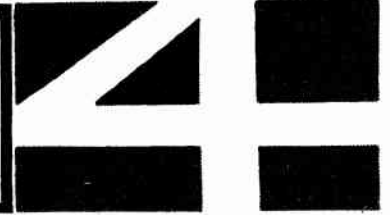


SPARTACIST



SUPPLEMENT

MAY 1968

5 CENTS

JOHNSON GOES, IMPERIALISM REMAINS!

The Viet Nam war has created a deep-going gulf in American society. Among the middle and working classes, widespread discontent with the prospect of a long war abroad and its consequences at home is growing, while a middle-class movement of opposition to the war has become the most articulate, if contradictory, exponent of this discontent.

The ruling class itself is divided over how best to achieve its aims in Southeast Asia and to what extent it is willing to sacrifice other interests to maintain U.S. dominance in the Far East.

BLOOD AND GOLD

The U.S. gold crisis, coming as it did on the heels of the British financial crisis, caused some radicals to assume the arrival of another world economic crisis on the dimensions of 1929 and 1931. But while the currency devaluation in Britain pointed to deep structural problems within the mechanism of production itself, problems insoluble short of a fundamental social transformation, that is not the case here.

In the U.S. the gold crisis is essentially a monetary one, largely if not entirely due to abundance, economic conversion, and the difficulties involved in linking up with European capital. These are partially due to the successes of U.S. capitalism. While the capitalist system is unable to solve its fundamental contradictions, the current gold crisis is only a superficial manifestation. A deep-going depression, for example, would stabilize the dollar--but hardly the system.

The National Liberation Front's successful Tet offensive has made it clear that a U.S. military victory will come about only through a vast increase in troops and continued heavy fighting for several years. The central aim of American imperialism in Southeast Asia--the containment and isolation of China--had already been achieved with the massacre of the Indonesian Communists in 1965, especially in the context of the Sino-Soviet split. A large section of the U.S. ruling class would now like to see an end to the Viet Nam war through negotiation, and would be willing to come to terms with whatever government could be formed in South Viet Nam.

1968 ELECTIONS

Johnson's announcement that he will not run for re-election, coupled with a partial bombing pause, is a result of these pressures. If the exposure of the Democratic Party as the major tool of savage imperialist aggression in Viet Nam can be healed over by a McCarthy or a Kennedy, capitalist politics can be revamped with a new liberal rhetoric. A new foreign policy "consensus" might be attained and the growing dissatisfaction among working people channelled into other areas before it reaches political consciousness. A large section of the anti-war movement, whose major demand has been "Dump Johnson," and whose aim is to strengthen capitalism by eliminating or covering over its most embarrassing consequences, is already in the "dove Democrat" camp. Thus the McCarthy campaign.

PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY

Some anti-war militants who recognize the nature and role of the Democratic Party have sought an answer in the "Peace and Freedom" movement, which has its center in the California Peace and Freedom Party. The PFP is a radical petty-bourgeois grouping which centered its program on two demands, for withdrawal from Viet Nam and for "Black Power," and which seeks to organize a third party around these demands. From the outset, however, it was clear that the PFP could interpret its independence in varying ways. Some forces viewed their break with the Democratic Party as a tactic for building a constituency to exert pressure on the system from an outside base. But there was also the possibility that the PFP could become a party which, while composed mainly of radical petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, would be the means for winning middle-class radicals decisively to the side of the working class and to the necessity for a Freedom Labor Party, a class struggle party of the proletariat. At the recent convention of the California PFP, the door was slammed on this possibility. The PFP tabled to oblivion the question of adopting an explicitly socialist, anti-capitalist orientation and defeated a motion of the Alameda County Labor Party cau-

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...JOHNSON

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cus and the San Francisco Labor committee in favor of a labor party orientation. The PFP as presently constituted, despite its radical intentions, serves as an obstacle even to the fight for its own demands by furthering the illusion that a radical restructuring of society can take place without putting politics on a class basis.

The basic class interests of the working class, unlike all intermediate strata, are in fundamental opposition to imperialism and the system it serves. The primary task of radicals in the anti-war movement must be to link this struggle with other aspects of capitalist exploitation and to build a unified and proletarian movement against the system. The responsibility lies with the self-proclaimed Marxist organizations to bring to the movement an understanding of this country's social system and the forces necessary to bring it down.

But the "revolutionary" left has betrayed this responsibility. The "Old Left" and New Left alike have reinforced the compartmentalization of the movement, each section--Negroes, workers, students--concerned only with "doing their own thing." The Socialist Workers Party, through its insistence on "single-issueism," has confined its role precisely to blocking any linkage of the war with other arenas of social struggle. It has sought to retain a precarious "unity" between "all men of good will"--defenders of the system, who seek to remove only its more obvious injustices, and the enemies of capitalism itself. The SWP through the Student Mobilization Committee has pressed for an anti-war student strike this 26 April; the Progressive Labor Party simply opposes the action in a sectarian manner, rather than seeking to turn it into a fight which would pose the involvement of the working class. We, however, propose seeking working-class support for the student strike and building toward an anti-war Friday, a one-day general strike during the work week in schools, offices and factories to demand immediate, unconditional withdrawal from Viet Nam. This could be the first real step toward direct involvement of the workers in refusing to make or transport imperialist war goods.

Only the Spartacist League has argued against the "We Won't Go" draft resistance tactic which serves only to perpetuate the isolation of anti-war radicals from working-class draftees, whose views could materially affect the war's outcome. And virtually the entire left, ourselves again excepted, has capitulated to the rising mood of Black Nationalism and sought to extend it even to the radical movement--to isolate the white anti-war radicals from the black ghetto, the only section of the working class which is now overwhelmingly against the war. "Marxist" opportunists combine with New Lefters in viewing black militants as the domestic representatives of "Che"--as a force with which to vicariously identify--rather than as a force to join with in a united struggle. The SWP's demand of "Bring the Black GI's Home Now" as a slogan for

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SUPPLEMENT



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black anti-war militants is only the grossest example of opportunism along these lines at the expense of the movement.

RACIST SLAYING OF KING

American society is currently polarized in two conflicting directions: the Viet Nam war and "crime in the streets," a delicate reactionary euphemism for black outbursts and white racist backlash. If the gulf over the war can be healed, the radical movement can be put on the defensive and public attention channelled onto the race issue, an issue which facilitates, rather than embarrasses, the control of the ruling class. Racism goes deep in American society and weakens the development of class consciousness.

The possibilities for racial violence this summer may have been anticipated by the outbursts of indignation resulting from the assassination of Martin Luther King in Memphis. King himself was at best an equivocal figure: on the one hand he was seen by the racists as a black leader and he died in the midst of a campaign to organize black sanitation workers against the city of Memphis; on the other, he best represented the pro-Establishment Negro leader, advocating non-violence for Black people while calling for their violent suppression by the cops in Watts and Detroit. The ruling class, although it profits from racial divisions among the workers and the super-exploitation of Black people, cannot but be sorry to have lost a hireling. Yet Marxists must recognize this act for what it was intended to be: an attack on the black freedom movement. Although it is ironic that the assassination of the main propagandist for non-violence is now the cause of violent outbursts of bitterness, the outbursts themselves are nonetheless tragic, for they provide no way out for the oppressed black workers. King's non-violent philosophy of love of one's oppressors is, of course, not the answer. Black people must organize for self-defense against racist terror, and must organize politically into a Freedom Labor party which can provide the basis to break down "black unity" and "white unity" into their class components. ■

...FETTER

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quire a communist-directed government in order to lead a capitalist state is not explained, nor is there any explanation of how a weak, neutralist capitalist state can remain independent, let alone compete with the giant imperialist complexes. Presumably this is not seen as a real problem, although the failure to cite models or economic and historical precedents should raise some obvious questions. But fantastic as this may seem, it is only the start.

Perhaps the problem ought to be viewed from a different angle. The U.S. government has given indications recently it wants to begin some sort of peace talks, which would presumably lead to the subject of negotiations. Now since it is unreasonable to assume that the U.S. plans simply to negotiate its own withdrawal--which it could carry out unilaterally, in any case--obviously the subjects for negotiation can only be the structure and nature of a coalition government. But a coalition between "socialist" and capitalist forces is by its very nature contradictory and highly unstable and therefore by definition only an interim government. One side would have to win out and smash its opposite number.

Such a coalition is analogous to the Kerensky interim Russian government of 1917, which contained both capitalist and nominally "socialist" members. But the real role of the socialist ministers there, as in this case, was to function as a "left cover" for the capitalist elements, to lull the workers while the rightists prepared a counterrevolution. In this instance for the NLF, no matter what the nominal political affiliation of its leadership, to participate in such a coalition would be an outright betrayal of the struggle. With a program which does not lead to socialism but to a rarefied capitalism, with no projection of a government in the interests of the workers and peasants, without even the forms of soviets to carry on the fight for socialism--and without a revolutionary vanguard to intervene and take power before the government slips back into the hands of the counterrevolution--entering such a coalition would simply be to take willing steps to one's own liquidation.

The Vietnamese people need a massive land reform and the liquidation of all extensive holdings--impossible demands within the limits of the new NLF program. The reunification of the country is a vital necessity, along with the integration of the Southern economy with the North. Soviet democracy is vitally needed in order to lay the groundwork for becoming a workers state. Instead, they are offered a program to maintain private property and capitalist relations indefinitely.

LIMITATIONS ON STALINIST MANEUVERS

The Vietnamese people have now been fighting for 27 years, and a by-product of this destruction has been the uprooting of a large part of the infrastructure of native capitalist relations. Nor is there adequate ca-

pital available for rebuilding. Much indigenous cash will be moving to the Riviera with its owners and will be unavailable to any reconstruction government. And the situation is too unstable and fluid to attract much aid from the affluent imperialist powers.

Even more: the struggle has apparently found roots among the city workers as well as the peasantry. There have been a number of large strikes within the city of Saigon itself, and recent arrests of supposedly "safe" labor leaders by the Ky government have caused some embarrassment in AFL-CIO circles here. Given the government and social conditions in Saigon today, such strikes cannot but take a distinctly political turn. If as a result the workers were to become fully politically conscious it is inconceivable they would be willing to accept the dominance of any capitalist government, no matter how benign or "neutral."

ON BALANCE

So as a result what we have is this: given its political ancestry and recent history, both the Ho Chi Minh and NLF leaderships are quite capable of doing their best to derail the Vietnamese revolution again, as they did in 1946 and again in 1954. This almost certainly will be the end result if the NLF decides actually to enter a coalition government, or makes similar deals for the semblance of power. This would mean accepting shadows in the place of substance, and those for only a very short while. Ultimately, it would mean putting off--again--until later the basic struggle for socialism.

At the very best, what can be achieved under the present leadership in South Viet Nam is a deeply flawed and partial social transformation in the direction of a workers state. But even this would mean the tacit discarding of the formal NLF program, for no social progress in this direction is possible with it as the operative guideline. The PRP in the south, like the Lao Dong in the north, unquestionably holds absolute control over the NLF at present, and there is no other agency for social revolution in Viet Nam.

On balance, and assuming the critical point that the Yankees and their agents leave, it is likely that the NLF will simply bypass its program and will then set out to make a limited, distorted and bureaucratic revolution from the top. The capitalists should be able to put up very little resistance; the bourgeois state is visibly crumbling. Still, for all its advances, there should be no illusions about this: the workers and the peasants will have not a smell of political power in the south any more than they now have in the north. In short, the best that can come out of such a unified Viet Nam is but another deformed workers state.

But if anything can betray the Vietnamese revolution--limited and deformed as it will be--the NLF leadership and its program are just the tools to do it.

COMMUNIST UNITY TO DEFEND VIETNAM
REVOLUTION REQUIRES WORKERS' POLITICAL
REVOLUTION AGAINST THE BUREAUCRATS
IN HANOI, PEKING, AND MOSCOW!

NLF PROGRAM: FETTER ON VICTORY

The National Liberation Front's extremely successful military offensive during Tet, together with the seige at the American outpost at Khesanh, brought them very near to total military victory over the U. S. imperialists and their Saigon puppets. This makes Hanoi's decision to agree to negotiations at this particular time especially disheartening, for the lifting of the seige shows a willingness to throw away the long-thwarted victory in the Vietnamese people's fight for independence and social reconstruction.

Hanoi's willingness now to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory is nothing short of a betrayal of the people of Viet Nam and of all socialist principles. It calculatedly ignores the lessons of the Genova sellout of 1954, where China and the USSR pressured the victorious Viet Minh to accept partition in exchange for promises of free elections and a peaceful national reconstruction. As a result of the "compromise," South Viet Nam became an imperialist outpost again. By sabotaging the NLF offensive, Hanoi's Stalinists are merely accomodating the U. S. need for a power base from which to negotiate.

For just as it was possible for world capitalism to make a deal before in Indochina, it is reasonable for them to assume it will be possible again. An examination of the nature of the anti-imperialist struggle in South Viet Nam, its program and its leaders, is vitally necessary for the left at this time, especially because it has been virtually ignored.

THE NLF AND ITS PROGRAM

There has been an understandable but nevertheless unfortunate tendency on the part of the American left to idealize Ho Chi Minh and the leadership of the NLF, and for radicals to turn their correct demands for military victory against imperialism and its puppets into uncritical political support for these leaders and their politics. This is a grave error, for not only do these would-be revolutionaries not understand the deformities of those they support--and are extremely likely to feel personally betrayed when the inevitable occurs--but are likely to carry over the Stalinist hallmarks of class-collaboration and murderous opportunism into the American revolutionary movement. It is vitally necessary to keep in mind that Ho Chi Minh and his co-thinkers have already sold out the Vietnamese revolution twice before. They stand ready, able and about to do the same thing again in 1968. And if they do, another, perhaps even more brutal and protracted, war in Viet Nam will automatically be put on the docket.

Although the present anti-imperialist struggle in Viet Nam had its origin in spontaneous uprisings un-

der nationalists against Ngo Diem, then American puppet-in-residence, it soon came under the control and direction of the remnants of the Stalinist cadre left from the Viet Minh. Even so, their influence was not sufficient to squelch the embryonic civil war. The leaders had little control over the matter; had they pulled out they would have lost influence altogether. Today there is no question that the "communist" People's Revolutionary Party, allied politically with Ho's Lao Dong in the North, holds political leadership in the NLF.

Yet despite the fact that the NLF leadership is officially communist, the program under whose banner it fights is nothing of the sort. The new, revised and heavily publicized program (Guardian, 21 July 1967), agreed upon early last September at a convention of the top NLF leadership, is totally inadequate to implement or even project the changes needed internally in South Viet Nam in order to wrest it from imperialist control. Among other things, the program affords protection for private trade and industry, the private ownership of land, the seizure and distribution of the land of absentee landlords (other land is to be bought up gradually, presumably when the money is available--hardly the massive "land reform" program everyone knows is vitally and integrally necessary), protection of the interests of foreign plantation owners and others, respect for land tenure of Buddhists and other religions, a liberal economy with state support in its "vital" sectors and the acceptance of economic aid from any countries, East or West, provided there are no strings attached. These are the more "radical" sections of the document!

It is quite evident that this program cannot be considered a "transitional" one (a bridge between capitalism and socialism?) insofar as, far from laying the groundwork for the liquidation of a capitalist class structure even eventually, it only calls for the establishment of a "neutral" capitalism, independent of any sector of world finance capitalism. Why it should re-

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