

# SPARTACIST



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## DRAWING THE CLASS LINE

In the wake of the G.E. and postal strikes and with the immediate prospect of many more to follow, the U.S. left enters the 1970's with great expectations and a poor record. Despite the objective opportunities of the 1960's—the declining mass appeal of anti-communism, the dramatic rise in rank and file labor militancy and the vastly unpopular Viet Nam war—the radical movement has not made any *qualitative* advance over its isolation and weakness in the Cold War period. After ten years of strike waves and increasing campus militancy, there is still no revolutionary organization which can claim a mass following around a socialist program. It would be pointless for the ostensible revolutionary movement to deny its weakness, and sheer philistinism, to attribute it merely to "objective conditions." One of the key historic facts of any period is after all the strength and fitness of the conscious revolutionaries. The history of the recent period has been one of opportunities ignored, wasted and betrayed.

In the broadest terms, the lesson of the 1960's is that *politics is important*. The view, or mood, that radicals could evade the questions which had divided the "Old Left" was decisively exploded when Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the main organizational embodiment of the student radical upsurge, found itself torn to pieces by a split. The best that the bright young innovators—presumably uncorrupted by "Old Left" sectarian dogmatism and factional squabbling—could do was to find their way back, small scale, to the form and content of 1930's-style Stalinism. Those who in the days of "participatory democracy" insisted that history is bunk now find themselves demanding, on pain of physical exclusion, pledges of allegiance to the Albanian government. To paraphrase Marx, when history repeats itself, the first time is tragedy, the second, farce.

### Revisionism Faces 1970

The greatest growth of the decade can be claimed by the Socialist Workers Party-Young Socialist Alliance (SWP-YSA), whose increase in numbers parallels its departure from a revolutionary working-class orientation. Thus the SWP's current election campaigns have so little semblance, even formally, of a class character that those of us who are accustomed to generally giving them highly critical support can no longer find anything to support about them. Its electoral propaganda focuses on the anti-war movement—where it functions as the organized right wing, whose main purpose is building a mass base among anti-war youth for consumption by liberal politicians—and demands "self-deter-

mination" and "community control" for Blacks, Chicanos, etc. The SWP poses "liberation" for all social strata whom they see in motion, without consideration of their road to power. All oppressed social groups are not nations and thus cannot withdraw from society no matter how badly they may want to; to call for their "self-determination" can only mean substituting radical words to cover up a lack of perspective for struggle. To be sure, *any* social group, either by its own desperate choice or by the victory of fascism, could become a na-



NY Times

### POSTAL WORKERS vote for wildcat strike.

tion. Thus the Zionists got their state of Israel. We would point out to those who seek to make of Black people a separate nation: a new Black Israel, complete with refugee problem and reactionary chauvinist ideology, would be the inevitable result.

The old "New Left" was preoccupied with the search for "new" substitutes for class program and class power. The ideologies of pacifism, student power, draft resistance, the "new working class" all succeeded each other and all justified the same abstention from working-class struggle. A major wing of SDS, however, under the leadership of Progressive Labor (PL) shared, in a crude way, a recognition of the need to make some sort of turn toward the working class. On this basis PL built the Worker-Student Alliance caucus of SDS (WSA), PL's semi-official youth section.

PL-WSA has, however, proved incapable of advancing  
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## TOWARD REGROUPMENT: An Exchange

New York, N.Y.

Certainly, you are right about "the pressing need in this country for a united Leninist vanguard" and, certainly, the past history of "left" organizations confirms the finding that it isn't an easy task.

After carefully reading your editorial, I still have a few unanswered questions and perhaps your reply would be of interest to other readers as well.

Regroupment, if it is to be effective, must be achieved on a correct ideological basis—or, as you put it, one must not "blur political issues." As a basis for political regroupment, you set out various proposals: democratic rights within the workers' movement, a working-class orientation, class struggle politics, a class line on the war and internationalism. However helpful each of these may be, I wonder if they provide an adequate foundation on which to base a vanguard party.

### Thought of Mao

Take, for example, the question of the one-stage versus two-stage revolution that you mention elsewhere in your Nov.-Dec. issue. Here, in the U.S., where only a socialist revolution is on the order of the day, left-wing groups have nevertheless made this question a major topic of debate. So high do passions run that some insist that *only* a one-stage revolution (clearly proclaiming its allegiance to socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat) can bring victory to the peasants in feudal colonial or semi-colonial areas as well as to the workers in imperialist countries. Lenin was perhaps more flexible, acknowledging as he did that where the peasant question was more complex than in imperialist Russia different forms would have to be found for winning them. Since the question of stages and the whole national question have been so woefully befogged by muddled partisans, it seems to me that one cannot ignore these questions or merely fume at those we disagree with but that one must patiently and systematically explain the whole business, as Lenin did when he showed how his contemporaries were often unaware of the difference between a socialist revolution and a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

### Two-Stage Revolution

Perhaps even more "troublesome" is the question of China. Here, PL is not very helpful when, in one breath, it claims to recognize China as the center of world revolution but, in the other, tells us that China is following the Soviet revisionists down the capitalist road because China has agreed to discuss the boundary question with a Soviet delegation. A left group that is "for in-

ternationalism" has to reckon with China and with the thought of Mao! It cannot lightly brush aside the fact that the Communist Party of China under Mao's leadership has liberated a nation of 700 million people, established socialism, conducted a principled campaign against Soviet revisionism and carried out a great proletarian cultural revolution. Yet, in its brief editorial indictment, PL did not even bother to cite the reasons given by the Chinese for entering into discussions with the Soviet delegation on the boundary issue.

While I am not familiar with SL's position, I gather that SL is not in full accord with the CP of China. This is not surprising and need not be an insuperable obstacle to agreeing on a vanguard but what I would like to see spelled out are the differences and the reasons for them. The 9th National Congress of the CCP carefully set forth its policy in considerable detail and, if we have differences, why not make them explicit and concrete? If we agree with parts of it, too, we could say so.

Fraternally yours,  
F.P.

### Editors' Reply:

The five working political positions discussed in our editorial SPARTACIST #14, Nov.-Dec. 1969) constitute, we feel, the programmatic basis for regroupment. Underlying them is the methodology and historical analysis centered on unconditional defense of the deformed workers states.

The theory of revolution by stages has a bad political history. "Postponing" socialist revolution has long meant subordinating the proletariat to the bourgeoisie, producing massacre, defeat and victorious counter-revolution: China 1927, Spain 1937, Indonesia 1965. The degenerated Communist International under Stalin resurrected the Menshevik theory of stages to hold back international proletarian revolutions.

### Permanent Revolution

You cite Lenin as questioning whether countries qualitatively more backward than Russia would require "different forms" for liberation. To apply this to China is false and suicidal (see article in this issue). But even for an area like Laos, which in fact has no workers and hardly any peasants, being composed mainly of preagrarian tribes, the classic "two-stage" theory is not helpful.

The "two-stage" theory is that backward countries must repeat the identical process of development as the now-advanced nations. However, on the contrary, in this era of capitalist decline the experience of colonial areas be-

comes more and more unlike the model, combining elements of backwardness with the most modern features. It would be historically naive to expect these countries to follow the same patterns as nations which industrialized during the flowering of capitalism, or compete with the imperialist nations in the context of the capitalist world market.

Such areas are held in their arrested condition by the capitalist world system. If they cannot long lead the world socialist revolution, they can spark it. Their final liberation can only be as part of a world socialist community, which, before it can become a classless society, must bring to bear the wealth and technology of the advanced nations on poverty and backwardness. Now more than ever, the international proletariat must be the vanguard.

### PL vs. Mao

PL is attempting to be properly leftist but lacks a grasp of fundamentals. To declare it immoral for China to discuss with "revisionists" instead of going to war over marginal real estate and nationalist egotism is infantile, of a piece with PL's reducing opposition to North Viet Nam's conservatism to a denial they should take Russian arms (in 1916 Lenin justified the Irish patriots' taking German rifles!). Equating negotiation *per se* with betrayal basically assumes one's professed heroes are really just bureaucrats who will sell out if possible. Falsely labeling the USSR "capitalist" does not solve the problem. A model for communist conduct is that of the Leninists at Brest-Litovsk, when revolutionary Russia was forced to make sacrifices to end the war with Germany in order to hasten the German revolution as well as save soviet power in Russia.

PL's confusion over China's negotiations is nonetheless a reflection of healthier impulses—distrust of the CCP in any other than an ultimatic stance. For indeed one of the characteristics of Stalinism is to either grovel or bluster. But unable or unwilling to see the roots of "revisionism" in the communist movement, PL can only rail against surface manifestations and propose fantastic answers to the problems created by a history of betrayal and defeat.

Northwestern University  
Department of History

I thought the piece on open admissions, in the Oct. issue of Spartacist East, was one of the best things I've seen on that subject. . . .

Christopher Lasch

[A free copy of the Oct. 1969 Spartacist East referred to is still available to interested readers. Write P.O. Box 1377, G.P.O., NYC 10001.]

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programmatically beyond a primitive, Economist, un-Marxist "workerism" (which resembles classless "Third Worldism" under a different banner). PL's official Maoism demands a parochial and patronizing approach to workers, while hesitating to raise its politics. Lin Piao's conception, sometimes ignored but not repudiated, that the poorest of society will encircle and destroy the imperialist metropolis, is reflected in PL-WSA's exclusive concentration on campus workers—an unorganized section of the class possessing little social power—as the strategy for radicalizing students; at the same time they reject any attempt to radicalize workers. The social-work emphasis on demonstrating solidarity over minor grievances is derived from the Maoist preachments of winning neutrality or support from the peasantry by "serving the people" rather than by winning them over politically.

Basic to PL's narrowness is their explicit hostility to Trotskyist *transitional* demands. Instead, PL counterposes a minimal/maximal concept of program which switches impressionistically and overnight between two poles: demands generally more trivial than many trade unionist demands, minor enough to be won by a weak worker-SDS coalition; and the ultimate demand of state power. The entire range of demands which do not obviously require the proletarian dictatorship but which increase the workers' ability to struggle, and to learn in struggle the need for revolution, are a willfully closed book to PL. On campuses, for example, the WSA-led SDS ("Boston SDS") refuses to agitate for free Open Admissions with stipend—an attack on class and race privilege which would actually help achieve their stated aim of building bonds between workers and SDS. Their justification is the claim that a worker's desire for an education for his children would only lead to being "bought off" and rejecting his class; on the contrary, it is precisely this desire for a qualitatively better life that will lead the working class to choose revolution. Perhaps PL's real problem is that to imply education is a good thing conflicts with Mao's "Cultural Revolution."

In fact the result of the maximum/minimum dichotomy of program is to cater to the political backwardness of most U.S. workers while maintaining occasional revolutionary verbiage to avoid being criticized for opportunism. Take for example the question of women's liberation. While claiming to struggle against female oppression, PL-WSA has repudiated the elementary Marxist position against the family, the chief institutional basis of that oppression. The reason for this acquiescence to reactionary institutions is clear: PL, wanting to make student radicals "pro-working-class" through class-guilt manipulation, feels it necessary to glorify the working class as it is under capitalism and ignore its backwardness (religion, the family, patriotism). Workers will become revolutionary despite the family, but the family as an institution can never become "an instrument of revolutionary struggle" as PL-WSA claims.

### Maoism in the Cafeteria

The Campus Worker-Student Alliance (CWSA) approach of SDS has been less than a smashing success. The program is simultaneously difficult to carry out, boring and politically trivial. One result, of course, is

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that it makes PL look so good by comparison. The PLers in SDS constantly insist that SDS students must not try to raise their politics with workers and that to do so would be "elitist." Yet presumably the *same* students, if they joined PL, would be part of a revolutionary party whose job is to radicalize the working class. Thus the SDSer who has been won to an understanding of the decisive role of the working class in making the revolution would have no choice but to join PL. Instead of being held responsible for its refusal to push a real working-class line in SDS, PL would profit from its *own* deficiencies!

The CWSA approach also has the intended effect of suppressing political clarification in SDS. The SDS leadership has sought to protect itself from critics (as well as avoid focusing attention on issues over which PL itself is divided or hopelessly confused) by endlessly discussing the CWSA, hoping everybody would finally get tired and go home. They have repeatedly sought, with varying success, to turn SDS meetings into recitations of individual actions in support of campus workers. (Thus the Washington, D.C., Conference which followed the November 15th anti-war protest consisted of CWSA pep talks followed by workshops discussing specific campus actions.) Attempts to discuss what *program* such actions are based on is met with cries of "Less Talk, More Action."

### Popular Front Mobilization

The split in SDS and the adventurist actions of its rightwing section did immeasurable harm to the multi-issue campus radical movement. The economist, non-political CWSA strategy did not help to reverse this trend. Partially as a result, SDS on many campuses looked far less appealing than competing Student Mobilization Committees (SMC), the YSA's class-collaborationist anti-war front group. PL-WSA's response has often been not to try to build SDS chapters where their own forces were weak, but instead creating CWSA groups which they could control. In some instances WSA loyalists did not even vote for chapter affiliation with their "own" Boston SDS organization or have acquiesced in the outright dissolution of SDS chapters, so long as

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they could maintain a separate CWSA group.

Faced with its own lack of appeal, the PL-WSA response may well be to move sharply to the right to follow the "mainstream" into SMC, making of SDS merely a faction within SMC although maintaining a skeleton SDS organization outside. This would amount to stepping backward to the period before 1965, to allow the sellout pop-front SMC an organizational monopoly over the anti-war movement. However, so long as building SDS is the primary orientation, agitation inside SMC against its sellout leadership is praiseworthy. Thus recently in several cities a loose bloc of anti-imperialist tendencies (most prominently WSA) proposed motions to ban bourgeois speakers from anti-war rallies, thus forcing the YSA-CP leaders to justify including liberals and other anti-communists in their coalition. The radicals' intervention helped to expose the policies and the bureaucratic manipulations of the SMC leadership.

### "Illegal" Postal Wildcat

The radical movement faced a clear test in the postal strike which briefly swept the country. The first strike of the century against the government was met by the union bureaucrats with a response which indicates the depth of their conservatism. In their desire to remain "respectable labor statesmen," the assorted bureaucrats did not dare to take any effective action to support a wildcat strike which was illegal under the government's anti-labor legislation prohibiting strikes by government employees. Fearing the wrath of their "friends" in office (and the example the postal workers were setting to their memberships) the labor fakers remained mute in the face of the clear political necessity for a *general strike* against the use of troops as scabs. The overwhelming bulk of the New York City working population was visibly in sympathy with the postal workers, yet the labor bureaucracy sat by while military strike-breakers tried to deliver the mail by bayonet. The postal workers, without any organized support and sold out and red-baited by their own union leadership, went back to work. Their unlooked-for wildcat may win them a substantial wage increase. But those who hail this settlement as "a victory for the strikers" are deliberately overlooking the state's victory in further undermining that right to strike which is at the basis of every gain won by labor, the only weapon the worker has short of revolution.

The SWP-YSA's enthusing postal strike supplement proclaimed that the workers' liberation struggle had of course been inspired by the students and "Third World" people! Their main pitch seemed to be: we support you, therefore vote for us. Workers Leaguers sold their *Bulletin* in front of the General Post Office, describing it with a gall that passes all belief as "the only paper supporting the postal strike." PL-WSA, typically, fought in New York SDS against demands for a general strike and a workers' political party (raised by Spartacist supporters) while themselves putting out a *Challenge* supplement which called for socialism.

### Stalinist Hoodlum Tactics

Despite its ultra-democratic rhetoric, the radical movement of the 1960's never understood the revolutionary principle of democracy for the movement. The ex-

clusionism of the RYM and Weatherman factions is well known. PL has consistently refused to accept defense aid and election support from "counter-revolutionary Trotskyites." Their Bay Area "Strike Support Committee" excluded members of the *Workers Action* group from a G.E. strike support meeting, even throwing out the only G.E. striker there! The Panthers were only applying this same brand of right-wing sectarianism when they lent moral and physical support to the attempted exclusion of PL-WSA from SDS. In affirming in principle and carrying out in practice the use of gangster tactics against left-wing criticism, the Panthers are consistently carrying forward the old Moscow Trial traditions defended by Maoists and all other Stalinists. And those "democratic" organizations like the International Socialists and SWP-YSA who long sought to feed off the Panthers' popularity by abstaining from criticism richly deserved their embarrassment when the Panthers became blatantly Stalinist enough to beat up and exclude communists while courting liberals and the Communist Party.

### Defend the Panthers!

The destruction from without and concomitant degeneration from within of the Black Panther Party is perhaps the decade's greatest defeat for revolutionary politics. The Panthers, nearly unique among Black radical groups for their seriousness and refusal to be bought off by the bourgeoisie, were not able to resolve their contrary impulses toward class struggle or Black Nationalism. The bandwagon opportunism of the Panthers' radical "friends" did not help them to make the distinction between class struggle and "progressive" Popular Fronts, or between mass armed self-defense of Black and working people and confrontationism against the better armed and organized bourgeois state. Isolated from the masses, and facing literally a nation-wide conspiracy among "law enforcement" agencies to provoke and kill them (or murder them without provocation), the Panthers have seen their leadership ruthlessly exterminated.

Their conduct creates a wide political distance between the Panthers and the Trotskyists, but their political degeneration does not affect our revolutionary duty to defend them and all other working-class political tendencies against ruling-class repression. To confuse opponents on the left with the class enemy means that one is blind to a fundamental distinction in revolutionary politics—the *class line*—in recognition of enemies and perhaps of friends too. It leads logically to a bloc with the bourgeoisie to get political enemies out of the way, as the Communist Party did in the early 1940's in supporting the Smith Act prosecution of Trotskyists. All tendencies within the working-class movement must *defend the movement*—in its totality and its separate organizations—against bourgeois repression or fascist terror, and must fight to protect non-exclusionism and open political debate. They must oppose sectarianism by struggling to create real united fronts (in which political differences are not subordinated to the unity) over specific issues of agreement. If there is any one lesson which can arm us to face the 1970's it is the need to fight for political consciousness: among workers, among radicals. Therefore, for a revolutionary organization, the preservation of the movement itself against repression and exclusion must be our first revolutionary duty. ■

## MAOIST GENESIS:

# Chinese Menshevism

by Bill Grey

The current popularity of Maoism as a supposed alternative to the frankly reformist Soviet strategy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, and the phenomenon of competing Maoist tendencies seeking to justify every conceivable political position on the basis of this same Maoist authority, make it necessary to examine Maoism as ideology and in practice and strip from it its claims to the mantle of Marxism-Leninism. So misunderstood is Maoism that, in this country at least, one Maoist group (Progressive Labor Party) is even seeking to derive a working-class orientation from this ideology which, like all Stalinism, depends on petty-bourgeois strata and is based on explicit denial of a proletarian perspective. Maoism is in essence not different from its tamer version, Khrushchevism, in its nationalist, conservative foreign policy. The greater verbal militancy of the Chinese toward imperialism (which has won to Mao such a following among would-be revolutionaries who recognize the sellout role of the Russian bureaucracy) is a more or less simple product of the far greater pressure which the Chinese state, diplomatically more isolated and industrially-militarily far weaker than the Soviet Union, has suffered from U.S. imperialism. Maoism is only Khrushchevism under the gun.

Maoism was shaped within the crisis of imperialism, but its particular direction was established within the ideology and control of the degenerated Soviet workers state which exerted decisive influence upon the Communist Parties internationally through the Stalinized Comintern. The enormously protracted (30-year) struggle for power and the difficulties of ruling a largely agrarian, under-industrialized country constantly under the military pressure of U.S. imperialism have exacerbated all the contradictory aspects of the strategy of Mao Tse-tung and his administrative machinery, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

### Antithesis of Bolshevism

Unlike Marxism, with which it has only a tenuous connection, Maoism is neither a coherent body of knowledge nor a systematic political system; it has no recognizable methodology nor is it a guide to action. It originated as part of the process of severing ties with Leninist theory. For Mao, Stalin represented Communism; for Marxists, Stalin personifies the counter-revolutionary self-defense tactics of a fearful nationalist bureaucratic caste. It is as impossible to discover the strategy of socialist revolution in Mao's works as in Stalin's, and

for the same reason: it is not there. Whereas Lenin and Trotsky ceaselessly analyzed concretely the fundamental political issues of the era, Mao's writing is only a collection of truisms, bromides and largely meaningless slogans. How unfitted and dangerous these are as a guide to political understanding can be graphically illustrated by one example: at the June 1969 SDS Convention the contending factions, holding wildly counterposed positions on most major issues, maintained themselves by chanting appropriate homilies from the **Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung!** This is hardly accidental.

Yet beneath the banalities there is a central thrust to Maoism as preached and practiced by its creators. In Mao's works, or those of official CCP theoreticians, there is exceedingly little attempt to come to terms with the program of Bolshevism. For Mao, Lenin is irrelevant. Despite massive setbacks and defeats, the Chinese line to this day holds the theory of revolution in stages as the appropriate strategy for all the colonial countries under the imperialist gun. This means that a "democratic" (i.e., bourgeois) state would necessarily exist for an extended period of time (in 1945 Mao predicted "scores of years" remained for China) in order to secure "national unity" and capitalist economic development for the semi-colonial, semi-feudal countries. This view, resuscitated by Stalin from the bankruptcy of Menshevism, has been paramount in Mao's program in an uninterrupted line since the mid-1920's. It is the fundamental perspective from which all his characteristic tactics flow.

The Leninist-Trotskyist perspective is strikingly different. It took only a few months after the bourgeois-democratic overthrow of Czarism in Russia for workers in revolution to establish a proletarian dictatorship. This basic perspective Mao was forced to pass off as a mere quirk of exceptional Russian circumstances.

### Theory of Stages

In Mao's report **On Coalition Government** he set forward his most revealing concrete application of the Menshevist theory of stages, proposing a coalition government with Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Kuomintang:

**"The carrying out of this program will not advance China to socialism. This is not a question of the subjective willingness of certain individuals to do the advancing; it is due to the fact that the objective political and social conditions**

**in China do not permit the advance."**(1)

This paragraph does not appear in any Chinese edition printed after the revolution. "Theorizing" with a pair of scissors is not a new phenomenon within the Stalinist movement, but the blatantly anti-revolutionary perspective cannot be expurgated so easily.

Since the great European revolutionary wave of 1848, it has been a fundamental premise of "classical" Marxism that the peasantry is in essence a multi-layered petty-bourgeois force incapable of establishing its own class rule. To be sure, throughout history, occasional stupendous **jacqueries** (of the kind which for example established the Han and Ming dynasties) have successfully overthrown a particular despot and carried out limited land reform, but they never proved capable of destroying the power of the landlord class or the state administration. (Engels dealt with a somewhat analogous situation during the European Reformation in **The Peasant War in Germany**.) It was Marx's own experience in the 1848 revolts which led him to discount the peasantry as a potentially revolutionary force by itself:

**"The history of the last three years has . . . provided sufficient proof that this class is incapable of any revolutionary initiative. . . ."**(2)

At that time, Marx considered the peasantry the natural ally of the petty-bourgeois urban democracy. Six years later, after his reflections had led him to conclude that the petty-bourgeois democracy was powerless to institute a revolutionary struggle, Marx wrote to Engels that:

**"The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of covering the rear of the proletarian revolution by a second edition of the Peasants' War. Then the affair will be splendid."**(3)

### Two-Class Dictatorship?

The most profound working out of this analysis took place in Russia. Initially Lenin had sought to bridge the gap between the workers and the peasants (whose limited involvement had led to the failure of the 1905 revolution) by a tentative slogan of a joint "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." But after his return to Russia in 1917 Lenin repudiated this analysis and in the **April Theses** put forward the call for socialist revolution led by the workers—in effect a reformulation of Trotsky's concept of Permanent Revolution. In 1920, Lenin summarized his entire revolutionary experience on this question for the Second

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Congress of the Communist International:

“... with the exception of the rural workers who are already on the side of the revolution, the dispersed, oppressed, intimidated rural population . . . who are condemned in all countries to semi-barbaric living conditions, groups which are economically, socially and culturally interested in the victory of socialism, can give decisive support to the revolutionary proletariat only after it has finally settled accounts with the large landowners and capitalists, and after these groups have seen from experience that they have an organized leader and defender who is powerful and resolute enough to help them on the right road.”(4)

Only after the Stalinization of the Comintern was this view dropped and the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” revived. The return to the line repudiated by Lenin signalled the triumph of revisionism in the world workers’ movement; application of this line in China led straight to Maoism and 30 years of betraying the Chinese workers into the murderous hands of Chiang Kai-shek.

World War I proved to be the great opportunity for the bourgeoisies of Japan, India and China. While the great imperialist powers were engaged in fratricidal conflict, Japanese imperialism invaded markets formerly dominated by the Western powers and politically extended its sphere of influence in Manchuria and northern China. For the Indian and Chinese bourgeoisies the absence of European competition offered the first real opportunity for industrial expansion. These new industries brought forth a new industrial proletariat which immediately made itself felt in the political arena. When Chinese students protested Western approval of Japanese imperialist spoils at the Versailles Conference in 1919, the Chinese proletariat backed the students with a nation-wide strike movement. Disillusionment with Western “democracy” prompted an important group of intellectuals and students to look to the Soviet Union and communism for a solution to imperialist domination of China and Chinese backwardness.

### “Maoism” Before Mao

The subsequent development of the CCP is symbolized by the competing views of its two co-founders, Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Li Ta-chao, and the later course of the Party reflected the struggle for dominance of the two widely divergent outlooks. Ch'en, general secretary and the organizer of the fledgling Party's successful orientation toward the working class, came to communism in a way typical of the cosmopolitan European Marxist intelligentsia, breaking with China's traditional



Eastfoto

### MAO backed up Khrushchev's suppression of Hungarian Revolution.

culture and backwardness. By contrast Li, after an initial period of internationalist enthusiasm, emphasized the nationalist, anti-imperialist aspects of the workers' movement, and soon developed a unitary view of Chinese society as a “proletarian nation” in which all classes had been turned into “proletarians” by imperialist super-exploitation.(5)

By 1926 Li Ta-chao had projected an anti-imperialist socialist revolution based solely on the peasantry. Stressing the failure of the bourgeois nationalist land program and the absence of a radical CCP program, Li advocated “land to the peasant who tills it” (i.e., division of land belonging to rich peasants and landlords) and stated that “a united peasantry, if it protects its class interests, can defeat all landlords.” This “peasant socialism” dovetailed neatly with his nationalism and his belief that the class struggle had turned into a global race war, that the colonial peoples and not the advanced urban proletariat would defeat the white Western imperialists. It is not surprising, then, that Li was one of the first and strongest advocates of the CCP's entry into Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang, the Chinese nationalist party. (6)

Thus, many fundamental characteristics of what is commonly thought of as uniquely “Maoist” made their appearance in the CCP under the sponsorship of Li Ta-chao before the rise of Mao and prior to the defeat of the second Chinese Revolution of 1926-27. It will be noted that Li's general outlook, virtually unamended, comprises the formula promoted in the 1965 thesis, *Long Live the Victory of People's War!* by Lin Piao, Mao's chosen successor and co-authority. It is hardly accidental that this anti-Marxist schema, which seeks to apply the “strategy” of the Chinese Revolution—that the “countryside” (the colonial world) will surround and ultimately destroy the “metropolitan” centers (Europe and the U.S.) by military means—had as its principal author a man who believed in global race war, “proletarian nations” and class-collaboration with bourgeois parties as the method for

revolution. Lin Piao's strategy nowhere indicates that the class struggle is in any sense decisive in either the colonial or the industrially developed Western capitalist countries, nor that there is any road to social revolution other than military conquest.

### CCP Enters the Kuomintang

The victory of Stalinism over the politics of international socialist revolution within the Russian State and Communist International meant the end of any independent, proletarian-based role for the CCP. The Communist International under Bukharin and Stalin set a policy of alliance with and entry into the Kuomintang. This was a fundamental departure from Leninism. While the Second Comintern Congress under Lenin and Trotsky had on occasion advocated support for the national bourgeoisie against imperialism, this support was tactical and conditional. Since the colonial bourgeoisie collaborated with the imperialists and “waged a joint struggle with it against all revolutionary movements and classes,” communists had to make a sharp distinction between the interests of the oppressed and “national interests.” Support to the national bourgeoisie was only defensible “when those who represented this movement would not oppose us in our efforts to educate and organize the peasantry and the masses of exploited people in general, in the revolutionary spirit.”(7) In 1922, the Fourth Congress of the Comintern returned to this theme and stated specifically that the “united anti-imperialist front” was merely a translation into the colonial countries of the “united front” tactic in the West. This meant its purpose was to expose betrayers and misleaders in the front, with political subordination to alien class forces out of the question. Under no circumstances would a communist ever enter, or take responsibility for, a bourgeois party or its policies.

But after the death of Lenin and Stalin's assumption of power, the Comintern's united front tactic was made over into its diametric opposite: class collaboration. The Russian leadership

and the Comintern forcefully compelled a deep entry into the Kuomintang and stilled those leaders of the CCP who had doubts about their "allies." Stalin himself went so far as to send a telegram (in October 1926) urging the CCP to call off a peasant revolt which had sprung up in Kwangtung province; the workers and peasants in revolt were forbidden to form their own soviets, so that the CCP could maintain its bloc with Chiang's "Revolutionary Army." (8) The CCP obeyed. Trotsky was later to excoriate this policy in his book, *The Permanent Revolution*:

"The official subordination of the Communist Party to the bourgeois leadership, and the official prohibition of forming soviets (Stalin and Bukharin taught that the Kuomintang 'took the place of' soviets) was a grosser and more glaring betrayal of Marxism than all the deeds of the Mensheviks in the years 1905-1917." (9)

Stalin, in justification, termed the bourgeois Kuomintang a "workers and peasants party," in contradistinction to everything Lenin had ever said about no such thing existing. Stalin, indeed, was to defend Chiang Kai-shek as a "reliable ally" (10) against charges by the Trotskyist opposition in April 1927—only a few days before Chiang was to stage his counter-revolutionary coup, turn on the CCP and butcher the Shanghai workers, who were under orders not to fight back. Following this debacle, Stalin modified his argument: the Kuomintang was not really a "workers and peasants party" but a bloc of four classes: the national bourgeoisie, urban petty-bourgeoisie, workers and peasants. He explained that Chiang, leader of the national bourgeoisie, had "deserted" this alliance and "gone over" to the compradors and imperialists; however, the Left Kuomintang, which represented the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie, continued to be anti-imperialist and peasant revolutionists. In reply to Trotsky's criticism, Stalin asserted that the CCP would be isolated from the masses if it abandoned "the banner of the Kuomintang, the most popular of all banners in China, to the Kuomintang Right." Thus, the CCP should push for land reform through that "organ of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," (11) the Left Kuomintang government at Wuhan. The Party supplied ministers of labor and agriculture to this government. The result, of course, was the same as the bloc with Chiang himself: the Left Kuomintang leader, Wang Ching-wei, crushed the CCP and the workers and peasants movements no less thoroughly.

#### Ultra-Left Turn

The CCP was expelled from the Left Kuomintang government in July 1927 as the Left Kuomintang leaders moved

further to the right to cement their ties with Chiang's counter-revolution. In order to deflect blame from the terrible failure of Comintern policy, Ch'en Tu-hsiu, the Party's general secretary, was deposed and falsely saddled with the responsibility for Stalin's debacle. The Comintern reversed its course; the new line stated that not only was the CCP intact but a new period of revolutionary upheaval was beginning and the CCP was to go on the offensive. Since the Kuomintang had had time to secure its power and the support of the army, the new policy produced nothing but a series of tragic adventures—the "Canton Soviet" and the Maoled Autumn Harvest Peasant Risings in late 1927, and ultra-left, absurd attempts to capture cities with peasant armies. Those uprisings were put down with murderous force, as might have been expected; as each adventure failed, Stalin accused the CCP leadership of "opportunism," deposed them and imposed a new group on the Party. Chu Chu-pui was followed by Li Li-san, who in turn was followed by Wang Ming and Po Ku.

Outside China, this thesis of "revolutionary offensive" was generalized by the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928 into the so-called "Third Period" strategy, which among other atrocities led the German Communist Party to eschew "united front" tactics toward the Social Democrats, split the working class and a few years later facilitated Hitler's rise. Inside China, the policy led to the complete destruction of CCP influence in the working class, annihilation of the Party's cadres and the withdrawal of its leadership into the countryside, the so-called "Soviet Republic," by 1932-33. This overnight flip-flop from crass conciliation of the bourgeoisie to irreconcilable warfare without weapons against the armed might of the reassembled, rearmed bourgeoisie was correctly described by Trotsky as "wearing furs in summer and going naked in winter."

#### Mao's Personal Rise

It is in the destruction of the CCP in the period from the Shanghai massacre to the fictitious "Canton Soviet" that one finds the key to the crystallization of Maoist ideology and the personal rise of Mao Tse-tung to power in the CCP. The repeated discrediting of leading members of the CCP eliminated most of his rivals as contenders for power in the party leadership. Stalin's policy had wantonly annihilated much of the CCP cadre and severed completely its former base in the urban industrial proletariat; the composition of the Party changed radically, as even Mao himself was to concede. As early as 1928, in a report to the Central Committee of the Party on the Red Army in the Ching-Kang mountains, Mao ad-

mits that a majority of his troops are neither workers nor peasants, but *éléments déclassés*—that is, bandits, thieves, vagabonds, etc. (12) Moreover, the constant blunderings of Stalin's policies throughout this period discredited not only the Comintern, of which Stalin was the transmission belt to China, but also Leninism and internationalism, in whose name the Comintern spoke. All this resulted in the transformation of the CCP from a communist party to something qualitatively different. It is not accidental that Mao's rise to a position of real authority in the CCP coincided with this change in the nature of the Party itself.

Mao's activities at the time of the bloc with the KMT until the Revolution of 1926-27 have proven a source of continuing embarrassment to present Chinese historians, who must produce a semblance of consistent revolutionary work where the record proves the very opposite. Mao's characteristic nationalism made him even less critical than the CCP leadership of the bloc with Chiang Kai-shek; in the fall of 1924 he was expelled from the Party's Central Committee and pressured to resign from the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee because Party leaders believed his close cooperation with the right-wing Kuomintang leadership was sabotaging CCP work (13). Then two years later, Mao's strong premature championing of a peasant army attack against a Left Kuomintang militarist led to his removal as head of the CCP's peasant department (and the slaughter of 20 thousand peasants by Kuomintang forces). This constant vacillation between class-collaborationist opportunism and ultra-left military adventurism is typical not only of Mao's lack of any revolutionary principle but also of his sharp inclination to set his own views above the orientation of the Party. He was able to escape constant censure only because of the constant confusion of policy and leadership which Stalin's running purge of CCP leaders created.

Throughout the whole period from 1924 until 1935, when he finally achieved full political and military control over the Party, Mao was constantly at odds with the CCP leadership and the Comintern. But with the Party fragmented and localized in different areas under CCP military control, and himself out of the reach of the Party leadership, Mao was able to construct his own faction by purging and restructuring the Party in the "Central Soviet" area for his own personal control. Throughout this entire period Mao did not follow the Comintern-CCP line but never fought openly for his views and policies, instead maneuvering organizationally and bureaucratically in the areas under his military control to impose his policies upon the Party. This is clearly evident

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in documents of that time, and can easily be deduced from Mao's autobiographical statements and writings.(14)

### Ups and Downs

Yet despite this maneuvering and the running of constant purges, Mao was himself a target for similar organizational manipulations. In November 1931 Mao was elected Chairman of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars at the First All-China Soviet Congress. At that Congress, the official line of the CCP's Politburo, which had Comintern backing, was also approved: an ultra-left line not in agreement with Mao's views. The contradiction was not long in manifesting itself, and the ever-flexible Chou En-lai began using Maoist organizational tactics against Mao, advocating positional warfare and an aggressive military posture. The Maoist line increasingly lost influence and eventually Mao was virtually deposed from his leading positions (February 1934) and by August 1934 was under house arrest.(15) But the Maoist organization remained intact, ready to take over when the ultra-left policy failed. Chou En-lai's policies failed to defeat Chiang's Fifth Encirclement Campaign, and the noose tightened ever more snugly around the Red Army. Outmaned and outgunned, the Red Army faced total annihilation if it continued to fight the Kuomintang with the military tactics advocated by Chou. So the decision to begin the Long March was made and 300 thousand Red Army troops began to break out of the Kuomintang trap in October 1934.

By January 1935 Mao's opponents were beaten. The Tsun-yi conference held that month restored Mao to his position of leadership; from this point on, Mao's private faction would control both the Army and the Central Committee. But although Mao had secured his dominance within the Party, his rule was still dependent on the Comintern's assent; Stalin was intolerant of oppositionists and Mao was hardly in a position to survive a rupture with the Soviet leadership. Three factors prevented such a split. The conference which restored Mao to leadership adopted a rightist policy of "the united anti-imperialist front" (which coincided generally with the new Popular Front line of the Comintern, adopted after the triumph of Hitlerite fascism in Germany, although it preceded the international Stalinist shift by a few months); thus the political clash became dormant. Stalin's interest was turning increasingly toward the West where fascism was laying the groundwork for a new anti-Soviet world war. Only 30 thousand troops had survived the Long March, and for years the CCP

would be an insignificant factor in Chinese politics because of its isolation from key sectors of the working class and peasantry; Stalin lost interest. Finally, the isolation of the CCP in the Northwest border region did not permit the Comintern precise control or accurate knowledge of the political situation at Yenan.

### Great Han Chauvinism

Mao did not develop anything approaching a coherent ideology to justify his vacillating policies until after he had achieved predominance in the CCP in Yenan; rather, the Maoist faction was built on the basis of shortsighted, extremely empirical responses to the existing, rapidly changing circumstances. Mao's appetites have usually been toward the right, toward class collaboration; only infrequently has he adapted to the moods of the rebellious peasantry. The current holding his disparate policies together has been Chinese nationalism. This is apparent in his various references to ancient bandit-heroes and great military emperors of China; in this, Maoism is weirdly similar to the Russian chauvinism expressed by Stalin during World War II. Similarly, the harsh treatment dealt out to the minority peoples residing within China's borders—Tibetans, Moslems and Mongols—follows exactly that of Soviet minorities. Although in 1936 Mao declared that "the Mohammedan and Tibetan peoples . . . will form autonomous Republics attached to the China federation," in 1949 China declared itself not a federation but a unitary republic. In 1956 Mao cited as a standard for political ideas that they should "help to unite the people of our various nationalities rather than divide them."(16) This is not one whit short of outright denial of the Leninist principle of self-determination for nations. Finally, Mao has even referred to Korea, Taiwan, Burma and Viet Nam in the language of classical Chinese imperial diplomacy—that is, as tributary states forcibly seized from China.(17) This attitude, first demonstrated during his close relations with the right wing of the Kuomintang in the 1920's, has continued to the present and is in large part responsible for the Maoists' attitude toward the recent border clashes with the Soviet Union over the Ussuri River region. The Russian regime, of course, takes this same anti-internationalist attitude toward territorial questions.

### Peasant Revolution?

While Mao's nationalism was central to his conduct in the period 1927 to 1935, in a more immediate sense it was his singleminded championing of agrarian revolution (whose features and program are never clearly defined) and guerilla warfare tactics which placed him in conflict with the various CCP

leaderships and made necessary his creation of a secret faction within the Party. In spite of the leading role of the Chinese proletariat in social struggles from 1919 to 1927, and the fact that the first upsurge of peasant struggle (1926-27) was directly sparked by the working class and its vanguard, Mao evinced no compunction about asserting the contrary. In early 1927, in the essay "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," one of the leading texts of the Mao-thought corpus, he writes:

**"To give credits where they are due if we allot ten points to the accomplishments of the democratic revolution, then the achievements of the urban dwellers and military units rate only three points, while the remaining seven points should go to the peasants in their rural revolution."** (18)

It is precisely this mindless and anti-historical commitment to the peasantry which, combined with Chinese nationalism, is the core of all of Mao's thinking on the Chinese Revolution. The supposed peculiarities of Chinese history and her semi-colonial status were later invoked to justify this theory of the peasant road to revolution:

**" . . . there is no legislature assembly to make use of, no legal right to organize workers to strike. Here the fundamental task of the Communist Party is not to go through a long period of legal struggle before launching an insurrection or civil war. Its task is not to seize the big cities and then the countryside, but to take the road in the opposite direction."**(19)

Since these same features equally characterized pre-revolutionary Russia, it appears that given Mao's perspective Lenin erred seriously in not abandoning his exile work and proletarian orientation to lead the Bolsheviks away from Moscow and St. Petersburg down to the Caucasus or behind the Urals to carry out a guerilla struggle against Czarism!

Mao's "theory" of the coming peasant revolution is an afterthought, a rationalization and self-justification. It is clear that Mao used China's supposed uniqueness to justify all his departures from Leninist theory, upon which rest his reputation as an independent "Marxist-Leninist" theoretician. This process occasionally leads him to the most banal, infantile reductionism:

**"Russian history has created the Russian system. . . . The contemporary history of China will create the Chinese system."** (20)

Likewise, while Mao never categorically abandons lip service to the ideological formula that the working class remains the leading class force, from which the CCP should derive its revolutionary consciousness and leadership, this amounts at most to throwing a few crumbs in the direction of "orthodoxy";

in reality Mao relied on his own factional, largely lumpen proletarian cadre within the Party, through a process of education, purges and "rectification," to transform the consciousness of a vast sea of peasants. Many commentators have stressed the heavily idealist voluntarism which permeates this thinking, which is at basic variance with the most fundamental methodology of Marxism, i.e., materialism.

#### Anti-Japanese Front

Shortly after Mao had attained the pinnacle of power within the CCP (following the anti-imperialist front, the new Comintern Popular Front line and the outbreak of war with Japan) he reverted to the CCP policy of the middle 1920's, calling for a united front with Chiang's Kuomintang government. The Party attitude toward Ching continued to fluctuate. Earlier Mao and General Chu Teh had said that "the Kuomintang militarists only toady and capitulate to imperialism" and called for the overthrow of the Kuomintang government. (21) The CCP proclamation of August 1935, however, made a special appeal to Chiang Kai-shek, promising to cooperate with the Kuomintang if Chiang would stop fighting "against his people." (22) Their calls fell on deaf ears even after they had intervened to save Chiang from certain death at the hands of other militarists.

However, in March 1937 Chiang relented. His conditions, which the CCP was willing to accept in principle, were: abolition of the Red Army, dissolution of the "Soviet Republic," cessation of propaganda and suspension of the class struggle. Later in the year the CCP hailed Sun Yat-sen's three People's Principles as the "paramount need of China." (23) For a while Chiang was still labeled the "chief of chiefs" of the "big local bullies, big bad gentry, big warlords, the big bureaucrats and the big compradors" whose "interests are inseparable from those of imperialism." (24) Less than a year later, however, Mao had decided that Chiang and the Kuomintang had joined that section of the vacillating national bourgeoisie who could "take part in the struggle." (25) And in October 1938, Mao declared that the Kuomintang "occupied the 'first place' in the anti-Japanese front:

"Without the Kuomintang it would be inconceivable to undertake and pursue the War of Resistance. . . . It enjoys the historical heritage of the Three People's Principles; it has had two great leaders in succession—Mr. Sun Yat-sen and Mr. Chiang Kai-shek; it has a great number of faithful and patriotic active members." (26)

Since these grovelling paeans to the Kuomintang were unlikely to convince Chiang or his brother militarists of the CCP's good will, their only result could

be to disorient the Party cadre and followers, create illusions among the masses, negate the lessons of the failed revolution and derail any attempt at social revolution by the workers and peasants. This policy is strikingly similar to the one Mao dictated to the Indonesian Communist Party three decades later—the policy which annihilated the Indonesian workers movement.

The Popular Front against the Japanese remained CCP policy until 1945. To maintain a bloc with the landlords the agrarian program was watered down to nothing: no land confiscation was permitted and "land reform" became rent reduction. (27) Despite the attempted conciliation, the landlords went over to the Japanese. Ironically, the peasantry was won over to the anti-Japanese struggle not on the basis of nationalism but because of the few meager reforms and their hostility to Chiang's mercenary army. (28)

#### The Civil War

Only after the Allied victory in 1945 and Chiang's refusal to come to terms with the CCP was a radical land reform program—confiscation of the landlords—put forth. Chiang escalated the war against the People's Liberation Army and even attacked Yenan, the CCP capital. Much has been written about Chiang's military mistakes in the Civil War, but his crack divisions were rarely defeated militarily. Rather, whole companies—even divisions—would desert to the other side. Chiang was defeated by the corruption and total bankruptcy of his regime and the economic and social chaos. China was in a classic pre-revolutionary situation from 1946 to 1949. No one but a blind adherent of the Maoist faith could believe that only a rural-based peasant army led by a rural-oriented party could have taken power in that situation. The Maoist CCP was largely forced to lead the peasant revolution or face extinction; neither Chiang nor the U.S. was willing to tolerate the existence of the CCP any longer.

The CCP sought to deny that the state established after the defeat of Chiang in 1949 was in essentials a dictatorship of the proletariat (albeit bureaucratically deformed). Officially the Maoist claim was that China was a "peoples democratic dictatorship" of the bloc of four classes, a 'new democracy' to achieve land reform, nationalize banks, railways, etc. and throw off the yoke of U.S. imperialist domination. The rich peasants and the national bourgeoisie were conciliated, the latter to receive life-long remuneration on the capital they had invested. Mao asserted that "the views held by some people that it is possible to eliminate capitalism and introduce socialism at an early date is wrong." (29) In the early years of the CCP regime, the "peoples democratic dictatorship" con-

sistently administered a reformist capitalist economy. But power was in the hands of the new state thrown up by the revolution and that state had no even episodically stable resting place except as a Stalinist, i.e. a deformed workers, state. The bourgeoisie knew this immediately and instinctively, the Maoist leadership learned it later and pragmatically.

#### "Building Socialism"

The paramount factor which forced the Party to lay the groundwork for the social transformation of Chinese society—that is, to nationalize the economy, institute a state monopoly over foreign trade and centralize economic planning—was the increased pressure of U.S. imperialism. Although the Maoists explicitly desired to go much slower, the U.S. intervention into the Korean civil war showed the need for an economy based on heavy industry which could sustain a modern army.

During the crucial period of the consolidation of power (1949-53) the Chinese economy was put on its feet again after fifty years of invasions and civil war. During this period, the CCP consolidated its dictatorship and it became clear that it had no intention of sharing state power with the Chinese bourgeoisie. The launching of the first Five Year Plan in 1953 codified the bureaucracy's determination to follow the path of the Soviet Union, transforming China from an agricultural to an industrial nation. The Stalinist character of Chinese "communism" is nowhere more evident than in this industrialization program of "building socialism" on the primitive base of peasant agriculture. There is not the slightest hint of internationalism in this outlook. Like Stalin's "Socialism in One Country" doctrine, the Maoists insist that socialism can be built within the Chinese nation without the aid of the advanced nations—that is, without proletarian revolution in the capitalist West.

The program for "building socialism" was officially promulgated at the Eighth Congress of the CCP. Ideologically, the shift from "new democracy" required that the "peoples democratic dictatorship" be transformed from a bloc of four classes to a bloc between the working class and the peasantry under the leadership of the CCP. To Marxists socialism can only follow a period of proletarian dictatorship until the achievement of a classless society. The failure of the Maoists to give even lip service to this term indicates their continued peasant outlook even after this industrialization policy turn.

#### Great Leap Backward

The first Five Year Plan was modeled on Stalin's early program, with the overwhelming bulk of the state's investment in heavy industry and the or-

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ganizing of peasants into producers' cooperatives. After a period of economic retrenchment in 1957, the second attempt at industrialization—the "Great Leap Forward"—was inaugurated in the winter of 1957. Upon the foundation of the collectives organized in 1955-56, 26,000 rural communes were set up in 1958. The commune system was an attempt to divert part of the peasant labor to a program of rural industrialization without a decline in agricultural output. The Maoists attempted to use primitive peasant labor to forge ahead industrially on all fronts. The result was a multiplicity of small plants whose output was too crude to be used. Combined with a series of bad harvests, the inefficiency of the rural peasant industries forced the Maoists to call off their "Great Leap."

The "Great Leap Forward" was an economic and political disaster. Its economic dislocations were felt as late as the late 1960's. In addition, it squandered most of the popular enthusiasm and moral capital won by the CCP as a result of the victorious revolution over Chiang.

### Anti-Internationalism

Despite his ringing denunciation of phony communism and "revisionism" since the early 1960's, Mao's foreign policy has been substantively identical to that practiced by the Soviet Union under Stalin, Khrushchev and now Brezhnev, and China's claims that it pursues a line of proletarian internationalism is a lie. Chinese state policy is identical in all essentials to that of the Russians. Both follow the only foreign policy consistent with the existence of a bureaucracy committed to the protection of a single state—i.e., "socialism in one country," a Stalinist nationalism. Lenin set forth two criteria for internationalism. They were:

"[one,] subordination of the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale; two, that the nation which arrives at victory over the bourgeoisie shall display the capacity and readiness to overthrow international capitalism." (30)

Like the Soviet leadership, the only readiness the Chinese bureaucrats have shown is to subordinate the struggles of the African and Asian proletariat to the facilitation of Chinese diplomacy. The Maoists simply attempt to transform by rhetoric their diplomatic agreements—with anti-communist military dictators like General Ayub Khan of Pakistan or "progressive" princes like the recently deposed Sihanouk of Cambodia—into triumphs for the world's anti-imperialist forces. By Maoist definition, anyone who will make diplomatic deals with China becomes an

anti-imperialist! As a result of China's friendly attitude toward Sihanouk, for example, the hard-pressed North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front forces near the Cambodian border and the Ho Chi Minh trail are now being harassed and shot at with Chinese-supplied arms.

### Bandung Conference

In 1954 Maoist China helped organize an "Asian-African Solidarity Conference" of twenty-nine nations at Ban-

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dung, Indonesia. Chou En-lai proposed recognition of equality of races and respect for the rights of the people of all nations to choose their own way of life and economic system. (31) The final communique adopted by the Conference mixed moribund "democratic" Wilsonian clichés with flaccid semi-anti-imperialist rhetoric. Among the "principles" agreed on were respect of the right of a country to self-defense (in accordance with the United Nations charter), abstention from the use of collective defense arrangements to serve the interests of the big powers, abstention by any country from exerting pressure on other countries (!), settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Spirit of Bandung were hailed as opening a new era of cooperation and good will cutting across ideological and national boundaries. (32)

The Bandung Conference represents an important turning point in post-war history. It marked the point when the bourgeoisies of the former colonial countries entered the arena of world politics with the intention of extorting as much economic and political aid as possible from the U.S. and Soviet Union. Instead of exposing these appetites and

seeking to exacerbate these nations' internal class antagonisms, the Chinese consistently emphasized their solidarity with these "anti-imperialist" bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaders against the West. Peking's deals with the nationalists were always based on the durable Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence which meant the complete renunciation of revolutionary propaganda and class struggle in these capitalist states.

In Africa, the Chinese have concluded such diplomatic agreements "against imperialism" with the Congo (Brazzaville), Guinea, Tanzania and, until 1966, Ghana. The last situation is instructive. In 1964 Mao sent a special message of congratulations to Nkrumah after this petty-bourgeois dictator had narrowly escaped assassination. Several years before, Nkrumah had attempted a "forced savings" plan to "modernize" the country by substantially cutting the already abysmal living standards of the Ghanaian working class. The workers refused to take this lying down and launched a strike wave which was crushed by Nkrumah's police and troops. To this demonstrated enemy of the international working class Mao, after the assassination attempt, indulged himself in the most servile bootlicking: "Please accept, Your Excellency, the most solicitous regards of mine and the Chinese people." (33) And in Algeria, the Maoists applauded Boumedienne's reactionary *coup d'état* against the more liberal bourgeois government of Ben Bella, in the hope of some trivial immediate benefits.

### Indonesian Massacre

The most disastrous deals Peking has made were those with Indonesia and Pakistan. The Maoists instructed the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to collaborate with the "anti-imperialist" President Sukharno. Sukharno, a stooge of Japanese imperialism in World War II, had previously crushed the PKI in 1948. Disregarding this, and laying such great stress on Sukharno's bellicose anti-Westernism that the Chinese published a selection of his "anti-imperialist" writings emphasizing African-Asian solidarity, Mao ordered the PKI to maintain at all costs a bloc with the Indonesian bourgeoisie. Under this rubric, the PKI forced the Indonesian working class to return to the capitalists several factories they had seized! This policy had a predictable, inevitable result: with the workers disarmed and misled by the "nationalist" rhetoric of the Indonesian bourgeoisie and the Chinese and PKI leaders, the Indonesian Army's reactionary general staff mutinied and butchered between 300 thousand and half a million communists and sympathizers in a matter of weeks. The largest mass Communist Party outside the Soviet bloc countries

was exterminated in the greatest atrocity against the international workers movement since Chiang Kai-shek's destruction of the Chinese Revolution of 1927 and Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The Indonesian military clique immediately assumed a hostile posture toward Peking, sponsoring attacks on the Chinese embassy and persecution of the Chinese minority living in Indonesia.

And what was the Chinese response? Merely to protest the persecution of Chinese nationals and to "deplore" the breaking off of friendly relations! No mention of the PKI disaster was made in any Chinese publication until July 1967. Throughout late 1965, 1966, to July 1967 all the Chinese ever did was to protest the maltreatment of Indonesian Chinese and the attacks on the Chinese embassy. The following report from *Peking Review* of 26 November 1964 is characteristic of Peking's attempt to gloss over the bloody defeat of the Indonesian proletariat:

**". . . despite his Excellency President Sukharno's repeated appeals to refrain from disruptive racialist acts and to safeguard the friendly relations between China and Indonesia, all indications now point to daily expansion rather than stoppage of outrageous persecution of Chinese nationals. . . ."**(34)

Even after the annihilation of the PKI the Chinese attempted to conciliate the Indonesian bourgeoisie. Only in July 1967—that is, after all their repeated attempts to make a deal with the Suharto dictatorship had failed—did the Maoists pledge their support to "the determination of the Indonesian people to make a revolution" against their "fascist dictatorship." (35) In this same issue of *Peking Review* an extensive analysis of the PKI's debacle, by the PKI Politburo, was finally published.

#### Mao Fronts for Khan

In the case of Pakistan, the Chinese have engineered an alliance with the national bourgeoisie which cannot be justified even in their own "anti-imperialist" terms. Not only has Pakistan been a military dictatorship for the past 15 years, but for that same period it has been allied with the U.S., from which it has received substantial military and economic aid. In 1965, during the Rann of Kutch war over Kashmir between India and Pakistan, the Chinese lined up behind Pakistan and labelled India, supported at the time by the U.S. and USSR, the "aggressor." A year later the Chinese promised the Pakistani dictatorship unequivocal support in case of another "aggression" against her—in other words, a military alliance with a tool of U.S. imperialism. (36) Instead of calling for a joint revolutionary class struggle of the Moslem Pakistani working class, the Hindu Indian working class and all other mi-

nority workers against the chauvinism and obscurantism of the Indian and Pakistani bourgeoisies, the Chinese tied the workers closer to their ruling classes by inflaming reactionary nationalist prejudices.

More recently, the Chinese press has totally ignored the upsurge of working-class struggle in Pakistan which caused the resignation of General Ayub Khan. Throughout early 1969 Pakistan was paralyzed by a series of general strikes and workers' demonstrations which were quelled only by murderous army repression. (37) Nothing has been mentioned about these struggles in any Chinese publication to date, and Sino-Pakistani relations have continued on their smooth course. On 23 March 1969 (little more than a month after Pakistani workers were shot down in the streets) the Pakistani ambassador in Peking gave a reception honoring Pakistan's National Day which was attended by Chinese Premier Chou En-lai and Vice-Premier Hsieh Fu-chih. The latter assured the ambassador that "the Chinese people will always remain your reliable friends in your struggle to oppose foreign aggression and interference and safeguard national independence." (38) This Stalinist bombast only intensified the Chinese bureaucracy's treacherous betrayal of the Pakistani working class and proletarian internationalism.

#### Japan—Asia's Powerhouse

While the most notorious examples of Peking's counter-revolutionary policies are its relations with the "anti-imperialist" bourgeoisies, its call for a Popular Front alliance with Japan on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is equally decisive in maintaining capitalism in Asia. Imperialist Japan may well be the second most powerful capitalist industrial nation in the world and is increasingly bringing Asia and Australia into her economic orbit. According to the thought of Chairman Mao, all strata of Japanese society including the bourgeoisie suffer from U.S. imperialism; therefore, the whole Japanese people should align with China against U.S. domination. (39)

This convenient analysis neglects rather a great deal. Japan is the technological and industrial powerhouse of Asia, with a highly skilled, powerful and increasingly militant working class. A revolution in Japan would be the key to a socialist Asia, just as a German Revolution has been the key to a socialist Europe since World War I. But a program of socialist revolution in Japan would entail a civil war against the Japanese bourgeoisie, not conciliation of them. The Maoist policy toward Japan is the greatest roadblock in the path of the Japanese workers and a betrayal of enormous proportions. It is,

moreover, nothing less than an open invitation to Japanese imperialism to reopen its bid for domination of the Pacific. A Japanese socialist revolution would end the threat of U.S. imperialism in Asia and become the industrial center for the construction of Asian socialism. It would also be the hardest possible blow to the existence of the Maoist bureaucracy itself, leading to its overthrow and the reconstruction of a truly proletarian international course in China.

#### "Cultural" Revolution

The "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" was analyzed in depth during its earliest stages in *SPARTACIST* (see "Maoism Run Amok," Nov.-Dec. 1966). To this day that analysis remains superior to anything published by the U.S. left and becomes even more illuminating with the perspective of time.

The Cultural Revolution was necessitated by disasters. The Great Leap Forward and the "communization" campaign had severed the considerable ties between the CCP and the Chinese people. Authority had to be re-established by a combination of propaganda and coercion. At the same time relations between China and the Soviet Union were beginning to deteriorate rapidly. To complete the desperate picture, what in the earlier period had seemed a promising attempt to create a Maoist International now lies shattered, with only Albania remaining true to the cause.

The Cultural Revolution was, in its origins and its essence, a faction fight between two wings of the Chinese bureaucracy. It is now clear that there were no substantive differences between the two tendencies and that the argument that Liu Shao-chi represented a "rightist," or "pro-Soviet," or "pro-capitalist" tendency was without foundation. It was in 1959 as a result of being saddled with the consequences of the Great Leap that Mao lost the chairmanship of the government to Liu and was allowed to hold only the largely honorific title of Party Chairman. The Cultural Revolution was Mao's successful recapturing of the Chinese state and the Army, which incidentally included the destruction of the CCP by the Red Guard youth. Those who would see in the Cultural Revolution any revolutionary thrust must show—in contradiction to all the evidence—that during Mao's temporary fall from power Chinese policy became any more "rightist" than earlier under his leadership (e.g., the Bandung Conference) or later (the policy toward Pakistan).

The Cultural Revolution was a response of desperation to the inevitable results of the earlier Maoist policies. Although in 1958 the Maoist leaders had believed they were close to a final breakthrough to their goals, the line taken in the late 1960's was that these

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would not be achieved for five or ten generations or even longer. Poverty and the inherited problems of economic backwardness could not be resolved (without an international revolution) except by continued sacrifices by the people: thus the need for the ever more ornate cult of Mao.

There is certainly a prestige factor involved in the cult; Mao frankly admitted this in 1965 to the journalist Edgar Snow when he contrasted Khrushchev with Stalin and asked, "was it possible that Mr. Khrushchev fell because he had no cult of personality at all?"(40) But the primary basis for the destruction of all other culture besides Maothought is a calculated attempt to destroy the ideological and material base for any future oppositional currents. This entails, further, the physical isolation of China from the rest of the world (which is infected by "bourgeois" or "revisionist" viruses), similar to the self-imposed isolation of Stalinist Russia from the 1930's to 1953. The implied theoretical basis for the destruction of oppositional currents is likewise found in the anti-Leninist Stalinist dictum that as the post-revolutionary approach to socialist society grows nearer, the ideological struggle against counter-revolution must grow more intense.

### Sino-Soviet Rupture

The nationalistic, "anti-imperialist bloc" foreign policies of Mao have proven dangerous even just in terms of protecting the gains of the Chinese Revolution. Consider for instance the India-China border incident. The Maoists had of course supported Nehru as an anti-imperialist until, like earlier "reliable allies," the Indians turned on them and provoked the border clash. Likewise, the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party was a more decisive victory for U.S. imperialism than even a victory in Viet Nam would be. The U.S. Viet Nam policy, undertaken as a threat

against China, now becomes almost superfluous.

With the Sino-Soviet split the diplomatic isolation of the Chinese became complete. The criminal actions of the Russian bureaucracy cannot be overlooked. Perhaps the grossest example was over the India-China outbreak; the Chinese policy having largely set up the situation, the Russians hastened to do their bit by rushing MIG fighter planes to India! The rapid deterioration of relations between the USSR and China abounds with such ugly instances of the grossest failure of elementary solidarity. The recent degeneration into squabbling over real estate—Mongolia, Chenpao/Damansky island and the Ussuri River—is a blatant contradiction of all claims to internationalism on either side: both bureaucracies madly whipping up reactionary nationalist sentiment and reinforcing their claims by reference to who conquered an uninhabited island first—the Manchu Dynasty or the Czar! The increase of chauvinism which has accompanied their campaigns will not be easily eradicated and is absurd emanating from leaderships which style themselves "socialist."

The Maoists seek to justify their hostility to the Soviets by reference to a new sociological theory of the Russian state. Russia has changed, according to Lin Piao, from "the world's first state of the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dark, fascist state of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." How or when this greatest counter-revolution of all time took place—without a shot fired!—Lin does not say. But given this premise, there should be no "principled" reason why the Chinese do not extend the old Stalinist policy of the united anti-fascist front to encompass a deal with U.S. imperialism against the USSR. This policy is of course ruled out at present by the American government's greater hostility to China and preference for a similar bloc with the Soviets. But in the long run the greater threat to capitalist world domination is

the military and industrial power of the Soviet Union—not the far weaker and more isolated Chinese regime. The danger of an imperialist alliance with China against the Russians cannot be dismissed.

### For Political Revolution!

In the final analysis, the protection and extension of the gains of the Chinese Revolution can be achieved only by the victory of socialism internationally. Even in an immediate sense, the narrow nationalistic bureaucracies cannot fight imperialism. Viet Nam is a glaring example. Had the military might of the deformed workers states been placed at the disposal of this struggle—e.g. a declaration by the Soviets that any bombing of North Viet Nam would be treated as if the bombs had fallen on Moscow—the U.S. would never have dared attempt military aggression. Likewise the tremendous burden of developing nuclear capability in under-industrialized China would have been unnecessary.

The fragmentation of the Sino-Soviet bloc and the petty nationalism of all the Stalinist leaders only underlines and makes more urgent the Trotskyist program of workers' political revolution against the treacherous bureaucrats in the USSR, China, Eastern Europe, North Viet Nam, etc. It is the duty of every socialist and working-class militant to defend these states unconditionally against imperialist attack or internal counter-revolution. Trotskyism, once constantly denounced as "divisive" for its criticism of the Stalinist leaderships of the deformed workers states, is now the only tendency which stands for communist unity against imperialism. The cliques ruling the Soviet Union and China, each committed to the basic Stalinist policy of "Socialism in One Country" (one's own country), must be thrown out by political revolution, and their counter-revolutionary policies replaced by a firm commitment to revolutionary proletarian internationalism. ■

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in the possession of two hundred drunken Curran goons imported from Southern ports, who beat the seamen with blackjacks and brass knuckles and tore up their union books. At first random but gradually becoming more selective, this unrestrained terror broke the back of the opposition. The New York membership meeting of 1 December was again packed with approximately 1000 outport Curran loyalists, and 15 dissidents were expelled by a 3-to-1 margin, with a great many seamen abstaining out of fear. Sporadic sparring continued for some time, but the bulk of the membership submitted to the rule of rarely-paralleled oligarchical tyranny which lasted for some fifteen years.

### "Bread and Butter"

The Curran bureaucracy secures for itself a comfortable and conflict-free existence by suppressing the NMU membership. By selling out the seamen, they win the reputation of being "reasonable," "respectable" labor statesmen. They can revel in their prestige (and the more tangible material benefits of their status) in the "peaceful coexistence" with the shipping companies that can be attained only at the cost of the seamen's wages and working conditions. The lack of rank and file participation in and control over union policies is clearly a precondition to this process. Thus, the working seamen found that as their democratic rights were taken away, their contract provisions and grievance procedure degenerated accordingly.

For some time after the founding of the NMU, major gains were made in wages, working and living conditions. Daily and weekly work hours were reduced; new jobs were created, alleviating the excessive work load; technology was employed for safety and convenience; mess hall and laundry facilities, linen supplies and food quality all improved dramatically; while, most important, patrolmen (the full-time union representatives) were generally prompt and efficient in settling disputes and grievances.

During World War II, NMU conditions began to decline, as the CP leadership pursued its policy of subordinating the seamen's interests to the war effort. Curran, after purging his CP mentors and all other "radicals" from the union, continued the erosion of the seamen's contracts. Today the NMU contract is woefully inadequate to the seamen's needs, worse than the contracts negotiated by the West Coast seamen's unions (SUP, MFOW, MCS) and in some respects worse than the NMU contract of 30 years ago! Manning scales have

been drastically cut (on some ships as many as three jobs were eliminated under the 1969 contract alone); seamen in unskilled jobs (constituting over 50 per cent of the crews on freighters and tankers, and up to 60 and 70 per cent on passenger ships) receive approximately \$100 per week base wage before taxes; overtime pay will not equal time-and-a-half for another two years; laundry facilities are a great inconvenience, with old wringer washing machines and no dryers, leaving passageway handrails and the soot-covered boiler room for drying clothes; most NMU ships are 25-year-old safety hazards sailing today only by the grace of Coast Guard extensions. Most significant is the union officials' indifference to seamen's legitimate grievances. When ships arrive in port, grievance procedures are not encouraged or even enforced. Patrolmen give crews double-talk, often relegating even the most elementary disputes to drawn out arbitration procedure.

The Curran bureaucracy holds out to the membership one flimsy figleaf: the pension and welfare plan. However, medical benefits are limited to surgical and hospital services and a minimal optical plan. There are no real provisions for ordinary illnesses or minor treatments for the seaman's family. The seaman can obtain such services for himself only at U.S. Public Health Hospitals, located only in major seaport cities. They are provided by the government because seamen are designated "wards of the state" by law. Taking advantage of these services is usually impractical because of the long wait for appointments, often involving several weeks. The \$250 per month pension plan is touted by the union bureaucracy as its supreme accomplishment. By comparison, in the West Coast unions, however, pensioners (and disabled seamen) receive an additional \$25 per month for each child under 18, which NMUers do not. To qualify for a pension, an NMU seaman must have spent two hundred days per year away at sea for twenty years, and is disqualified from pension rights if he takes an extended break from sailing.

In exchange, no doubt, for all this, the officers of the NMU live high on the hog. All national officers are provided with luxury automobiles (the President has a private chauffeur-bodyguard). They all receive salaries of more than \$20,000 per year (Curran draws about \$80,000) in addition to expenses, and a pension plan based on current salaries and collectible in one lump sum. They have sold the membership out in the most literal possible way.

### The Monolith Trembles

In the spring of 1966, some former union officials ran in the union elections

against the Curran regime. (In the NMU, previous union office is a requirement for candidacy for any office except the lowest—that of patrolman, the equivalent of business agent—which is appointed by the President!) The most constructive and best organized campaign was conducted by James Morrissey. His literature consisted of well-researched facts and figures which exposed the privileges and betrayals of the union bureaucrats but drawing no other conclusions, however, than the need for "bread-and-butter" gains and democratic union reforms.

Morrissey continued the fight after the election. He began publishing a newspaper, *The Call*, and reprinting material from the bourgeois and liberal press in the name of a group, the Committee for NMU Democracy. *The Call* began to direct attention toward the then upcoming National Convention (October 1966), describing procedures and recommending proposals for constitutional revisions and contract changes. At the same time Morrissey was getting together with other candidates who had run in the election: Joe Padilla, "Frenchy" Gaston Guyon, and Richard Haake (who ran for President against Curran, although not eligible and not listed on the ballot, having not held office before.) Supporters and interested union members began contacting Morrissey, and even openly demonstrating their opposition to the union bureaucrats.

By this time Curran and his henchmen were getting scared. First annoyed by opponents in the election, they were now faced with the prospect of confronting dissidents at the Convention and perhaps a continuing rank and file movement. It was decided to do something about it. Not long after the election, outside the New York NMU hall, three goons jumped Morrissey in broad daylight and beat him with lead pipes wrapped in paper bags. He suffered multiple skull fractures which confined him to a hospital for several weeks and prevented him from being elected a Convention delegate.

### Bureaucratic Bulwark

For fifteen years Curran had entrenched himself in his office. He had railroaded conventions and transformed the NMU constitution into a security guarantee for the incumbent bureaucracy. Under his Presidency, the office of patrolman was changed from an elected post to a presidential appointee, and port officials could be removed or transferred at his discretion. Frequent elections, formerly bi-annual, were decreased to every four years; conventions, also bi-annual, were reduced to three year periods. Officials brought up on charges were tried by other officers, and the ac-

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cuser was required to compensate the officer for loss of pay if he was not convicted. Eligibility for office required five years union membership. The President became the sole interpreter of the constitution. Non-seamen, shoreside workers unaware of the history of the NMU or sometimes even the traditions of trade unionism were brought into the NMU as full members in the seamen's division, in a gerrymandering ploy. Convention committeemen, who make all major decisions, are "recommended" by the President. Union officers set their own salaries and receive unlimited expense accounts. The guarantee of freedom of the press has been eliminated: the union organ, *The Pilot*, never prints the arguments or positions of critics of the bureaucracy.

Curran's insatiable appetite for personal power transcends common bureaucratic machinations. Two spectacular architectural edifices (the Joseph Curran Building and the Joseph Curran Annex) bear his name, as do most citations, awards and donations presented in the name of the union.

In light of this substantial bureaucratic bulwark, it is shocking that Curran responded so directly and brutally to the first challenge to his power in fifteen years. Yet this physical attack on Morrissey, in keeping with the tradition of "resolving" waterfront struggles, was not unwarranted from Curran's standpoint because his stranglehold over the NMU rests on a very fragile foundation. Subsequent events have demonstrated just how tenuous is Curran's control.

The Morrissey beating, covered in the major newspapers and publicized in *The Call*, had exactly the reverse effect of that anticipated by the Curran machine. Union members began taking an active interest in the oppositionists. Convinced of the sincerity of the dissidents, shocked by Morrissey's documentation of the NMU's corruption, perhaps some of them remembering the days of militant unionism—rank and file union members started writing letters and sending contributions to the Committee for NMU Democracy.

### Liberalism's Inadequacy

Following the election, Morrissey restricted his Committee to a perspective of anti-bureaucratic victory through the courts. His objective was to nullify the 1966 election on the basis of the restrictiveness of the union constitution. Winning a new election, Morrissey believed, would unleash the pent-up dissent within the seamen's ranks and sweep his slate to power. For three years Morrissey and other oppositionists were tied up in court hassels. And

the supposedly "favorable" decision handed down by noted liberal Judge Constance Baker Motley (which allowed the shoreside workers in the Canal Zone, numbering in the thousands, to vote in the elections) was handled by the Labor Department so that it resulted in the enhancement of the Curran leadership's position. The ruling in favor of the larger voting constituency was not used to overturn the previous election, but instead scheduled to be put into effect for the next election. Other attempts by the Morrissey group to use the government courts (e.g. suits over the handling of the pension plan or union funds, Gaston Guyon's suit for delegate status at the Convention, etc.) have proved equally futile.

While involved with the court maneuvers, *The Call* published a program which stated the aims of the Committee for NMU Democracy. Not one of the sixteen points goes beyond the most basic economic and democratic union issues. It calls for "reliance on our own strength, not on sipping cocktails with shipowners and Washington bureaucrats"; however, this is contradicted by the overwhelming emphasis placed on calling for the capitalist courts to intervene "impartially" in internal union politics. It is important to note that early in the struggle Morrissey's narrow, liberal program undermined the Committee's ability to defend itself politically against the bureaucrats' propagandistic attacks and curtailed the development of a solid base in the rank and file.

The Committee's inability to take positions on broader social and political issues has undercut its appeal to Black and Puerto Rican seamen who constitute a majority of the NMU membership. The Morrissey group has not committed itself to a relentless struggle against racial oppression generally and *de facto* racism in the NMU. To build a solid opposition, as well as a united union, it is important to convince any backward elements among the membership of the self-defeating effects of racism and discriminatory practices. Without a class analysis of the political system (the nature of the Democratic Party, the role of the courts) the need for militant union policies cannot be made clear. Hence the Morrissey caucus cannot win over crucial sections of the union, nor can it arouse the active interest and participation of the general membership with a program and orientation which does not basically differ from the politics of the Curran group although taking strong exception to its methods.

Meanwhile Curran continues to hold the loyalty of, or at least neutralize, large sections of the NMU membership. He claims credit for the work of

the Communists and other radicals in fighting racism in the NMU. He also howls long and loud about his opponents' use of anti-union laws and the anti-labor attacks on the union, and his protests strike a chord in many union members who therefore hesitate before entering the struggle. Although Curran's cynical rhetoric merely seeks to cloak his traitorous bureaucratic machinations in the guise of militant unionism, it is the limitations of Morrissey's approach which allow Curran to mobilize support in the name of elementary union solidarity.

### Morrissey Flops

The new election set for February 1969 left little time for Morrissey to organize a campaign. Without a program providing a firm foundation, the Morrissey slate not only lost the election but also the opportunity to raise rank and file consciousness. The returns reported for the election attributed to Morrissey 54 per cent in the port of New York, and 43 per cent nationally, of the vote of the seamen. (Morrissey ran for the second spot, secretary-treasurer of the NMU.) The total returns were not as favorable because of the vote of the non-seamen, shoreside workers. More pertinent and less misleading is the fact that these results were just slightly better than when he ran as an *unknown* in 1966. This is a clear indication of the high level of membership dissatisfaction, and of Morrissey's inability to mobilize and broaden the widespread discontent with the Curran machine.

At the National Convention held in October 1969, Morrissey and his group met with virtually no success on the floor. Their poor showing there was primarily attributable to the lack of organization and groundwork among the rank and file. Only a handful of dissidents were willing to speak on the floor, and these efforts were haphazard and spontaneous. Morrissey himself was poorly prepared. At one point, Curran lambasted his antagonist on personal grounds, making rambling attacks against him. Instead of defiantly challenging Curran on a point of order and personal privilege, Morrissey cowered.

Curran pulled his usual razzle-dazzle convention stunts (e.g., calling a one-day recess, adjourning the Convention before new business). But there had been no real threat to his authority at the Convention. It was Curran's show from start to finish.

### New Opposition Group

A year and a half ago, in October 1968 another dissident newspaper, *The Beacon*, emerged from within the NMU ranks on the West Coast. *The Beacon* is published by the West Coast Committee for NMU Democracy. Its supporters

are rank and file unionists who distinguish themselves from Morrissey's group in order to take a firm stand on principled issues. *The Beacon* also sees the need for involving rank and file NMUers in the struggle against the bureaucrats. The West Coast Committee has had tenuous connections with Morrissey's group, including giving Morrissey's slate highly critical support against the Curran regime in the union elections, although there are indications that the West Coast group is being driven out of Morrissey's Committee. *The Beacon* lacks the resources of Morrissey's group but has, more importantly, an understanding of the needs of the NMU membership joined to a principled program for fighting for them.

Many of the NMUers who write in *The Beacon* are committed enough to sign articles with their names and book numbers, even at the risk of reprisals from the Curran machine. *The Beacon* emphasizes the connection between economic unionism and political struggle. Its editorial policy calls for building a political party of the workers, union support to Black struggles as part of the labor struggle and condemnation of the Viet Nam war. It categorically opposes unionists' appealing to ruling-class courts. *The Beacon* has exposed the traitorous nature of the union bureaucracy and its unwillingness to fight for work rules, living conditions, job procurement regulations and pension and welfare benefits. One article analyzing the bureaucrats' *de facto* racist practices used to manipulate the membership exposes the subtle yet pernicious character of Curran and his men. Another, describing the maritime industry as a front for government subsidizing of bourgeois speculators with workers' tax dollars, illuminates the nature of the state. By linking "bread-and-butter" militant union demands with political issues, *The Beacon* is attempting to build a caucus which sees its strength as a base of militant, class-conscious workers, counterposed to Morrissey who seems to view his group more as a personal following. The West Coast group around *The Beacon* is based on a transitional program of

struggle and the need for a fundamentally different kind of social system.

#### Democracy Not Enough

Morrissey offers nothing to the NMU seamen beyond democratic union reforms and superficial economic demands. His aims are nebulous and his focus idealistic and moralistic rather than rooted in a class analysis. Without exposing and severing the union's ties to the capitalist state, without appealing to and raising the class consciousness of the seamen—in short, without coupling economic and democratic demands with a class-based political and social context—it is impossible to develop rank and file leadership capable of wrenching control from Curran and his ilk. At best Morrissey's Committee could only replace a particularly despicable and venal group of bureaucrats with others somewhat less overtly objectionable. Just as a union must either fight the agencies and institutions of capital or serve their interests so union leaders must be either revolutionaries or labor lieutenants of capital.

Without a principled programmatic basis, an opposition can beat Curran only by beating him at his own class-collaborationist methods: relying more heavily on the bosses and the government (e.g., anti-labor laws, the bourgeois courts, dependence on the bourgeois press) and suppressing the free expression and militancy of the rank and file workers. Thus limited, Morrissey cannot present a viable alternative to the Curran regime. It is precisely here that Morrissey and *The Call* fail and represent a deflection of the seamen's militant impulses and legitimate needs, while *The Beacon* presents a genuine alternative worthy of support.

#### Left Press Coverage

The analysis of the NMU struggle by the ostensible revolutionary organizations demonstrates again the crisis of revolutionary leadership. Not surprisingly, the Communist Party press has tail-ended the Morrissey caucus, taking exception only to his red-baiting in reference to Curran's Stalinoid past. The CP, entirely imbued with the politics of liberalism, is incapable of seeing Morrissey's red-baiting as part and parcel of his whole approach.

The NMU press coverage of the Workers League in its garbage organ, *The Bulletin*, is a marvel of opportunistic, inconsistent reporting. At first the *Bulletin's* coverage consisted of obsequious and uncritical reports of Morrissey's reformist policies and practices. Later issues tried to cover their tracks and were more critical of Morrissey, but a social-patriotic bemoaning of the decline of "American flag" shipping has continued. The issue of going to the bourgeois courts has also been handled

inconsistently, perhaps on account of the shameless defense by their British mentor, Gerry Healy, of the use of capitalist courts against political opponents. The 16 December 1968 *Bulletin*, for example, referred to a possible "unintended silver lining" of Morrissey's Federal Court suit, but then concluded that it didn't work after all, in a masterpiece of shameless journalism. The NMU coverage of the *Bulletin* is not based on any real involvement in union struggles; rather, the information seems mainly culled from the capitalist newspapers.

The Progressive Labor Party (PL) has had a better analysis. The October 1969 issue of *Challenge* is strongly critical of Morrissey for the correct reasons—reliance on the courts, lack of membership involvement, concentration on sporadic events (e.g., elections, conventions) instead of a principled perspective of a protracted fight. *Challenge* has even gone so far as to recognize the CP's sell-out record of betrayals in the NMU. The article concluded with a call for a scientific approach to the NMU struggle and the need for Marxist leadership within the ranks of the seamen. However, PL's approach to its own past and the traditions of the Stalinist movement from which it springs is insufficient to understand the roots of the CP's trade union betrayals. PL's attempt to generate a program of struggle is decisively limited by its willful inability to grasp the concept of transitional demands, and the theory (and practice) of the "left-center coalition" is but a continuation of quantitatively left-wing Stalinism in the labor movement.

#### Class Struggle Program

The much-espoused cause of NMU democracy can only be instituted and guaranteed by the development of revolutionary class consciousness among the NMU membership. This level of consciousness, which must be embodied most strongly by the union leadership, is not a product of militant trade unionism but rather a *precondition* to it. In this period the old reformist trade union bureaucracies can serve only as a channel for bourgeois ideology into the unions and a link to the bourgeois state through the capitalist political parties. Only a revolutionary union leadership can safeguard the vital independence of the working-class institutions from the state and fight for the economic and political interests of the workers against the shipowners and the ruling class in general. NMU militants must break from the liberals' program of formal democracy without class consciousness to fight on the basis of a transitional program which links the felt needs of the seamen to the more far-reaching and fundamental struggle against the bourgeois order. ■

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# STORM IN THE NMU

A period of internal oppositional activity has begun in the National Maritime Union (NMU). In the period since the 1966 NMU elections, rank and file seamen have been openly opposing the corrupt bureaucracy, headed by Joseph Curran, the first and only president of the thirty-three year old union.

## Heritage of CP Betrayals

Joe Curran has been the formal head of the NMU since its founding in 1937, when it was reorganized out of the decadent International Seafarers' Union. The Communist Party (CP) played a key role in the effort when they disbanded their "Red unions" and entered I.S.U. Other radical groups including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Wobblies (IWW) took part in the organizing drive. Through their large numbers and efficient apparatus, the CP was able to dominate the effort and gain control of the NMU. It was at this point that Joe Curran was thrust into power.

Curran was not a leading CPer or organizer, but was picked up as a front man for the CP. The story heard inside the union today is that a spokesman was needed to take a telephone call from a judge to a wildcat strike ship in San Pedro, California. With the likelihood that company goons were waiting at the end of the pier to attack him, Curran accepted this risky assignment. He has been the spokesman for the union ever since.

Although the structure of the union was formally a model of democracy, the Stalinist CP used manipulatory and restrictive practices in maintaining its rule. They viciously attacked organized opposition and individual dissidents. The SWP was brutally victimized for resisting the CP's betrayals of the seamen. Physical violence, by no means an innovation in waterfront struggles, was raised to a new high under the efficient direction of the CP apparatus.

## CP Control Shattered

The decisive struggle in overthrowing the CP's iron grip on the NMU came at the 1947 union Convention which opened in late September. A number of factors contributed. The maneuvering and sellout policy of the CP during the war (which even included informing on workers to the FBI and draft board) had lost them the support of most of the seamen. At the same time, the end of the war ushered in a vicious government campaign directed at purging

"red" influence from the labor movement. At that point Curran, motivated largely by opportunism and personal ambition, turned on the CP apparatus which had first brought him into prominence. He mobilized several desperate elements into a loose anti-CP bloc: militants disgusted by the wartime sell-outs of their interests to the war effort; former CPers who continued to share the CP's general political outlook but could not stomach the results of CP policies in NMU; and the "respectable" anti-Communists, backed up by the CIO national leadership under Murray. The complexity of the situation was intensified by the CPers' initiating a policy of adventurist work actions aimed at recapturing for themselves the mantle of radicalism.

The revolt against the CP was genuinely a manifestation of rank and file disgust with the conservatism of the CP machine, which had exceeded the run-of-the-mill union bureaucrats in

into more trouble over such witch hunting proposals.

After the Convention, Curran organized this insurgent bloc into the "Rank and File Committee." The union elections which followed, in July 1948, were a decisive defeat for the CP.

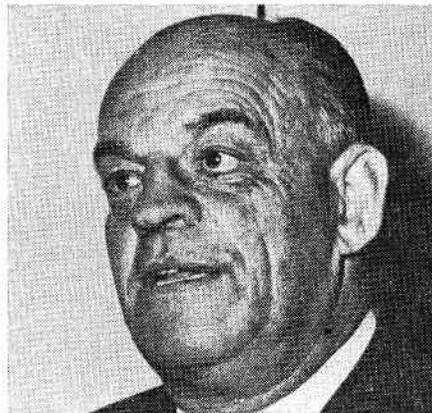
The Trotskyist NMUers, having been isolated and victimized by the CP and now themselves feeling the pressure of the onset of the Cold War, crumbled in this period of crisis. They failed to play a sufficiently independent role of continuing their denunciations of the CP bureaucratic leadership while at the same time warning against the unprincipled nature of the anti-CP bloc and the danger that self-serving opportunists like Curran would seek to rise to the top on the backs of the militants. Instead of fighting the programless "Rank and File Committee" while conducting a strongly critical supporting campaign, they simply jumped on the bandwagon.

## Curran Consolidates

"The New York NMU, which contained over half the union's national membership, continued after Curran's victory to be a thorn in his side. His proposal, in May 1949, to institute a mandatory loyalty oath (derisively dubbed the "NMU Taft-Hartley Act") As a condition for the NMU membership was voted down by the overwhelming margin of 1535 to 97. Following their example, the seamen in Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston also voted it down (the combined vote in favor of the proposal in the latter two cities was only 4 votes!). Later that year, Curran's "removal" of a high-ranking elected New York NMU official, who was a leader of the dissident "Independent Caucus," resulted in the spontaneous occupation of the union hiring hall by thousands of rank and filers. This situation of dual power in the NMU could not be tolerated by the Curran regime. When the New York NMUers arrived for their next membership meeting, on 17 November 1949, they were met by cops who kept them out of the meeting hall while chartered buses unloaded hundreds of Curran supporters from outside ports. Despite the presence of 200-300 cops, the meeting ended in total disorder. Rank and file seamen continued to occupy the union hall for several days.

Nearly two weeks later, following the Thanksgiving holiday, NMUers reporting to the hiring hall for jobs found it

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Joe Curran

Wide World

jingoistic support to the war effort and collaboration with government security agencies. Of the seven different competing sea unions existing at that time, the NMU had the most militant membership but got the worst contracts. Thus, when Curran broke with the CP (taking with him a section of the union leadership) he had little trouble mobilizing enough support to wrest the NMU from the CP.

The Convention, which ran for 24 days, was a solid victory for the anti-CP bloc. The only defeat for Curran was that a motion to prohibit interference in union affairs by organized "political or religious groups" was voted down. Curran was later to run