

# SPARTACIST



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## *Toward Stalinism or Trotskyism?*

# NEW LEFT'S DEATH AGONY

The heavily publicized SDS split at its National Convention in Chicago was the culmination of a year of factional squabbling and in-fighting between the "National Collective" (NC) and the "Worker-Student Alliance" (WSA). The WSA is led by the Progressive Labor Party (PL), this country's semi-official—although by no means only—Maoist organization. The NC is based on SDS's National Officers and their supporters who included, as it turned out, the Communist Party and the Black Panthers. The NC tendency is actually a bloc of several distinct groups (the old New Left exemplified by Mark Rudd, Avakian's Bay Area Revolutionary Union, National Secretary Mike Klonsky) which crystallized in reflexive reaction to the aggressive assault on mainstream New Leftism mounted by the WSA.

In terms of size and influence, SDS was at its apex. Students newly radicalized by the Viet Nam war and repressions of the ghetto rebellions flocked to SDS in droves, attracted by its professed openness and its activism. In the main contemptuous of theory, SDSers scorned the "Old Left," which they viewed as dogmatic, anti-democratic and faction-ridden, and sought to replace the old disputes with only a few classless phrases: "participatory democracy," "community control," "organize the poor," "doing your own thing," etc. In 1965, PL dissolved its earlier youth group, the May 2nd Movement (which had attempted, unsuccessfully, to compete with SDS) to enter SDS.

### **SDS Goes Stalinist**

Faced with the pressing lack of program, perspective and theory, SDS began to harden up in a number of directions. The politics of PL, the main group visible in SDS with any kind of proletarian line, had tremendous appeal to the most serious SDSers groping for a class analysis. Partly in response, anti-PL'ism began to crystallize a strong sentiment to transform SDS into a democratic-centralist youth organization, a disciplined group representing evolving mainstream New Leftism. At the June 1968 SDS Convention held in East Lansing, PL came close to being thrown out of SDS as an "external cadre organization." The recent Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) proposal embodied this attempt to transform SDS into domestic Red Guards, a hard-line youth party.

At this year's June convention, the two currents met head-on. There was no doubt that a showdown was in the wings as the tension ran high, occasionally erupting into fist fights and lapsing into shouting matches with each side waving Mao's "Little Red Book" at the other. The stage was set for a repetition in a higher key of last year's PL-baiting, and it became apparent that this year the NC did not intend to stop short of expulsion. There was only one catch: the PL-WSA wing, by dint of their crude working-class line's appeal and after months of determined organizing, came to the Convention with what was probably a majority of the delegates. The NC was forced to speed up its timing in order to force the intended split *before* the final voting for the incoming leadership. In a heavy-handed maneuver, they brought in the Black Panther Party for an obviously pre-planned denunciation of "racism" and "Trotskyism," including threats of physical violence. Immediately following a harangue by the Panthers, leaflets were distributed—in a masterpiece of convenient timing—castigating PL for its "counter-revolutionary" and "racist" stands on Cuba, the NLF, the Black movement, etc. The splitting faction, representing a large *minority* of the organization, walked out of the Convention hall and SDS. They took with them SDS's funds, mailing lists, offices and newspaper.

The Klonsky-Avakian-Dohrn bloc is united chiefly in its hostility to PL, its uncritical "Third World" enthusiasm, its refusal to tolerate criticism of what used to be called "progressive forces" and its anti-working-class line. They see colonial revolutions as a precondition to any radicalization of the U.S. working class, whose role they see as at best passive allies for the Vietnamese or else as a labor aristocracy bought off by imperialist crumbs. Thus, they reduce themselves to cheerleaders for the "Third World" guerrillas and function domestically as white Black Nationalists.

### **Spartacist Intervenes**

The Spartacist League intervened at the Convention with several resolutions and position papers (reprinted in this issue of SPARTACIST). After the split of the NC bloc, our comrades remained in SDS (i.e., the WSA wing, to whom we stand closer than to the NC splitters who are both politically to their right and openly exclu-

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## Special Issue on Split in SDS

## ... AGONY

sionist), functioning as a left-wing opposition to PL. The ex-Trotskyist SWP-YSA was conspicuous by its non-intervention, not surprising since among youth groups the YSA stands qualitatively to the right of both the WSA and NC wings of SDS. As a footnote, the Independent Socialist Clubs have finally provided a demonstration of their "third camp" philosophy by running candidates in the Klonskyite group while proposing motions condemning the splitters to the WSA wing. For those who have been wondering where the "third camp" is located, the answer seems to be—a foot in both camps.

### Theoretical Bankruptcy

In a sense, PL has had its own Stalinism shoved down its throat. In December 1968, at the Ann Arbor National Council, PL blocked with the NC to racist-bait the Marcus group ("SDS Labor Committee") for their critical support to the UFT in the NYC teachers' strike, and supported their expulsion in direct violation of SDS's non-exclusionist Constitution. Now PL is at the mercy of the same degenerate, anti-consciousness weapons in the hands of the NC—exclusion and slander—for their critical attitude toward Black Nationalism and the "Third World" Stalinist leaders, a line which is too far left for the NC and its right-wing Stalinists. In a classic ironic twist PL, after years of denouncing Trotskyists for criticizing Stalinist-led movements and their states, is itself accused of Trotskyism for its present version of the classically Trotskyist position that denunciation of betrayals is vital rather than divisive in the fight against imperialism. Further, before its recent turn, PL spent years uncritically supporting Black Nationalism in all its guises, thus helping establish the precedent that the Panthers—who have now led the anti-PL purge—must be correct by definition.

While the Klonsky-Dohrn-Avakian wing comes out openly for smashing the working class for its racism, the WSA-PL opposes Black separatism and calls for working-class unity across color lines. This is again a crude version of an impulse toward Trotskyism: that is, the program of proletarian revolution rather than Maoist peasant-based "Bloc of Four Classes" national movements. But in typical Stalinist fashion, PL has rejected its former line of uncritical apologetics for Black Nationalism only to jump over the Leninist outlook into the camp of color-blind unity-mongering, denying the need to fight against the special oppression of Black workers.

### Maoists vs. Mao

Avakian and the Panthers were right when they accused PL of deviating from Maoist orthodoxy, since for Maoists, as for Stalin, "national liberation" and blocs with petty-bourgeois class forces must take priority over class struggle. PL's shift on the national question seems a genuine attempt to create a Leninist class-conscious politics of struggle. But PL must at the same time for reasons of power (keeping the Chinese franchise) lug Maoism around their necks like a millstone. Rejection of Stalin and Mao being out of the question, of course, PL cannot inquire into its historical roots or the basis of its present theories, which

### WHO'S WHAT NOW?

**"The Progressive Labor Party has attacked every revolutionary nationalist struggle of the Black and Latin peoples in the U.S. as being racist and reactionary. . . . Progressive Labor Party has attacked Ho Chi Minh, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the revolutionary government of Cuba—all leaders of the peoples' struggles for freedom against U.S. imperialism. Progressive Labor Party, because of its positions and practices, is objectively racist, anti-communist, and reactionary. It has no place in SDS, an organization of revolutionary youth."**

(from official statement of National Collective wing of SDS following June 1969 Convention, establishing new criteria for SDS membership)

**"The Spartacists, in general, want a revolution in Cuba, China (People's Republic), Algeria and the USSR. This position and others has been taken by the Spartacists and other trotskyites. Coincidentally, this is the same position taken by the U.S. State Department. . . . In effect, the trotskyites do the work of the enemy."**

(from PL's William McAdoo's letter to the Chicago Epton Defense Committee excluding Spartacists from Epton defense work, 3 March 1965)

would reveal a great deal about its heroes. And without any methodology, PL can only readjust its mistakes by flip-flopping impressionistically every time the wind changes, often to a symmetrical error from the opposite direction.

The Leninist-Trotskyist conception of the role of the vanguard in broader struggles includes recognition of the special oppression of racial, ethnic, national, social minorities and seeks to fight for the special needs of all the oppressed while recognizing the primacy of class issues and the necessity

for proletarian hegemony. Leninists see the need for mass *organizational forms*—transitional organizations for, e.g., Black people, women, youth—to struggle for their special needs and cut across national, ethnic and sexual divisions in order to focus all the oppressed on a fight against the real source and profiteers of their exploitation. PL's recent discovery of the illusory nature of Black Nationalism is insufficient and, especially coming from left-wingers in the belly of the most powerful imperialist nation on earth, decisively so. In this country, in which racial divisions in the working masses have been successfully exploited in the interests of the rulers for hundreds of years, any pretention to a perspective of class unity without an understanding of how to overcome divisions which cut across class lines is theoretically bankrupt.

### Xerox Copy SDSes

The physical act of bringing off the split exposes the NC as viciously sectarian. Crystallized into a tendency within SDS, they sought to turn SDS itself into their model of a youth party, with their politics, rather than organizing a competitor to PL outside SDS while continuing to function inside SDS as a tendency. They desire instead to remake SDS in their own image, wishing to both retain their power as national officers and avoid political combat with other tendencies in an open organization, a fear all Stalinists share. In splitting SDS, they have destroyed the one organization in which the programs and analyses of all the groups could compete for adherents while still remaining democratic, inclusive and open at the bottom for newly radicalized youth. We also would like to see an organization of revolutionary youth organized along the correct program—i.e., a Young Spartacist. But to seek to play power politics in the hope of turning SDS itself into such a group would be viciously destructive of radicalizing the newer layers of young people.

The need for a broad-based, non-exclusionary democratic organization of radical youth remains. But neither the Klonskyites nor the WSA-SDS is capable of making their rival organizations such a group. The Klonskyites immediately adopted an exclusionary clause barring from membership PL, anyone who opposes PL's exclusion and anyone who does not unconditionally support "the struggles of the Black and Latin colonies within the U.S. for national liberation" and the NLF, North Viet Nam, China, North Korea, Albania, Cuba. PL's own past history of organizational abuses militates strongly against the WSA's affirmed policy

of non-exclusion. PL itself excluded Spartacist supporters from their Harlem Defense Council and committees to defend Bill Epton on the political grounds that Trotskyism was "counter-revolutionary," a policy which they still maintain, and have occasionally used violence against other radicals. For tactical reasons, PL needs to be non-exclusionist in SDS now in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of its accusations against the NC splitters, but PL's own handling of its previous youth group—the May 2nd Movement—shows that PL will not be able to avoid the temptation to turn SDS into a Xerox copy of PL politically by getting rid of dissident individuals and throwing out oppositional tendencies.

#### The Check Bounces

The losers in the struggle are the NC bloc, too factionalized and incomplete in their political outlook to maintain any long-term organizational continuity. Their maneuvers at the SDS Convention have tied them to Stalinist manipulation tactics, which they will undoubtedly spend their political future perfecting. The NC is a sorry lot. It took only an indecent three days for one of their uncritical Stalinist blank checks to bounce. At the split, PL was castigated as counter-revolutionary because they criticize Castro's Cuba, the National Collective's Caribbean Vatican. Yet three days later the *New York Times* reported that Black Panthers residing in Cuba have been jailed for organizing Black Cubans. One wonders what the NC can possibly say in a situation like this, where *any* statement they could make (aside from cynical denial of the whole episode) should by rights exclude them from their own organization by their own criteria!

The servile enthusing of the NC for Stalinist bureaucracies from Albania to Viet Nam has nothing in common with either proletarian internationalism

or Marxism. Rather, it is a retreading of the path of the CPUSA, which in the late twenties started down the reformist road by losing its perspective for international proletarian revolution, transforming itself instead into a cheerleader and borderguard for the totalitarian bureaucracy consolidating itself in the Soviet Union. Yet PL, which wrongly considers that the USSR has simply returned to capitalism, maintains at the same time a schizoid ambivalence toward Cuba and North Viet Nam; as a result of their opportunist Avakian-like subservience toward "Maothought" they render themselves incapable of arriving at a Leninist revolutionary theory.

Would-be revolutionaries must understand that the "revisionism" which PL condemns began *with Stalin*, not after him, that class betrayal can be stopped only by political revolution against the conservative, nationalistic Stalinist bureaucrats and the restoration of the political dictatorship of the proletariat, and that "Trotskyism" is not a curse-word but is the *international, proletarian, revolutionary* perspective in opposition to Stalinism, the neo-Menshevik revisionism which stands for class collaboration and betrayal.

#### Stalinism or Trotskyism?

In impulse, PL might be characterized as "Trotskyism with a pre-frontal lobotomy." The essential contradiction for PL is that it has not come down decisively either as an apologist for Third World Stalinism—as its Maoism would dictate—or for proletarian revolution in the U.S. Whereas faithful Maoism necessitates the subordination of the class struggle to the "national liberation" movements, PL actually broke with the Canadian Maoists to adopt a critical attitude towards Ho Chi Minh and the NLF. Time after time they have come up with positions

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EDITORS: David Cunningham;  
Managing, Elizabeth Gordon;  
Assistant, Joel Salant;  
West Coast, Christopher Kinder;  
Southern, Joseph Vetter.

BUSINESS MANAGER: Elaine West.

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which are in essence an unconscious bad paraphrase of Trotskyist analysis, usually several years too late and after denouncing as "counter-revolutionary" these very positions. Unable to stand up against any study of history or theory, which would reveal the betrayals of Stalin and Mao as well as PL's own checkered past, PL *must* continue to denounce Trotskyism and to practice the same Stalinist slander, exclusionism and violence which the Klonsky wing is now employing against them.

This decisive split in SDS comes after years of rejecting the lessons of history and the "old disputes" of the earlier movement as sectarian and irrelevant. The split reflects a clear left-right polarization between those who continue an anti-worker elitism and those who subjectively seek, in an abortive and distorted way, working-class politics. Both sides have now accepted, if unevenly and incompletely, the counter-revolutionary dead-end of Stalinism—a massive tradition of anti-Leninism built upon the physical destruction of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and which has behind it a series of betrayals of the international working class from China in 1927-8 through Spain in 1936-7 to Indonesia in 1965. It is indeed ironic that the New Left, after years of rejecting the "Old Left," should end up embracing precisely that aspect of the "Old Left" responsible for the sterility and failure of the efforts of perhaps millions of dedicated militants who at one time shared SDS's subjective commitment to revolution. Chicago marked the death of a flawed, contradictory and hopeful phenomenon, the New Left. ■

## Defend Black Panthers!

The authorities are everywhere trying to destroy the only existing nation-wide Black movement of struggle.

## Free the New York 21

jailed in a vicious, transparent frame-up and held on \$100,000 bail each for "Conspiracy" charges.

Money for legal defense is urgently needed.  
Send to:

Black Panther Party  
Box 1224  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202

# THE SECRET WAR BETWEEN B. (AND WI

The following document was written for a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) regional conference by Spartacist League comrades in the South; later, copies of the polemic, with an introduction and entitled Mike Klonsky Versus Brother Stalin, were distributed at the June 1969 SDS Convention.

Trotskyists loathe Stalin, and after his earliest years we do not consider his views Marxist. Marxism and the National Question was a viable reference for two reasons: this was Klonsky's "theoretical" cover for his own separatist views, not corresponding to canon text; secondly, as the document makes clear, Stalin wrote this work in 1913 at Lenin's direction and under his editorial tutelage. The work pales in significance compared with the subtlety and depth of Lenin's own work on nationalities; but if mediocre, Stalin's essay is still considered justifiably a theoretical contribution of the Marxist movement.

But even in terms of his own theory, Stalin never had an integrated and systematic view on the national question. The man who shortly before the Bolshevik Revolution was capable (with aid) of stating the Leninist analysis on imperialism and the special oppression of minorities could, by 1922, indulge himself in a fierce, great-power bureaucratic suppression of Georgia and the Georgian Bolsheviks in so crass and ugly a manner that when finally notice of this came to the attention of the dying Lenin his response was to recommend to the Central Committee of his party that Stalin be removed from the office of its General Secretary.

Our document quotes Stalin to the effect that in contradistinction to the bourgeoisie's attempt to prolong the national aspects of social struggle, "the class-conscious proletariat cannot rally under the 'national' flag of the bourgeoisie." This is Lenin's politics. Yet the same man who wrote that became the architect of the popular front with the "progressive bourgeoisie" and in China, Spain, France and tens of other places wrecked potential communist revolutions by the self-same rallying under the "national" flag. Would-be revolutionaries should understand that blind enthusiasm for "national liberation movements" in preference to class struggle conceptions leads down an old, old road heaped with the bodies of dedicated communists butchered by their "progressive," "liberal" bourgeois allies. Those who seek sustenance in Maothought should remember that it

was Mao, Stalin's greatest living acolyte himself, who engineered the political techniques that disarmed the Indonesian working class and led to the mass execution of their Communist Party. Readers of this document should not allow any admiration for Stalin's youthful Leninist orthodoxy here to blind them to the fact that in whatever contemporary guise Stalinism is the syphilis of the workers' movement and unless mercilessly eradicated will destroy yet another generation of young revolutionaries.

What is self-determination? SDS National Secretary Mike Klonsky says self-determination means the right of a group, or a people, to decide their own destiny.

According to Marxism, self-determination means the right of a nation to independence and equality in its dealings with other nations.

What's the difference? First, the Marxist begins with material reality. Can this or that group *really* decide its own destiny? Maybe students and soldiers *ought* to be able to decide their own destiny. It might be nice. But these groups *exist* only because they're subsidized by the rest of society. Their struggles for political and personal freedom are necessary and just, but we can't talk about self-determination for a fragment of society that can't support itself. Would a steel mill, under socialism, decide its own destiny? No, the fate of the mill and the workers would be *socially* determined by the need for steel, the availability of ore, the state of technology, the skill and consciousness of the workers.

After a successful revolution, does a workers' state "decide its own destiny"? No. Cuba's destiny is strongly influenced by U.S. and Soviet foreign policy. Even if socialism were victorious on a world scale, the economic development of individual areas and industries would be *socially* determined on an *international* basis.

So, Marxists don't begin by asking whether a group *wants* complete autonomy, or is oppressed, or deserves a break, or *feels* it needs independence. When a revolutionary says "self-determination" he isn't talking about abstract or utopian independence from society by small, weak castes—"student power," for example. The revolutionary uses "self-determination" to describe the right to *secede*, and the capability to form a nation, when that struggle for secession advances the revolution—the *whole* class struggle.

## A Black Nation?

Klonsky says American Blacks are a nation, and that self-determination, *in the Marxist sense*, applies to their struggle. In his recent *New Left Notes* article on SSOC, he says:

*"While I disagree with SSOC's notion of the South as a colony, I do believe that the nature of the struggle in the South is going to take on special characteristics. This is due primarily to the historic role of the Black liberation movement in the South and to the fact that the historical basis for a separate Black nation lies in the South." (emphasis added)*

Of course the South will exhibit special characteristics. The revolution in Brooklyn will be very different from the struggle in Queens, for that matter. But is there *actually* a historical basis for a separate Black nation? Is there *now*, or in the future, a *material* basis for separatism?

Brother Klonsky seems to assume—correctly—that most radicals are unaware of just what Marxists consider constitutes a "nation." At the recent SSOC High School Conference in Atlanta, he recommended as an authority on the national question—J. V. Stalin. Lenin, too, considered Stalin an authority on the national question for the Party; that is, until Stalin's brutal treatment of the Georgian communists, along with other offenses against the Bolshevik principle led Lenin to declare that Stalin's tenure as General Secretary posed grave dangers for the Party.

## Stalin's Contribution

A standard work on the national question and self-determination is Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question*. We reread it after the confusing experience of listening to Klonsky in Atlanta. The National Secretary kept referring to "self-determination" to support his points. For example, he said that American radicals have no right to criticize the policies of the NLF. That would be imperialism, since their revolution was their own business. We were wondering whether we had the right to criticize counter-revolutionary Soviet policy when he dropped another one—criticism of the Black Panthers indicated a racist mentality, since whites had no right to tell the Black liberation fighters what to do.

That sounded consistent, anyway. But the next moment Klonsky had nominated the Panthers for vanguard not only of the Black liberation struggle,

# ROTHER KLONSKY AND STALIN IO WON)

but the whole American revolution. Now if the National Secretary really thought he had no business criticizing the Blacks he wouldn't be putting the Panthers on a pedestal at the expense of SNCC, ELRUM, and many others. He would take his own advice, and keep his mouth shut. However, no such deviation from character occurred.

By and by, Klonsky was asked where his theory came from. He referred us to Stalin. We had read the pamphlet. Someone had a very bad memory. Checking the pamphlet would tell us which. When we reread Uncle Joe's work, we found that Stalin contradicted Klonsky on every point. The differences can't be accounted for by lapse of memory.

Let's summarize just what Stalin said about the national question in 1913, when his view was close to Lenin's. Once people get this straight in their minds, Klonsky can come forward and take credit for developing a new theory of nationalism that has nothing to do with the Bolshevik crew of amateurs.

## Leninist Criteria

What constitutes a nation, and once we know that, what should we do about it? In *Marxism and the National Question* (Stalin, *Works*, vol. ii, pp. 300-381) Stalin declares that:

*"A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."*

He goes further:

*"It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation."*

The Bolsheviks thought it was pointless to spend a lot of blood trying to get political independence for groups which would fall, quickly and totally, under the economic domination of some other power. So they defined a nation in such a way as to exclude religions, cliques, castes, and any other groups which couldn't make a go of it independently. Stalin set down four characteristics, and specified that a "nation" must have *all* of them.

- 1) Common language
- 2) Common territory
- 3) Common economic life (with independent class structure and means of

production organized along capitalist lines)

4) Common psychological make-up; common culture

Now which of these features of nationalism is shared by Blacks in the U.S.? Do they have a common language? Well, yes: English, like most other Americans. Common territory? While the South retains a large Black population, the population shift of Blacks in the last fifty years has been from the rural South into all parts of the country, especially into the big cities, many of which now have Black majorities or near-majorities. The geographical distribution of Blacks is increasingly the same as that of the U.S. working class as a whole. Psychological make-up manifested in a common culture? This question lends itself more than the others to subjective interpretation; but it seems that what common, distinctive culture exists is that of the lower, most oppressed stratum of the American working class and that section squeezed into the ranks of the chronically unemployed. Blacks may give the appearance of possessing some degree of special, national culture, because unlike whites almost all Blacks are working-class; this is a class difference in culture, not a national one. Appalachian white workers, or migrant agricultural laborers, for example, possess a somewhat distinct culture as a result of their special niches in capitalism's division of labor.

The forced segregation of Blacks in the U.S. is another factor lending them the appearance of nationhood. But this forced segregation from the bulk of the working class, of which they are economically a part, stands in direct contrast to the usual pattern of national oppression: forced assimilation. The forced segregation imposed on Blacks by a ruling class seeking to prevent working-class unity has impelled Blacks to seek integration and equality with the rest of the working class. Separatism is an accommodation to the ruling class' tactic of working-class division

along racial lines, and most Blacks know it. When they unite in separate Black organizations it has usually been to fight the separatism, the *appearance* of separate nationality, imposed upon them by the (white) bourgeoisie. A separatist ideology, in its very nature, cannot direct a struggle against the segregation which keeps Blacks in their doubly oppressed condition. And it's obviously dangerous to imply to racist white workers that since Blacks are a separate nation and deserve a separate state, the whites can have a segregated socialism. This is not different in principle from SSOC's organizing workers as Southerners.

## Utopian Cultural Nationalism

People trying to make a case for Black Culture usually tell only half, or less than half, of the story. They emphasize escape, insurrection, sabotage, protest—the whole spectrum of Black resistance to oppression.

In fact, these traditions are largely absent from the Black community. They are smothered by the culture of humility and submission promoted by the preachers and Uncle Toms. The demand for Black studies is an attempt by the militants to attack the dominant ghetto culture, the culture of submission. This situation duplicates that of the working class as a whole: a dominant ideology of religion and patriotism, promoted by the rulers and all their media, and an insurgent culture of class struggle preserved by the left and part of the labor movement.

In their book *Black Power*, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton state:

*"Under classic colonialism, the colony is a source of cheaply produced raw materials . . . which the "Mother Country" then processes into finished goods and sells at a high profit—sometimes back to the colony itself. The black communities in the United States do not export anything except human labor." (p. 6, emphasis added)*

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## ... KLONSKY

Now that is a respectable Marxist definition not of a nation—colony or otherwise—but of the situation of the proletariat under capitalism. Many of the special features of Black life and consciousness in the U.S. follow from the fact that Blacks are proletarians like most other Americans, *only more so*; that is, the Black petty bourgeoisie is extremely small, and the Black big bourgeoisie non-existent. In the epoch of decaying capitalism there simply isn't room for new Black Rockefellers.

### On Separate Organization

Are Black people *simply* working-class, in their vast majority? No. They represent a *specialty* oppressed color caste within the U.S. working class. There are other such specialty oppressed states, or "castes," within the working class, and within the petty bourgeoisie as well. The special oppression of Blacks is *qualitatively* similar to that endured by women, youth, many American Indians (some of whom would qualify for a national status in the Marxist sense), and white ethnic minority groups. These examples, too, are predominantly working-class in composition, though sometimes less overwhelmingly so than Blacks. Each of these groups suffers special oppression in addition to the fundamental oppression of the working class under capitalism.

Modern Bolsheviks, like Lenin's party, do not oppose but rather encourage these groups to form special organizations to fight their special oppression. These organizations and movements do not *compete* with the vanguard party of the whole class, but rather are *linked to it* through their most conscious cadre. What we *must* oppose is the dual vanguard concept; the U.S. has a single bourgeois state and ruling class, and unifying the struggles of all capitalism's separate oppressed groups must be a *single* Marxist party.

With Lenin looking over his shoulder, Stalin would probably say that Blacks no longer have a common territory, that language barriers don't separate them from most other workers, that their culture is not widely divergent either, and that they own nothing but their bodies. He would conclude from this that it would be extremely difficult to unite the Blacks around a demand for secession. And if secession were accomplished, Black workers would still be working for white capitalists since there is no Black big bourgeoisie, no Black capital. Similarly, Lenin's party opposed self-determination for the Jewish ghetto because it provided no avenue of struggle against the dominant

institutions of oppression. For this reason the Party opposed the slogan despite the recognized special oppression of the Jews under Tsarism, and despite the existence of widespread anti-Semitism among the less conscious Russian workers.

So the Bolshevik Stalin might say: "Throw in with the white workers, struggle against the bosses and against the specific forms of oppression that isolate you and weaken you."

Klonsky cuts through all this nit-picking. He states, boldly and clearly, "If you want to secede, go ahead. It's your blood, and anyway it's not my business to tell you what to do."

Let's put another question to Klonsky and Stalin: Assuming an oppressed and oppressor nation, how should the vanguard party organize?

Klonsky thinks in terms of two vanguards—one Black, one white—with unity at some future date.

Stalin's views on the vanguard are sort of old-fashioned:

*"We know where the demarcation of workers according to nationalities leads to. The disintegration of a united workers' party, the splitting of trade unions, aggravation of national friction, national strike-breaking, complete demoralization within the ranks of Social-Democracy."*

Simple, isn't it? One ruling class, one vanguard. One boss, one union. One bureaucracy, one caucus to fight it. Stalin wouldn't think much of ELRUM, with its demands for Black foremen. That would seem to him only one step from the demand for Black cops.

Klonsky is more open-minded and liberal in his approach. He's more modest and diplomatic. He knows his place.

### No Liberal Blank Checks

Let's assume Klonsky can persuade us that the situation of the American Blacks is a national-liberation question, and furthermore, that it requires a separate vanguard. Would that mean that revolutionaries shouldn't criticize the Black vanguard? The Bolsheviks were notorious for fierce and uncompromising criticism of foreign vanguard parties. *Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* is mostly criticism of the mistakes of other vanguards. Lenin considered this international criticism and debate to be a *vital* part of internationalism.

Marxists emphatically *do not* support all national demands. They proclaim the *right* of nations to wage their own class struggles, to decide their own historic destinies, even to move backward to an outmoded social order. But Marxists don't abdicate their responsibility to their class, the proletariat. They don't tail-end the self-determination struggle. They try to direct it politically, to lead the national struggle

in a direction favorable to the *international proletariat* and the establishment of its dictatorship. They don't act as yes-men for national movements, which usually suffer from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leadership. Honest revolutionaries don't issue blank checks of support to anybody.

The Bolsheviks adopted an extremely critical attitude toward national movements and their demands. In the first section of the pamphlet cited Stalin observes that nationalism was flourishing in 1913, to the weakening and defeat of the proletarian movement internationally. As to the Marxist approach, he says:

*"Social-Democracy [will not] support every demand of a nation. A nation has the right even to return to the old order of things; but this does not mean that Social-Democracy will subscribe to such a decision if taken by some institution of a particular nation. The obligations of Social-Democracy, which defends the interests of the proletariat, and the rights of a nation, are two different things."*

*"This is what essentially distinguishes the policy of the class-conscious proletariat from the policy of the bourgeoisie, which attempts to aggravate and fan the national struggle and to prolong the national movement."*

*"And that is why the class-conscious proletariat cannot rally under the 'national' flag of the bourgeoisie."*

Stalinist enthusiasts for non-proletarian "movements of national liberation around the world" (Arab nationalism, Ben Bella & Boumedienne, Sukarno, Chiang Kai-shek in the 1920's, etc.) should note that Stalin, too, before he liquidated the Old Bolsheviks Left, Right, and Center, spoke for the critical, proletarian, Leninist approach to the national question.

Stalin makes another important observation about nationalism which is very difficult to square with the "historical basis" which Klonsky says exists for a separate Black nation in the U.S.

*"A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into nations."*

Does Klonsky believe that the twentieth century is one of "rising capitalism" in the U.S.? Or that the U.S., even the South, was "feudal" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the historical basis for a separate Black nation was presumably being laid?

### Ersatz Orthodoxy

Summing up: Klonsky and the National Collective have been using Sta-

lin's name—only his name—to justify their attitude toward the Black liberation struggle and their overall perspective for SDS. Even a *hasty* reading of *Marxism and the National Question* leaves us with this choice of conclusions:

- 1) Klonsky can't read.
- 2) Klonsky is lying.

Ever since the National Collective made its first abortive power-play it has been desperately searching for a national perspective for SDS that would justify greater centralism. It was unable to develop a program of class struggle, because most of the National Collective doesn't believe in the working class as a revolutionary force, much less the *primary* force for change. But it could and did unite around the romantic appeal of the Panthers. By making the victory of the Black movement a precondition for the development of the American revolution (Klonsky, "The White Question," *NLN* 20 Mar. '69) it has dumped the difficult job of teaching class consciousness and promoting the class struggle. What remains is simple agitation against white supremacy, which quite a few liberal and reformist groups have been doing for years. In effect, the National Collective is "with" the Panthers the same way a tape worm is "with" its host. If the Panthers pressure the National Collective to adopt a genuine revolutionary strategy of class struggle, we can depend on the parasite to leave by the traditional route.

#### PL vs. Marxist Clarity

The chief opposition to the National Collective's line on nationalism has come from Progressive Labor. Observers of this battle should know that until its drastic left turn on nationalism of a few months ago, PL endorsed the same kind of petty-bourgeois nationalist movements here and abroad which the National Collective enthuses over now. PL condemned the Trotskyist Spartacist League for its critical approach to national movements, an approach now adopted by them. PL won't admit just *whose* analysis they have borrowed from, any more than Stalin admitted adopting aspects of the Left Opposition's program *after* purging them from the Party. They admit they were wrong on the Black liberation movement, Algeria, the NLF, etc. (see the article on Black Liberation in *PL*, Feb. '69), but they can't say who was *right* on these questions or what *political method* led them to avoid PL's errors. Maybe they feel that all that's lost is Marxist clarity, and they're right. Keeping silent means fewer questions when a new zig-zag is called.

PL has not revised its *method* of analyzing problems like the national question. That would require the repudia-

tion of all the characteristic theory and practice of Communist Parties since Stalin's break with Lenin, Trotsky, and Marxism, and his dictatorship over the Party. Socialism in One Country, the Bloc of Four Classes, the Theory of Social Fascism, the liberal Pop Fronts—all this history of the Third International parties would have to be condemned, and that would be getting "dangerously" close to—Trotskyism. PL belongs to a tradition of degenerate Bolshevism—Stalinism and Maoism. Both look to social formations other than the working class for support of parasitic bureaucracies ruling in place of the proletariat. This is the basis, in political method, of the forty-year pattern of betrayal of the proletariat, a betrayal proceeding from the bureaucracy's need to obtain support or neutrality from bourgeois forces. PL's dependence on the ideology and leadership emanating from China (read *Peking Review*, if you can) will bring their national position right back to where it was should Mao's bureaucracy reprimand PL for its recent divergence from Peking's ultra-opportunistic stance on the national question. The old Moscow-oriented Communist Parties followed every twist and turn of the Soviet bureaucracy as it sought to avoid the twin dangers of imperialist invasion and workers' political control from below—in the period which PL considers healthy and revolutionary. Radicals leaning toward PL should keep their political spines flexible, and keep close watch on *Peking Review*. ■

—Nick Dicken—SDS at large, Spartacist League

—Leon Day—SDS at large, Spartacist League

## ... WARFARE

(Continued from Back Page)

ganization would be both artificial and destructive.

Resolved: That SDS remain a broad-based, democratic organization of radical youth, committed to socialism.

### 3. On Stalinist Wreckers

The split by the Avakian-Dohrn-Klonskyite wreckers, aided by the Black Panther Party, occurred after this resolution was prepared. This split was the logical culmination of the past year's intense faction fighting, in which the two major factions carried on a political fight in the manner of Stalinists, that is, through a jockeying for power based more on intimidation and manipulation than democratic discussion. It is to be pointed out that the heavy-handed actions and preplanning of the National Collective, Bay Area Revolutionary Union, and Black Panther Party far outdid any other group

## Spartacist Local Directory

- AUSTIN.** Box 8165, Univ. Sta., Austin, Texas 78712. phone: 476-9714.
- BERKELEY.** Box 852, Main P.O., Berkeley, Calif. 94701. phone: 525-5243.
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- WASHINGTON, D.C.-BALTIMORE.** Box 680, Ben Franklin Sta., Washington, D.C. 20044.

in terms of opportunist, anti-democratic, Stalinist functioning.

In this context, something must be said about the Black Panther Party. *The Black Panthers have newly discovered and repeated the errors which helped destroy the last Communist movement in the thirties.* That is, they make a suicidal confusion between fascism and bourgeois democracy, believing that they are living under fascism, and seek to create the *classless popular front against fascism* just as Stalin did in the thirties. While the Black Panthers have struggled hard against the bourgeois state they have ignored Lenin's dictum that without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolution.

At the SDS convention, the Black Panther Party allowed itself to be used by the right-wing Stalinists (Avakian-Klonskyites) in a fight against the left-wing Stalinists (Progressive Labor Party). In doing so, the Black Panther Party lent itself to the internal wrecking operation within SDS.

Political disputes between groups must be carried on in a free and open exchange, with the confidence that correct politics will win people. Reliance on under-the-table deals and threats can only be an obstacle to the making of a revolution.

We emphasize again our position on the future direction SDS should take. It should be a broad-based organization of radical youth committed to socialism, maintaining an internal life of democracy and non-exclusionism. ■

21 June 1969

## AS FACTIONAL WARFARE ERUPTS:

# Spartacist at Chicago

The following position papers were worked up in consultation and during the heat of struggle by the Spartacist League members in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) who attended the convention. 1500 of these papers were distributed there on Saturday, 21 June 1969. They were signed by:

George Kukich, Cornell SDS, Spartacist League

Gallatin Deitz, Univ. of Illinois SDS, Spartacist League

Libby Scheier, SDS-at-large (formerly at Berkeley), Spartacist League

Joel Salinger, SDS-at-large (formerly at Temple), Spartacist League

### 1. PL—Trotskyism with a Pre-Frontal Lobotomy

The Progressive Labor Party, purportedly Marxist-Leninist, has led a growing faction, the Worker-Student Alliance, within SDS, claiming to represent a working-class pole of attraction. There are, however, serious problems with the Progressive Labor program and its theoretical bulwark.

Progressive Labor has, since its inception, been caught on the horns of an irreconcilable contradiction; at once wanting to be both pro-working class (mainly because they are located physically in a country in which the bulk of the population are proletarians) and at the same time Maoist (i.e., Stalinist in theory); wanting to be against Soviet revisionism, but unable to realize that that revising took place with Stalin, not after him; wanting to be critical of past errors, such as that of the PKI of Indonesia forming a coalition with the Sukarno government, and not seeing in that error the generalizable flaw of the "left-center" coalition; wanting to be historical, but not looking critically at events of more than 20 years ago.

PL could be characterized as Trotskyist in that they have a pro-working-class orientation that now sees the proletariat, as opposed to national or ethnic forces, as the primary force in the revolutionary struggle. What makes PL susceptible to the charge of being lobotomized is their lack of understanding of international revolutionary events and theory of the past fifty years.

#### Recent Shifts

PL was totally uncritical of the NLF in its fight against imperialism, ignoring Ho Chi Minh's Stalinist betrayal of the revolution in 1946 and again in 1954 at Geneva, and only became dis-

enchanted with the NLF when it became obvious that another sell-out was in the wings. Similarly, Progressive Labor has only recently changed their line on Black Nationalism from uncritically tail-ending all "Black Liberation" struggles despite their political content or program, to indifference to the special needs of black people. Evidence of this is their insensitive opposition to the demand for "open admissions" at City College. They are unable to see that extension of open admissions into the demand for universal *free* higher education would be in the special interest of both black people and working-class struggle as a whole. Education is not simply the property of the bourgeoisie. This struggle for open admissions is similar to the struggle by the working class for free public education at the turn of the century. This type of fight is a real attack on class privilege requiring revolutionary tactics to implement.

In making this shift on the black question, PL poses the concept that racial oppression must be defeated before the class struggle can be fought. And in using this mechanical, undialectical approach, PL has jumped right over the Leninist position: blacks, due to their particular history and position in society, are going to play a leading role in a united vanguard struggle for a working-class revolution, while at the same time putting forward demands that strike at the heart of their caste oppression.

POST-SPLIT NOTE: PL's failure (following a vicious attack upon them) to criticize the Black Panther Party's role in Friday's events can only be characterized as opportunist.

### 2. Which Way SDS?

SDS has evolved as the leading radical student organization in the mid-sixties for two reasons: objectively there was an imperialist war in Viet Nam and racial discrimination in the U.S.; subjectively because of the movement's general openness, militancy and formal attempt at democracy in carrying through its many actions.

Slowly SDS came to understand the class nature of capitalism and the force that will bring it down—the revolutionary struggle of the working class. This was due in part to the open attitude of the student movement to developing new

ideas, to the class character of the society itself, and polemics by ostensibly revolutionary organizations such as PL.

However, students haven't broken out of their social milieu, and have failed to establish concrete links to the working-class movement; students in this society do not form a class and are in fact a multi-layered grouping in transition. Therefore, though it is proper for students to turn their attention in the direction of the working class, and utilize a Marxian analysis, the student movement cannot will itself into becoming a working-class organization. However, in the absence of a vanguard party rooted in the working class, there has been a strongly felt pressure on the part of student activists to prove themselves serious revolutionaries. This manifested itself as a growing sentiment in SDS for the body to become a Marxist-Leninist organization (i.e., in form, democratic centralist). This sentiment has been demonstrated by the hardening up of factions into an intense struggle for power.

This tendency should be opposed not merely because SDSers are students, but largely because SDS has not developed a program for working-class struggle which only comes with a comprehensive analysis of the history of other working-class struggles, particularly the Russian Revolution, their achievements, failures, and consequences for their working classes. Short of this elemental beginning of the creation of theory for the transition from capitalism to socialism, any attempt by SDS to become a Marxist-Leninist or-

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