

VANGUARD newsletter

Published monthly by independent revolutionary socialists

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P. O. Box 67, Peck Slip Station, New York, N. Y. 10038

Vol. 3, No. 3 Price 10¢ (\$1.00 per year) Labor donated March 1971

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THE SPLIT IN THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

In evaluating the Black Panther's call for a conference at Oakland to achieve a "united front against fascism" and "community control of police", we stated in our July 1969 issue, that its program was a confused mixture of Black nationalism, reformism, Maoist rhetoric, "third world" anti-imperialism, but also a growing anti-capitalist orientation,

Because of its confused program, we also stated that the Black Panther Party (BPP) had become:

"...an easy victim, on the one hand, of the police, as a result of its para-military guerrillaist postures, and on the other hand, of the opportunists of the left, witness its co-optation by PFP [Peace and Freedom Party], by the anti-PL sections of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and by the Communist Party [CP]."

At that time, we called for a determined struggle by revolutionary socialists to intervene in the conference in order to win the Black Panther members and supporters to "revolutionary politics", to fight for a "consistent class approach to all questions", which would, of course, include "a principled defense of BPP members and all other militants under attack".

It was on the basis of "Marxist clarity and principle", that we saw the Black Panther members able to become "an important and even vital

part of the working class vanguard".

The BPP was able to win a mass following in the ghettos because it voiced the anger and readiness for struggle of the Black masses against their special oppression, against a pervasive racial discrimination which was manifested in employment, housing, education and all other social relations.

The Black struggle manifested itself during the prosperity of the '60's in a "civil rights" movement. The increased militancy of the Black youth, reflects the crisis of the world capitalist system. The sharpening disequilibria in productive and financial relations has first been demonstrated in the social sphere in all countries. In the US, the Indochinese war has been a mighty catalyst in accelerating this process. Black youth, in particular, have become increasingly aware that their mass unemployment, low wages and dead-end jobs have their roots in the capitalist system. This militancy found expression in support for the BPP as their instrument in struggle.

With the BPP under increasing "police attacks, outrageous brutality, frame-ups and murders", a struggle within it over strategy and tactics, and, eventually, a split over its irreconcilable programmatic elements, became inevitable.

The differences within the BPP came to light when the 13 on trial, of the "Panther 21 indicted for bomb conspiracy and murder, were expelled from the party, for criticizing the leadership in an open letter to the Weathermen in the "East Village Other".

On Feb. 26th, Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria, in a live long-distance TV hook-up to Huey Newton, the BPP Minister of Defence in San Francisco, condemned the expulsion of the 13 and that of a Black Panther in Los Angeles. He blamed David Hilliard, the party's Chief of Staff, and called for his expulsion.

The following day, Cleaver and all Black Panthers in the International section of the party in Algeria were also expelled. Cleaver, in turn, took similar action against Newton and Hilliard, and what he called, "the right-wing of the party", and announced its reorganization. At this time, the 5 NY party branches support Cleaver's faction.

Cleaver was attacked in the next issue of the party paper as a wife-beater, who was keeping Kathleen Cleaver a prisoner, and also for denouncing Angela Davis and Cuba.

When Michael Tabor and Richard Moore, two of the defendants, forfeited bail totaling \$150,000 by fleeing to Algeria together with Newton's secretary and important papers, Newton denounced them as deserters and traitors to the party, and as responsible for the revocation of bail for two of the women co-defendants.

Amidst the welter of personal, organizational and directly political charges, the fundamental differences between the factions also came into the open.

Cleaver holds the position that the BPP has become over-involved in "political mass mobilizations", and has, as a result, turned away from the "military" struggle. He has

also called for the formation of an illegal, underground party, which Newton opposes. Don Cox, a Cleaver supporter, has attempted to justify this position by "disclosing" that Lenin had "discovered" that Marx was "right politically", while Bakunin was "right militarily", and had, therefore, united the two.

Even in this period, when Leninism is used as a shield by the most diverse elements, who eclectically seek quotations to justify their anti-working class positions--their revisionism, adventurism and outright reformism--a more blatant and insolent forgery would be hard to find.

Cleaver believes that his mixture of Maoism, nationalism and particular brand of reformism--he attacks the CP brand--entitles his faction to the designation as the "left-wing". Newton, who is concerned to find more directly political methods of struggle, and who has, therefore, turned to Marxism and its philosophy, is understood by Cleaver to have taken a turn to the "right".

The "socialist" Cleaver, who has also indicted Marx as a "racist", writes off the white working class as hopelessly reactionary, and the students as pampered and middle class. Only the "lumpenproletariat" is revolutionary.

Newton, who has now found that Marxism alone is capable of explaining modern society, of illuminating the road which the masses must take to end their exploitation and oppression, and who has also repudiated the US CP as revisionist, has also concluded that, not the proletariat but the "lumpenproletariat" will overthrow capitalism. Although both Cleaver and Newton use the same term, they are not saying the same thing.

Marx and Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, state that:

"the 'dangerous class', the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution. Its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue."

In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx places within the lumpenproletariat, the "princely" member, Bonaparte III, together with vagabonds, swindlers, pick-pockets, tricksters, gamblers, pimps, brothel-keepers, beggars, and ruined bourgeois elements.

Engels, in his preface to the Peasant War In Germany, has the following to say about the lumpenproletariat:

"...this scum of depraved elements from all classes, with headquarters in the big cities is absolutely venal and absolutely brazen ... Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies upon them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement."

Newton, during a recent speaking tour, made clear that he meant by the "lumpenproletariat", in large measure, the unemployed, both Black and white, i.e., the industrial reserve army, whose ranks are continually being augmented by technological changes, and in which Black workers have historically held a disproportionate share. But this army is not and should not be confused with the lumpenproletariat.

The industrial reserve army, according to Marx (Capital, Vol. I Chap. XXV, Sec. 4, "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation"), is made up of "every laborer when partially or wholly unemployed, and especially, older, transient and "stagnant" workers. The last named suffers from "extremely irregular employment", and, when working, puts in a "maximum" of hours for a "minimum of wages", as do a great many Black workers today.

Even paupers--Marx specifically excludes from this category vagabonds, criminals and prostitutes--are included in the industrial reserve army, as its "dead weight". In it, Marx includes those "able to work", those who have become "demoralized and ragged"--these would appear to be the "lazarus-layers of the working class"--orphans and pauper children" and those "unable

to work". Pauperism, according to Marx, is "the hospital of the active labor army", part of the overhead expenses of capitalist production, which the capitalists well know how to "throw from their own shoulders to those of the working class and lower middle class".

It is, of course, true that the demoralization which accompanies grinding poverty is a major factor in lumpenization. Marx and Engels, as we have shown, recognized that some members of the lumpenproletariat, "may, here and there" be reclaimed by the revolutionary process. While these would be welcome recruits, Marx and Engels had not the slightest identification with or kind reception for the lumpenproletariat as such. Unlike some who identify with Marxism today, they were incapable of placing the poor, e.g., those receiving welfare, to say nothing of the irregularly employed, in the same category with pimps, thieves and swindlers, who prey on workers most, and on the poorest, in the first place.

Although Newton turns away from the regularly employed workers, and still has illusions in the lumpenproletariat as defined by Marxists, his orientation is toward the most oppressed layers of the working class, Black and white. Cleaver, on the other hand, incorporates elements of the industrial reserve army into his use of the term, but he seems more oriented toward the lumpenproletariat, as defined by Marxists. Witness the welcome given Timothy Leary, the "revolutionary" religious drug cult leader by Cleaver in Algeria, as well as his continued and warm relationship with the "Yippy" cult.

We believe that the bureaucratic and strong-arm tactics used by both factions, have only served to obscure the political differences between them and play into the hands of the ruling class.

However, we consider the Newton faction to be the "left-wing" of the BPP, which is now in motion away from the confused program of its origins, and which is now exploring the ideas of revolutionary Marxism.

That a great deal of confusion is still present is obvious, e.g., the recent espousal by Newton of "Marxism-Leninism-Pantherism-Intercommunalism". The revolutionary Marxists must continue to carry on a fight to win the Panthers to "Marxist clarity and principle. But it is because Newton has departed from Black nationalism, both "revolutionary" and "cultural" toward a working class orientation, that he is being attacked by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which has betrayed the program of Trotskyism, the revolutionary Marxism of our time.

The Workers League (WL), which also presents itself as Trotskyist, is trying to engage Newton in discussion. (In another article in this issue, we call attention to the "method" with which it carried on a "discussion" with us.) It approaches Newton, in effect, with the injunction to "forget race and think class". To the WL, the working class in the racially divided US is an abstraction, in which special oppression based on race becomes invisible. We have identified its abandonment of Trotsky's position for that of the Socialist Labor Party on this question, to be "a passive adaptation to white chauvinism". It is with this position that the WL hopes to win Newton and his supporters to its banner!

We believe that our program, which calls for the unity of the working class in struggle against special oppression--as being in the immediate and fundamental interests of all workers--to be the only basis on which this unity can be achieved.

To "solve" its economic difficulties, US capitalism moves to cut the "real" wages of the working class, to place their union under state control, to end the right to strike under threat of fines and jail. This is what the "incomes policy" is really about. Both the liberal and conservative wings of the ruling class are demanding this policy, and their labor leader, George Meany, has agreed to support it with "modifications".

We call for the formation of bi-racial caucuses in the unions, which

will fight to unite the workers on a program of transitional demands, linking the daily struggle to the need for a socialist revolution. As white workers recognize that they must fight against all special oppression in their own interests--because the lower wages and worsened conditions of Black workers drag down their own wages and conditions, because the bosses use racial divisions to break unions--their trade union consciousness expands into a class and socialist perspective.

Black workers have formed caucuses of their own to fight racism in the shops and unions. As they achieve confidence that white workers are class brothers, who fight racial discrimination in all forms, Black caucuses will unite with the bi-racial.

The bi-racial caucuses fight for:

- an end to the super-exploitation of minority and women workers.
- an end to unemployment through a shorter work-week, "'30 for '40", a program of public works, expropriation under workers' control of industry.
- the organization of the unorganized, the unemployed and the youth, and to unite the "community" to the workers' movement.
- union democracy, to oust the "pie-card" bureaucrats.
- an independent workers' party.
- a national caucus movement to lead the workers, out of which can come the factory committees and workers' councils, i.e., the organs of "dual power" and workers' rule.

Black workers, politically in advance of the white today, can play a vital role in building a revolutionary party to lead the socialist revolution in the US.

Our new masthead was designed by a well-wisher, Charles Doehrer, the editor of RESISTANCE PRESS, P. O. Box 592, Chicago, Illinois 60690. Cde. Doehrer's publication attempts to unite workers in struggle around specific issues, and, in the process, help lay the basis for a revolutionary socialist movement. He has our best wishes and many thanks.

STATE AND REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA - Part IV

Cuba - Capitalist, Workers' or Deformed Workers' State?

Bonapartism, to Marxists, originates as the expression of a social crisis in bourgeois society, which threatens to overturn existing class relations. An "ostensible mediator" comes to the fore, who seems to stand above classes, but, in reality, balances between them.

As the world crisis of capitalism develops, the capitalist state, in both the advanced and under-developed countries, becomes the "national capitalist" in Engels' phrase, is required to nationalize and operate the basic means of production, communication and transportation to keep the economy functioning.

From a spur to the development of industry, the national state has long since operated as a barrier to the developing means of production. Today, the world crisis expresses itself in national competition for a shrinking world market. The unstable world structure, geared to the US dollar, threatens to go under, dragging with it the largest financial and industrial corporations. State intervention is increasingly necessary in all countries to preserve the mode of production.

The growing number of Bonapartist regimes in the under-developed countries testifies to the growing social crisis. The productive forces, distorted and retarded by imperialism, prove unable to satisfy the minimum needs of the growing population. Bonapartism seeks to solve the crisis, first, by keeping the masses under control, and then, by using the state to secure and provide the necessary capital with which to develop modern industry.

As Trotsky has pointed out, a distinction should be made between the Bonapartism of capitalism's rise and consolidation and the Bonapartism of capitalism's decay, e.g., the regime of Schleicher-Von Papen in Germany before Hitler took power.

With the degeneration of the first workers' state, Stalinism, a previously unknown type of Bonapartism arose on the new social foundations achieved by the October Revolution, which veers not only between the internal classes, but internation-

ally as well.

The end of the second World War, also saw Bonapartist regimes installed in Eastern Europe and China. The Stalinist parties, initially, functioned as caretakers of the bourgeois state machinery. Later the economic foundations of these states were bureaucratically transformed, so that they became qualitatively indistinguishable from the degenerated Soviet state. [In 1948, the world Trotskyist movement identified them as "deformed workers' states" ? China, 1948?

The Cuban revolution, in turn, introduced a new variation on the Bonapartist theme. Castro, at one time, a leader of the left-wing of the bourgeois Ortodoxo party, was able to establish a guerrilla base in the Sierra Maestra mountains, with peasant support. From this base, Castro succeeded in assembling a guerrilla army, in overthrowing the discredited Batista regime, and in taking control of the bourgeois state machinery. He then announced an ambitious program of social reforms, eliminated agricultural holdings over 1000 acres, lowered rents, and reduced rates on electricity and telephone service, i.e., a program which directly threatened US imperialist investments.

Castro's hopes for long term, low-interest loans from the US, with which to build a modern capitalist Cuba were rebuffed by US capitalism. Its anti-Cuban economic measures, e.g., the repudiation of the sugar quota for Cuba, and its increasingly overt support for domestic reaction, in turn forced Castro toward retaliatory nationalizations of US and domestic capitalist holdings.

Castro's increased and intensified program of social reforms produced a rapid rise in the living standards of the masses in consumption, educa-

tion and housing, broadening mass support for the regime. It also produced an exodus of the Cuban bourgeoisie and a large part of its petty-bourgeoisie. It became necessary to form and arm a people's militia against US military intervention, such as at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. It also became more and more necessary to turn to the Soviet Union for the economic and military support to survive.

The changed ideology of Cuba's Bonapartist leaders reflected the transformed foundations of the Cuban state, which had become qualitatively indistinguishable from those in Eastern Europe, China and the Soviet Union. The cadres of the Popular Socialist Party, the old party of the Cuban Communists, were utilized to create a new organization, which under Castro's control, would direct the economy and state.

But the same contradiction which explains the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and which has continued to plague it and the other deformed workers' states, has also been operating in Cuba.

? [Its economic foundations are too inadequate to enable the Cuban bureaucracy to even pose a credible "socialism in one country".] Castro has had, on the one hand, to retreat to "monoculture". He has harnessed the energies of the agricultural and industrial workers to an all-out drive to achieve a large enough sugar "cash crop" to finance industrial development. Cuba has thus been made even more dependent on the capitalist world market and the Soviet bureaucracy.

On the other hand, and in contradiction to the differently situated bureaucracy in the Soviet bloc, who yearn for repose, Castro has been forced to seek a revolutionary development in other Latin American countries. But the revolution which the Cuban bureaucracy seeks is not that of revolutionary Marxism.

The concept of the permanent revolution, which Trotsky originated and which predicted the course of the Russian Revolution, looks to the smaller working class of the underdeveloped nation to lead the much

larger peasantry in a socialist revolution, and thus to the solution of democratic and national tasks solved earlier by the bourgeoisie of the advanced countries.

In discussing the 1936 Stalinist constitution, Trotsky said that:

"Bonapartism...always leans on the village as against the city. In this too, Stalin remains true to tradition."

As does also Mao Tse Tung and Fidel Castro.

Castro's anti-working class orientation was shown, not only by his entire development and by the nature of the struggles he led, but also in direct attacks on the organized workers. Shortly after he took power, he criticized the wages and working conditions of the electrical workers, indicted them as a privileged layer, imperiously removed union leaders, and replaced them with his own representatives. He has since made numerous statements deriding the industrial workers as revolutionary instruments.

The concept of the guerrilla "foco" in which Castro generalized his own experiences in the Sierra Maestra mountains, and with which he imbued Régis Debray, cost "Che" Guevara his life when he attempted to repeat it in Bolivia. Now thrown on the garbage heap, this concept only represented the specific interpretation by the Cuban bureaucracy of prevailing "third world" anti-working class conceptions. The Chinese version of this outlook was given by Lin Piao, Mao's heir designate. It seems that US capitalism would be defeated by the underdeveloped countries, as the cities in China were overcome by the countryside.

The "benevolent despotism" of Castro has, according to the theoreticians of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), a "content" equal to that of the state which emerged from the October Revolution. A full decade has gone, but they are still patiently waiting for Castro to provide the Soviet "forms".

Castro has had to admit to the catastrophic condition of the econo-

my--of a drop in industrial production in many sectors, of factories shut down, of shortages of food and manufactured goods, of apathy and exhaustion. [He has had to include among the reasons for the present plight of Cuba, the "ignorance" of the Cuban leadership. As do bureaucrats everywhere, however, he inverts cause and effect, and blames, in addition, absenteeism, vagrancy, parasitism, disorganization and shortages of capital goods caused by the workers' "carelessness".] The low productivity, which he also condemns, cannot be overcome by exhortation, but is an inevitable concomitant of production in a backward and isolated country. Capitalist relations in the means of production have been destroyed, but their backwardness still prevents Cuba from achieving the labor productivity of the advanced capitalist countries.

The constant exhortations to work harder and longer, the bureaucratic planning, which the masses are then supposed to "ratify" and carry out, e.g., the sugar production goals which were not and could not be met, and which sacrificed necessary industrial production, only served to instill apathy, lower production and bring the economy to the brink of disaster. The Cuban bureaucracy has proven bankrupt, if not to the pundits of the SWP, then to a growing section of the Cuban masses.

Cuba is a fortress under siege. Its beleaguered garrison has to hold off a more powerful enemy until reinforcements arrive, i.e., the victory of the working classes of the advanced countries. An intelligent and revolutionary leadership would fight for the full participation of the workers in every aspect of economic and political life, through their Soviets. It would project policies to achieve an optimum and balanced development of the productive forces under the circumstances.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition thus called for a national plan which would aim for a rapid development of industry and agriculture. For this, they were denounced by Stalin and Bukharin as "super-industrializers". In 1928, faced

with the bankruptcy of policies supporting the kulak and "socialism in one country" at a snail's pace, Stalin made an abrupt turn to the left. Seizing upon the program of industrialization of the Left Opposition, he first produced a timid plan. Emboldened by its overwhelming success, the bureaucracy began to believe that commands could accomplish anything.

It demanded that the 5 year plans be completed in 4. Piece-work was revived. The masses were constantly exhorted to greater efforts. The Soviet masses were able to achieve a greatly expanded industrial capacity on the basis of the new social relations, despite the havoc wrought by the bureaucracy in agriculture, in the starvation of millions, and in vast disproportions and waste, which brought the country to the brink of disaster. Castro has not invented anything. He has merely repeated the same mistakes on a much smaller scale.

The Stalinist bureaucracy was able to survive, only by unleashing mass terror against all possible sources of opposition, and, in the first place, against those who might have shown even a trace of an interest in the ideas of Trotsky. Castro has testified to the depth of the crisis in Cuba by theatrically volunteering to step down. [The sincerity of this gesture, however, can also be measured by his harassment of the Posadaist organization, which identifies itself as Trotskyist, whose members had been jailed and whose presses were confiscated, as well as by his attack on Trotskyism at the Tricontinental Congress in 1966, in the style of the Stalinists during the Moscow frame-up "trials"]

Some organizations identifying with Trotskyism deny that Cuban Bonapartism had directed a transformation in the economic base, which ended capitalist relations in the means of production.

[Lutte Ouvrière (LO) in France, previously independent, has recently gone through the first stages of a unity with La Ligue Communiste. To LO, no such phenomenon as a deformed workers' state is conceivable. Only

the Soviet Union can be defined as a workers' state, albeit in a degenerated form. Eastern Europe, China and Cuba are still capitalist states. How can these states be considered workers' states, asks LO, when their working classes never took power in a socialist revolution? Even though they have not and cannot be qualitatively distinguished from the degenerated product of the first workers' state by LO, or by any other organization to our knowledge, like the proverbial farmer who encountered a giraffe, it insists that there is no such animal.

To its new consort La Ligue Communiste, as with the other affiliates and co-thinkers of the United Secretariat (U Sec) of the Fourth International, such as the SWP, deformed workers' state is an accepted category. It, like the SWP and the others, however, refuses to place Cuba in it. It also finds Cuba to be a genuine workers' state with the qualities of the Soviet state in its first period after the Russian Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky.

LO is not concerned over its difference with the U Sec over a question which qualitatively transformed sections of it, such as the SWP, into the same type of arrant opportunist able to unite in one international. To the rigidly "orthodox" and "Trotskyist" LO, at least on the "Russian" question, it is much more important to play the "numbers" game, to elevate the organizational aspect of politics above the essentially political, to bury, to "postpone" fundamental political disagreements, in order to attract French militants to a larger and more "impressive" organization.

Although the Workers League (WL) and its co-thinkers in the International Committee (IC) of the Fourth International readily agree that the states in Eastern Europe and China are deformed workers' states, they draw the line at Cuba. In common with LO, they maintain that Cuba is capitalist.

But what kind of capitalist state is it, whose bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie have fled to the US, whose statistics on nationalization

of industry and collectivization of agriculture compare favorably with any of the Eastern European states? An adequate answer has never been formulated, to our knowledge, by either the WL or its co-thinkers.

In December 1961, in polemics with the SWP, the French section of the IC, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI), defined the Cuban state as a "shoddy, decomposed and unreal bourgeois state", with a "workers' and peasants' government" controlled by the Castro regime. Comparing Cuba to Spain in 1936-37, it saw in Cuba "a special type of dual power", in which the bourgeois state machinery had only been partially destroyed, but which lacked the revolutionary leadership to enable it to go forward to the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

At that time, the OCI expressed its dissatisfaction with the 1948 analysis which had coined the term, "deformed workers' state", and which, it felt, had utilized some of the methods of Pabloism in the process.

It seemed to object to the designation of Cuba as a deformed workers' state, primarily because of the bureaucracy's lack of "working class origins", as was the case with the Stalinist bureaucracies in Yugoslavia and China. It also found the concept of "structural assimilation", which had been used to relate the qualities of the first and degenerated workers' state to the new, "born deformed" workers' states, to be inapplicable to Cuba.

The OCI attempted to stem the growing revisionism in the SWP with a Marxist analysis of the Cuban developments. But, unfortunately, it did not draw the necessary conclusions from its understanding that an "unreal bourgeois state" existed in Cuba, under Castro's Bonapartist control. Yes! But in what essential way did Cuba in 1961 differ from the Soviet "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie", under Stalinist control? (See our discussion on this point in our January issue.) The incorrect analogy with Spain made it possible for the OCI to avoid asking this question.

The "bourgeois" Cuban state,

according to the WL and IC, does not appreciably differ from other under-developed states in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with Bonapartist regimes in the saddle.

There are, of course, many similarities among them, including the basic condition, that they have nationalized important means of production. All Bonapartist regimes in the post-war period, which seek an industrial development for their under-developed countries, have also understood that the Soviet Union offers them a necessary point of support against imperialism. But the class relationships within the deformed workers' states and the pseudo workers' states are quite different. Viewing the similarity in form, the WL and IC, and also LO, ignore the difference in content.

The Bonapartist regime of a backward capitalist country, in which some vestiges of feudal relations may also remain, may move against sections of the exploiting classes. It may nationalize some latifundia, and even expropriate individual industrial, financial and commercial capitalist interests. It is on this basis that Bonapartist figures of the Nasser type can come before the workers and peasants as "socialists". However, an examination of a country such as Egypt, would soon show that sections of its dwarfed bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie have thrived under this kind of "socialism".

In answer to those individuals and groups who also equated the Stalin-

ist and fascist bureaucracies, in a manner much like the approach of LO and the IC to Cuba and "bourgeois" states, Trotsky said the following:

"The fascist bureaucracy likewise treats the state as its property. It imposes severe restrictions upon private capital and often provokes convulsions within it. We can say, by way of a logical argument: if the fascist bureaucracy succeeded in more and more imposing its discipline and its restrictions on the capitalists without effective resistance on the part of the latter, this bureaucracy could gradually transform itself into a new ruling "class" absolutely analogous to the Soviet bureaucracy. But the fascist state belongs to the bureaucracy only "in some respect". ... These are three little words Craipeau deliberately ignores. But they have their importance. They are even decisive. They are an integral part of the dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality." (Writings of Leon Trotsky /1937-38/, p. 87, VN emphasis)

This passage sheds a brilliant light, not only on the question of Cuba, but also on the transformations in Yugoslavia and China, i.e., in under-developed countries in the post-war period. We shall return to it in our concluding installment. (to be continued)

THE WORKERS LEAGUE "DISCUSSES" WITH VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

/We publish below a letter to Gerry Healy, National Secretary of the Socialist Labour League (SLL) in England, and secretary of the International Committee (IC) of the Fourth International.

/In it, we inform Cde. Healy of the hooligan tactics used by their co-thinkers in the Workers League (WL) in "discussion" with other political tendencies. We also contrast our concern with the essentially political questions to the WL eclectic and pragmatic emphasis on the organizational aspect of

politics. We again enumerate the outstanding political differences between the WL and IC and ourselves.

/The demand for our recantation, that we must admit our guilt in rejecting "internationalism", before the WL would consider serious political discussion with us, has an historic precedent. Trotsky had attacked the growing bureaucratization of the party, and the economic policies of the Politbureau in his "Open Letter" of 1923, and in his pamphlet, The New Course. Zinoviev, who had originated the fabrication

that "Trotskyism" is anti-Leninism, also demanded that Trotsky recant. He had to admit that he was "wrong" in attacking the leadership, for "peace" to be restored in the party.

As we noted in our January 1969 issue, the conception that national and international perspectives are "one perspective", led to the "subordination of the Negro question". This conception originates with the IC. Not only has Trotsky's position on the Negro question been discarded but the fundamentals of the Leninist position on the national question, in general.

Trotsky, in the introduction to the German edition of the Permanent Revolution takes up Stalin's thesis that the "specific features" of a country only supplement the "'general features' like warts on a face". These "national peculiarities", said Trotsky, "represent an original combination of the basic features of the world process" which "can be

of decisive significance for revolutionary strategy" for "many years" --as in Russia!

It is the failure of the WL and IC to understand the uneven and combined development in all things, which is at the root of their inverted neo-Luxembourg mistakes on the national question.

Luxembourg, as we stated in August 1969, opposed Lenin's position on the right of nations to self-determination, as a representative of the proletariat of an oppressed nation. But the SLL in England opposes this right for the French Canadians, Scots and Welsh in the British "Commonwealth". The WL in the US refuses to conduct a struggle against the special oppression of Blacks.

We believe that a revolutionary socialist movement cannot be built in this country or in any country with "national peculiarities" without an understanding of Lenin's and Trotsky's position on this question.

* * * * *

Dear Comrade Healy,

March 12, 1971

You will, of course, wish to be informed about a meeting on January 20, 1971, in which Hugh Fredricks, Harold Robins, Mark Berns and I met as delegates of VANGUARD NEWSLETTER with Tim Wohlforth, Fred Mueller, Pat Connolly and Denis O'Casey of the Workers League.

We considered that a discussion with the WL was again in order upon noting its partial return to Trotsky's and our own position on the Negro question, e.g., the recognition that the Blacks are, "the most dynamic section of the working class", who, therefore, "can and will play an important role...in the construction of a vanguard leadership for the class as a whole", that the real "content" of the Black movement, is one of militant struggle against all oppression, which tends to break through the Black nationalist "form" in which it is often initially expressed.

In arranging with Wohlforth for the meeting at the WL's headquarters, I made clear our reason for requesting it, namely, to explore the implications of the shift in the WL's line on the Negro question, to determine

whether a sufficient basis now existed for a cooperative working relationship in which differences would be narrowed, and which, therefore, might lead to an eventual unity.

Wohlforth agreed to the meeting, while also stating his belief that the "real" difference was not on the Negro question, but rather on "internationalism". Despite our feeling that this response was not too promising, we decided to follow through on our overture.

I opened the meeting with a twenty minute presentation of our positions. We welcomed the WL's return to some of Trotsky's positions on the Negro question, and then presented our arguments. We re-stated our belief that our disagreement on this question was the essential barrier to our unity. We requested information as to whether the WL had also re-

considered its position denying that the Black and Spanish-speaking minorities were subject to a special oppression, manifested in the workplace as super-exploitation. We again informed them that we believed the recognition of this condition to be a potentially powerful lever with which to raise the political class consciousness of Black and white workers in the process of uniting them in a struggle for their immediate and fundamental interests. We contrasted our approach, in which the struggle against special oppression was united to the transitional program, to theirs, in which a concrete program of struggle against racism was absent.

We also posed our positions for a united front approach to existing Black caucuses, support to the right of the Black masses to a section of the US for a separate state, should they wish it, and to the right of the Quebecois to independence, as rooted in the Leninist position of the right of nations to self-determination, which seeks to unite the workers of oppressor and oppressed nations for the socialist revolution.

We praised their work in publishing a regular weekly paper, and their concentration in the trade union movement, and concluded with the hope that the discussion would prove fruitful in further narrowing existing political differences.

Wohlforth responded by informing us that, in his opinion, the fundamental question was our recognition that the International Committee's struggle against Pabloism represented the continuity of the struggle for the Fourth International, and that the Negro question was subordinate to the "program of the WL and IC". According to Wohlforth, our decision not to join their organization was "historically wrong". Their shift of position on the Negro question proved that we could have influenced the course of the WL from within, instead of opposing it from without.

Even had they arrived at full agreement with us on the Negro question, they "could not care less", as they were not interested in "episodic agreements". It was a

question of "Marxist method". Until we reconsidered our attitude toward the "fundamental question" of "internationalism", on which they had become "even more fanatical", acknowledged that we had adopted "Robertson's position" toward the IC, and repudiated our incorrect course, there was "nothing to discuss". This accusation and demand for our recantation were echoed by Pat Connolly.

Furthermore, said Wohlforth, they were still in basic disagreement with Trotsky's position on the Negro question, although they now "understood more clearly" those "parts" concerning the "relationship of the Black vanguard to the working class as a whole". They still held to their criticism of Trotsky, made in the pamphlet on Black nationalism and in Lucy St. John's articles.

In an attempt at provoking a discussion, Cde. Fredricks questioned Wohlforth as to the motivation for the changes which the WL had made on this question. However, Wohlforth's reply was evasive. Throughout the meeting, he refused to argue the merits of their position on this question, but simply made assertions. He insisted that they "were not blind followers of Trotsky", that he had made a number of mistakes, that he was "wrong", not only on this question, but also on the Jewish question. He had referred to the "Jewish nation". "Wrong!"

Wohlforth also falsely charged Cde. Robins with being a "Zionist", and informed him that he would not be permitted in their organization under any circumstances. It was, however, his reaction to Cde. Robins' contribution to the discussion, which completely revealed Wohlforth's real political "method".

Cde. Robins criticized the account of the politics in the "International Report" by Wohlforth to the WL's convention which had appeared in the Jan. 11, 1971 "Bulletin", as lacking in the most fundamental premises and methodology which one would expect from a Trotskyist. It did not contain an analysis of the international and domestic economic situation, the spiraling inflation throughout the

world, or conclusions as to its effect on the working class movement in the US. It said nothing about the US imperialist war in Indochina, the present split in the ruling class, the role of Stalinism and petty-bourgeois pacifism, and the morale of the army, and presented no comprehensive military policy toward the war. The report also reflected the WL's abandonment of the Trotskyist policy of uniting the Black and white workers in struggle against job and other forms of racial discrimination. For a period of developing crisis, Wohlforth simply dwelt on the need to study philosophy. "What kind of Trotskyism is that", asked Cde. Robins?

At this point, Wohlforth interrupted, refused to allow him to finish his remarks, and then justified this conduct on the basis that at their headquarters, they made the rules governing discussion!

He then broke up the meeting by demanding that Cde. Robins immediately vacate their premises, by calling him a "deserter from Trotskyism", and by threatening, at some distance and in the language of the gutter, that he would have his nose broken if he ever returned there. This, to a man who is more than twenty years his senior, was a founding member of the Trotskyist movement and an active Trotskyist for more than forty years, and who continues to function prominently and openly as a Trotskyist in his trade union and as a member of our organization!

Assuming that Wohlforth's behavior has a rational explanation, what could he have hoped to gain by so gross a rejection of our well-intentioned overture? Fear that a cooperative relationship might expose his members to our ideas, might cause his "flock" to stray? Perhaps. He may have felt that our small numbers permitted him to act in so arrogant a fashion. If so, his miscalculation was as gross as his behavior.

We do not bluff about our size, as do some other radical groups. Our newsletter, however, is read by most political tendencies on the "left" in this country, as well as

by a number of organizations abroad. His "method" in "discussions" with other tendencies will, unfortunately, discredit, not only the WL but also, the other organizations of the IC with which it is in solidarity. Wohlforth's conduct will, undoubtedly, provide grist to the mills of the Pabloist United Secretariat, who may even use it to justify their rejection of your own recent proposals for discussion with them.

As to the criticism by Wohlforth which alone deserves a response--that we have not "broken" from Robertson's "method", in rejecting "internationalism" for such "subordinate" considerations as the Negro question--we welcome the opportunity of again making our position clear.

Hugh Fredricks and I informed the WL, in refusing Wohlforth's invitation to join it, of our belief that a section of an international Leninist and Trotskyist working class vanguard party could not be built in the racially divided US on the basis of its program of passive adaptation to white chauvinism, and that it would have been an abrogation of principle unworthy of Trotskyists to have joined an organization whose program, we believed, insured the failure of our common perspective.

In addition, and as I stated in my letter to Robert Sherwood, at the time, in informing him of the events which had transpired at the last WL meeting which we attended:

"...the forms of membership would be emptied of content, under the circumstances, in that we would have to either mutely radiate our differences on a question touching almost every aspect of practical activity, or would, by constantly raising our differences, constantly disrupt the work of the organization...the relationship of the individual to the collective could not be maintained, where programmatic differences were so serious, without doing violence to one, the other or both..."

"Until we can reach sufficient programmatic agreement with the WL, it is as wrong for it to pose

membership to us, as it would be wrong for us to accept it. What kind of members could we be under circumstances where we were, in effect, debarred from making political contributions on basic questions? It was not our subordination to the WL that was posed, but, in reality, our political obliteration."

The WL responded, as you know, by passing Wohlforth's motion that, "the Turner group" is an "alien petty-bourgeois tendency", and "breaking off all political relations with it". We believe, however, that our position was and is principled and in excellent agreement with Trotsky's conception, as stated in his article on the centrism of the ILP, "In the Middle of the Road", that:

"The International is first of all a program, and a system of strategic, tactical and organizational methods that flow from it."

(Trotsky's emphasis)

We are small, but, in our modest way, we are also trying to build the Fourth International. We do this, however, not by subordinating program to the fetish of "internationalism", as does Wohlforth, but by fighting for a program which we believe can build a real, living section of such an international in the US, the heartland of world capitalism and imperialism. We believe this to be the greatest service we can provide an international.

Robertson's split from the IC in 1962 and 1966, was motivated, as we have shown, by petty egotistical considerations. Programmatic disagreements were entirely subordinate. By lumping our serious political differences with Robertson's unprincipled behavior, Wohlforth only reveals his own unprincipled attitude toward program. Having rejected Trotsky's position on the Negro question, the heart of the American question, he really demands that we behave as Robertson did, to ignore our program, to discard it to worship, along with Wohlforth and company, at the empty shrine of an

abstract "internationalism" without program.

Under the fetish of "internationalism", Wohlforth is, obviously, building a personal organization, and not the "Fourth International", as he claims. We believe that he cannot tolerate an organization which unites "under its banner the most audacious iconoclasts, fighters and insurgents ...", in Trotsky's choice descriptive phrase of Lenin's Bolshevik Party in The Revolution Betrayed. We had noted two years ago, and had so informed the WL's members at the last meeting which we attended, that their meetings resembled a "chicken-pecking order", and not a real collective. Wohlforth "pecks" all others, but no one dares reply to the criticism or to criticize him. The other "leaders", in their turn, criticize lesser "lights", also without fear of a rejoinder. The same technique is utilized by Robertson, who was also trained in these methods in the same Shachtmanite school.

It is possible that Wohlforth believes that this sort of "leadership" can produce a mass party. We do not agree. He is able to draw together a few dependent souls by utilizing the banners of the IC in a mystical fashion. We have noted not a few individuals in the WL's ranks whose approach to the organization resembled that of "true believers". As you well know, utilizing the banners of October, the Stalinized Communist parties were able to recruit and even retain thousands of very devoted and subjectively revolutionary members, not only in the ultra-left period, but also in the overtly counter-revolutionary "popular front" period, i.e., regardless of program. We do not believe that the IC's banners can be utilized in this manner to build a mass party. Even if such a fantasy could be realized, such a party would be entirely incapable of leading the working class to power.

We have never denied that the IC, in fighting Pabloist revisionism, was conducting a struggle for the continuity of revolutionary Marxism, for the Fourth International. It

is because of that struggle and because of our own struggle along the same lines, that our tendency stands politically closest to you. We share a common heritage, outlook and goal. However, we do not have sufficient programmatic agreement to enable us to join you in one organization.

Our differences on China seem to have vanished along with your critical support to Mao Tse Tung and his "Cultural Revolution". However, we still differ on Cuba. We do not see it as capitalist, but rather, as a deformed workers' state, not qualitatively differing from those in Eastern Europe, China or the Soviet Union. We cannot see the "Arab Revolution" in the peasant-guerrilla struggles of the fedayeen as you do. You share this position with the Pabloists, the Stalinists and a number of other opportunist organizations. We consider your long diplomatic silence on the Stalinist program of betrayal of the Indo-chinese struggle, which you have covered over with the slogan of "Victory to the NLF", to be a serious disservice to the "struggle for the Fourth International". Finally and decisively, we believe that your co-thinkers in the WL are still following policies which make impossible the construction of a viable section of the Fourth International in the US.

We do not believe that the WL's present eclectic political patchwork, which it presents as having been derived by Marxist "METHOD", can produce anything but what it already has produced, confusion. Nor do we believe that personal vituperation, slander, spite and willfulness have anything in common with Leninist hardness. The hardness of the Bolsheviks was founded in theoretical clarity, in a clear understanding of the road which the working class must take to the socialist revolution.

Wohlforth seems eager to call attention to the "number", usually unspecified, of Trotsky's "mistakes" to justify the WL's faulty politics, and to present himself as the superior "theoretician". And what was

Trotsky's "mistake" on the Jewish question? Trotsky was incapable of conceptualizing eternal, immutable categories, and saw every phenomenon, including the national, in motion, in development, in the process of becoming or disappearing, unlike the master of "METHOD", Wohlforth. Trotsky had pointed out, early in 1937, that the anti-semitic policies of "decaying capitalism" was helping keep alive Yiddish culture in Europe, and bringing into being a "Jewish nation", which would "maintain itself for an entire epoch to come", and which would, therefore, seek a "common territory". While Zionism was "incapable of resolving the Jewish question", socialism would enable "the dispersed Jews", other "scattered nations" such as the Arabs and "parts of nationalities" to be "reassembled" in a community of their own choice.

We believe that the process of building the Fourth International will eventually bring us together in one organization. We look forward to the narrowing of our political differences. We believe that this unity can only come about as a result of our contending ideas, acted on and tested in the crucible of the objective process. To the extent that our political differences diminish, we will seek to further the process of unity. We do not allow personality to outweigh program.

We are confident that you will find objectionable Wohlforth's assertion that his petty-bourgeois property rights determine the norms for discussion or the rules of conduct for meetings of socialists or for any civilized group, for that matter. The WL's adoption of neo-Stalinist methods should be a matter of concern to revolutionary socialists, and certainly to his co-thinkers abroad.

Fraternally,

Harry Turner

Part VI of the series, "Trotskyism Today", which discusses the split in the Spartacist League, will be published in our April issue.