity, in the epoch of imperialism. But what factors compel "neo-capitalist" state intervention in a period of expansion? It is, obviously, not enough to inform us as Mandel does at first that the bourgeoisie arrived at the "conviction" of the need for "the conscious and expanding intervention" of the state as a result of its loss of "confidence" in the automatic mechanisms "of capitalist economy." On this subjective basis, merely as a policy decision of the "decisive layers of the bourgeoisie," Mandel's kinship to Kautsky would be unmistakable. Might not the bourgeoisie in future demonstrate its ability to use the state for "anti-crisis" purposes by achieving, not only Kautsky's "peaceful democracy," but perhaps also his "ultra-imperialism" for

"world peace" as well?

Mandel produces his objective "second factor", the "cold war" and the "permanence of the armaments race". It is a "new factor....a so-to-speak extra-economic source" whose expansive effect is a shortening of the "renewal period of fixed capital..."

A third objective factor which Mandel also finds is the capitalist industrialization of under-developed countries. To the extent that the "colonial revolution" thereby stimulates production in the imperialist countries, it provides additional support for the "neo-capitalist" long-term expansive "cycle."

The adulteration of Marxism is first expressed in the deliberate erosion of its scientific terminology. The phrase "colonial revolution" is not only eminently acceptable to the petty-bourgeois nationalists and Bonapartists of the so-called "third world", because it is designed to conceal class content, it is a bridge by which the revisionists can cross over to the perspective and politics of the petty-bourgeoisie.

In the "new" reality, according to Mandel, the deep and prolonged cyclical crises of the past can no longer be expected to occur, but only the more mild and brief "recessions" in a "far more rapid series of cycles."

Thoroughly impressed with the evident world capitalist economic growth, Mandel was convinced that a "long term period of accelerated growth" also accompanied by a "permanent inflation" caused by the deficit financing of the military sector of the economy was in the offing.

It is because Mandel is unable to demonstrate that the "structural" changes of which he bases his "neo-capitalist" third stage of capitalism are a leap from quantity to a new quality that he is required to move its beginnings back to 1929-32. But why 1929-32? Increasing state intervention into economic life to guarantee profit has been a fact of life since the first world war. Lenin notes this manifestation in

his pamphlet on imperialism in the maneuvers of the giant oil monopolies before that war. With as much justification, Mandel could extend his "neo-capitalist" epoch back in time to entirely coincide with what the Marxists understand as an entire imperialist epoch. It should be clear then that he has presented a revisionist conception which rather than extending Marxist theory is in irreconcilable opposition to it.

The theory of "neo-capitalism" began to flounder not too long after its enunciation on the shoals of a developing crisis of world capitalism whose signs are now visible to even vulgar bourgeois political economists.

Successive international monetary crisis demonstrate the bankruptcy of the over-valued dollar as a world currency. The crises reflect, more fundamentally, the challenge to American capitalism by Japanese and German capitalism for the world market as a result of the uneven development of the productive forces.

The international monetary crises and the negotiations which established the shaky Smithsonian agreement have clearly established that not Mandel's "giant corporations" but international finance capital dominates domestic and international commerce and industry.

The military expenditures which were supposed to act as a stimulus to the economy in assuring a "neo-capitalist" expansion of the "national income" became instead an intolerable burden on the American economy in the "recession" of 1969-71, resulting in cuts in the "defense" appropriations, in governmental expenditures, particularly in social services and in a division in the ruling class on the Indochinese war. The "soft" wing clamors for immediate acceptance of the "peaceful coexistence" deal which the Soviet, Chinese and Vietnamese Stalinists have offered to preserve capitalist relations in South Vietnam and elsewhere, while the "hard" wing seeks a similar deal but with a regime firmly under its imperialist control.

The exacerbation of intra-imperi-

alist rivalry was clearly visible in the gauntlet thrown down to the imperialist rivals of the US by Nixon on August 15, 1971 in severing the dollar's links to gold, in imposing a protective tariff on imports pending the revaluation of foreign currencies and in the "buy American" tax credit on capital goods.

Attempts since to "dampen" this struggle by diplomacy and through the Smithsonian accord have demonstrably failed and could not but fail given the increasing acuteness of the fundamental capitalist contradiction between the still expanding productive forces and the limits of the world market.

On August 15th, Nixon announced the ruling class onslaught on the standards and organizations of the American working class. The bourgeoisie is required to place the burden of developing crisis on the working class at home and abroad in order to preserve its world market and to improve its mass and rate of profit--just as in the "old" imperialist epoch.

It would seem that the long continuation of the "long-term expansion" which Mandel still saw in 1968 has proven somewhat short. The "neo-capitalist" epoch is coming to a rapid close.

His "escape clause" to satisfy the "orthodox"--his protestation that he did not believe that the expansion would "last forever"--will, no doubt, prove increasingly useful in

covering his revisionist tracks as the fundamental nature of the entire epoch since World War I as imperialist and, in Lenin's phrase, the "eve of the socialist revolution," reasserts itself after a somewhat prolonged hiatus.

Mandel's theoretical construct, "neo-capitalism" has its political expression--"short-term structural reforms" to create a "powerful public sector" also in "credit" and "transportation." The "levers of command" in the economy are to be taken from the financiers and the monopolists and placed in the hands of the "nation" under "workers' control." Economic "dual power" thus achieved would "rapidly culminate in a duality of political power." "In turn," this "stage" could "usher in the conquest of power by the workers...."

As used by Mandel, the transitional demand, workers control of industry, turns into its opposite, loses every spark of revolutionary vitality and becomes reformist enough to satisfy even the academic bourgeois philistines whom he avidly courts.

From Mandel's "neo-capitalist" theory flows not only his program of "structural reforms," but also his conception of the "new working class," his advocacy of guerilla warfare, his role in 1961 in the Belgian general strike and also in the 1968 betrayal by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party of Ceylon affiliated to the United Secretariat.

(to be continued)

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

Introduction by David Fender

The following is the first part of the historical section of the Communist Tendency's (CT) counter-resolution, "Historical Roots of the Degeneration of the Fourth International and the Centrism of the SWP--For a Return to the Proletarian Road of Trotskyism." (The complete documents of the CT are available from VANGUARD NEWSLETTER for \$1.50.) This first section of the resolution sketches the history of the

Fourth International to 1953 with particular regard to the role of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The history goes only to 1953 not by design, but because time did not permit us to finish it--hence the short document "The International Situation--An Initial Assessment" published in a previous issue. Nevertheless, the period to 1953 was sufficient for our purposes during the struggle inside the SWP,

since it adequately explained the roots of the SWP's degeneration and of its present day centrist politics.

Today, however, a more complete historical sketch is necessary, especially in light of those groups like the Workers League which dissect history to fit the needs of their own Procrustean organizations.

Ever since the appearance of the CT's document, the "Wohlforth" League has outdone itself in apologizing for those very things with which they rationalize their own existence. Suddenly the long overdue project of writing the "history" of the Fourth International before 1953 was taken up. Schools were held across the country to deal with this topic, and these were addressed by no less than Lucy St. John and Tim Wohlforth, whose speeches were subsequently printed in the "Bulletin." And now the readers of the "Bulletin" are treated to a new series of four-page center-spreads against those who would "vilify" Wohlforth's (and Healy's) history. Being one of the principle targets of these excursions into fantasy by Wohlforth and his camarilla, I claim no intention to or plaudit for "vilifying" anyone. If Healy or Wohlforth feel vilified then they must take all the credit.

Why all the commotion by Wohlforth and Co.? The answer is clear.

The major contradiction expressing itself inside the party today is the discrepancy between the party's claim to represent the heritage of Lenin and Trotsky, i.e., Marxism on the one hand, and the crass opportunism represented in its day to day political program on the other.

While the party still dresses itself in orthodoxy on some questions, it has openly discarded--especially in those areas in which the party has been most active--whole portions of the transitional program. Garments have been hastily torn off at the seams, laying bare the party's revisionism, justified by simplistic observations--in lieu of analysis--such as "times have changed." In their stead the party has substituted a reformist and pacifist garb decorated with radical sounding phrases and trimmed in a call to action for action's sake.

They are feeling the heat of the revolutionary "idea," which Trotsky discussed in his letter to the French youth in 1937. The idea, said he, which "corresponds to the exigencies of historical development, is more powerful than the most powerful organization." Face to face with the revolutionary idea, Wohlforth takes refuge in a pseudo-methodological argument, accusing its proponents of idealism, vilification and distortion and--with the clear intention of erecting an impenetrable shield of hostility to safeguard his "flock"--attacks them as a "vicious anti-Marxist tendency hostile to the workers movement." Using a similar phraseology, the Stalinists of the 1930's prepared the physical attacks on and the murders of the "Trotskyites."

In future introductions to this series and in the series on the history after 1953 which will follow, we will show concretely that it is comrade Wohlforth who has done the vilifying, the distorting and, worst of all, made a mockery of dialectics. We will do this because we believe "with the help of pitiless criticism, of constant propaganda, and bold agitation" that we "will destroy the old organizations, internally rotten, which have become the principle obstacles on the road of the revolutionary movement." ]

The ever increasing rapidity with which the party impatiently tears itself away from even any formal adherence to its traditional proletarian program is an admission of the party's writing off of the American proletariat as the fundamental force for a socialist change, and is an attempt by those thoroughly imbued with such skepticism toward the proletariat to completely immerse the party in the petty-bourgeois milieu. The fundamental task of assuring the proletarian character of the party has long ago been discarded for the task of

"building" the party of poly-vanguardism. Politics and building the party today are judged in terms of numbers devoid of any class analysis, class basis, or class perspective. Every political activity the party enters into is done on a multi-class basis, be it the women's liberation movement under the guise of "sisterhood," the Black liberation movement under the guise of "nationalism," the antiwar movement under the guise of "non-exclusion," the struggle of the Chicanos and other minorities under the guise of "third-worldism," etc. These non-class categories have nothing in common with Marxism. When the party does turn to the proletariat --and it eventually will to round out its poly-vanguard perspective-- the multi-class approach will be no different, as has so clearly been indicated from our past activity and from what is outlined in the present NC political resolution. We will be blocing from the inside or from the outside with capital's lieutenants in the labor movement under the guise of fighting the bosses "first" in the "objective" struggle against capitalism.

The present day politics of the SWP have nothing in common with the revolutionary heritage of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. The heritage of the party's theoretical analysis and political activity is Social Democracy, Stalinism and Centrism of all varieties, and the party can only be characterized as being right-centrist quickly on its way to outright reformism. The burden of preventing this eventual-ity rests on the cadres of the party.

The present party crisis is not the result of an overnight occurrence which has just popped up like a mushroom after a warm spring rain, nor can it be resolved by merely doing work among the proletariat. The party crisis, on the contrary, is a result of a combination of factors: The party's historical weaknesses, the historical weakness of the Left Opposition and the Fourth International and external circumstances.

Up to the present the generally

accepted reason for the weakness and isolation of the Trotskyist movement has been the exceptionally hard conditions under which we were forced to work owing to unfavorable circumstances beyond our control. There can be no doubt as to the great amount of truth contained in the above reasoning, and that even the best organization can not keep from becoming isolated to one degree or another during periods of reaction. But to continually blame the unfavorable external conditions without any critical evaluation of our own conscious intervention is to only beg the question and adopt a fatalistic attitude.

In the first place we cannot expect that some day the turbulent waters will separate, and we will be able to walk freely and unmolested into the promised land of socialism--neither the bourgeoisie nor the Stalinist bureaucracies are going to roll over and play dead. In one very important sense, it is the revolutionary party itself which creates its own favorable circumstances as well as unfavorable ones.

Futhermore, it is just not true that we have had to continually operate under unfavorable circumstances. During and after World War II there was a revolutionary upsurge of the working class, peasants and oppressed nationalities on a world scale. How is it that the world Trotskyist movement wasn't able to take advantage of such favorable circumstances? It was during this very same period that the French and Italian Communist parties became mass parties leading behind them not only the mass of working class, but also some of its most conscious layers. But even more revealing are those instances where the Trotskyist movement has verged on becoming the mass party of the proletariat, specifically in Bolivia where the question of power was actually posed. In Vietnam the Trotskyist movement had gained a certain hegemony in the Saigon proletariat before and after World War II, only to be wiped out almost overnight by the

Stalinist henchmen of Ho Chi Minh. In Ceylon the Lanka Sama Samaja Party emerged as the leadership in crucial areas of the proletariat with as many as 14 MPs in 1956, only to be bloc-ed today with the bourgeois Sri Lanka Freedom Party in a coalition government which is now slaughtering the revolutionary youth in the country. In Bolivia the Partido Obrero Revolucionario was founded long before the Communist Party and firmly established its leadership position among the important sections of the Bolivian proletariat with as many as 8 MPs in 1949, only in the 1952 revolution--under conditions almost identical to those in Russia in 1917--to end up supporting the Bolivian Kerensky, Pas Estenssoro. This, plus many other opportunities, such as in France and Algeria during the struggle in Algeria, the Belgian general strike, etc., have given the Fourth International numerous opportunities.

No, the opportunities for the Trotskyists have not been lacking. The Fourth International must now take full responsibility for its own failures to provide a valid alternative to the crisis in leadership which was the basis for the founding of the organization. The crisis in leadership of the proletariat during the last 30 years since the founding of the Fourth International has ultimately been the crisis of the leadership of the Fourth International itself.

The crisis in leadership has resulted in the complete fragmentation of the world Trotskyist movement. After the death of Trotsky the international Trotskyist movement failed to develop a competent leadership which could command the confidence and respect of the international cadres. The inability of the different Trotskyist leaderships, especially the International leadership, to provide a consistent Trotskyist analysis and program resulted in a good many zigs and zags as events took them by surprise. In certain countries where the Trotskyist parties did manage to accumulate a certain number of

cadres, in spite of their program-- a natural occurrence under favorable objective conditions--these parties were ruined beyond recognition or washed away completely like sandcastles after the first (adverse) wave. Such circumstances could not help but disorient even the best of comrades and raise protests from others. Alien class pressures ran rampant and each sharp turn produced both reaction and galloping runaways. Some comrades identified the disastrous politics with that of Trotskyism and began to question the whole validity of Marxism itself. While other comrades were able to make telling criticisms of their political opponents, most of the time they too proved incapable of providing a Trotskyist analysis and program. In this whirlwind of mad-hatter politics, cliques and counter-cliques were common, and the heated internal debates ended almost invariably with organizational means being resorted to by one side or another. Bureaucratic expulsions and Simon-pure splits became the norm; until today the world "Trotskyist" movement looks like an American junkyard containing every make and model of the last 30 years.

Today there are four international groupings claiming to be, or to represent, the true heritage of the Fourth International. In some countries there are as many as ten or more groups which claim some allegiance or other to Trotsky. In those countries where you find only one, the reason is simple: the Trotskyist movement has been crushed or there is just no history of Trotskyism. Instead of embodying the development of Marxism and providing a competent, reliable and representative leadership for the different sections of the International, the International leadership, has on the contrary, proved to be the kiss of death for almost every section. As we shall try to show in brief sketch, this legacy still lives in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

(to be continued)