

# WORKERS' TRIBUNE

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

September, 1981

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

## WAR AND THE TASKS OF LABOR

(Editor's Note: These articles are reprinted from *Workers' Tribune* no. 2)

Fellow workers! These most perilous times are demanding solutions to the growing injustice facing workers of this and all other countries. The solution presented by the U.S. government can be summed up in one phrase: war and austerity. While many hard-won rights, benefits, and services are being stripped away, the capitalists and their representatives in government tell us that we must prepare to die for the supposed "national interest" in Iran, or El Salvador, or wherever next they threaten.

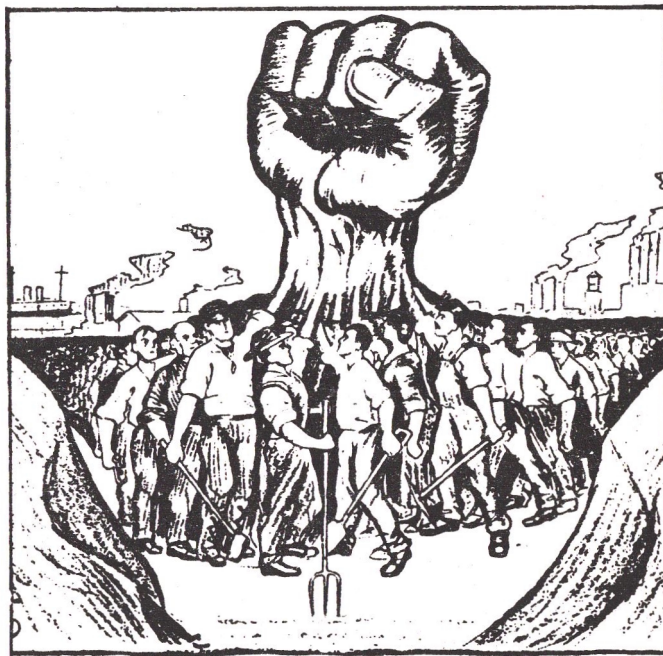
The American working class should get it clear that the "national interest" so hypocritically spoken of by the politicians is nothing but the interest of the giant corporations like Exxon and General Motors and the largest banks like Bank of America and Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan, to plunder the world. The workers and the capitalists have no common interest, as every day we must sweat and toil for the capitalists to maximize their profits.

To obscure the *class* interest of the working class, and to whip up support for an imperialist war of conquest, a vicious wave of chauvinism and jingoism is being whipped up. Oppressed peoples face intensified attacks, such as the murder of more than 20 Black children in Atlanta, raids against Mexican and other Latin American immigrant workers, and harassment and beatings of Iranians. The capitalists especially want a new war to redivide the colonial and semi-colonial countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where the greatest superprofits can be gotten. Thus, in all the imperialist countries such as the U.S., Russia, France, etc., the accelerating arms race and preparations for war is accompanied by more flag-waving, jingoism, and racism.

The continuing capitalist economic crisis, the attempts to shift it entirely onto the backs of the workers and oppressed peoples of this and other countries, and the threat of a new world war have resulted in a growing resentment by U.S. workers to the worsening conditions they are facing. Yet despite rising opposition, there has been no massive struggle of the working class against these attacks. This is because there are various responses and solutions offered by various political forces.

The main response has been that of the trade union leader-

ship. All that has been put forward is a laundry list of legislative reforms that are proving to be powerless against the offensive of the capitalists against our living standards and rights. The union leaders have consistently pursued the politics of class collaboration with the capitalists, rather than class struggle against the capitalists. They have made the American labor movement a tail of the capitalist state, the floundering Democratic Party, and such central imperialist institutions like the Rockefeller-dominated Trilateral Commission and Council on Foreign Relations (see article "Trade Union Bureaucrats in Service of Imperialism:").



The union leaders do not represent the mass of exploited and oppressed workers. Rather, they represent a minority of the workers, the bribed upper stratum known as the labor aristocracy. These workers actually benefit from imperialist

**The Collapse of the American  
Workers' Movement**

plunder and receive crumbs from the superprofits grabbed from the colonies and semi-colonies. The union leaders have used their positions as heads of the vast union bureaucracies to enrich themselves even farther. Workers' dues and union funds are used as investments in capitalist enterprises. While running a crisis-ridden bank, the United Mine Workers under Sam Church's leadership raised dues 120 percent. Doug Fraser of the United Auto Workers tells workers to accept pay cuts, and support U.S. auto companies and blame Japanese auto workers for the collapse of the U.S. auto industry. At the same time he partakes of all the riches and privileges of being on Chrysler's board of directors.

In short, the union bureaucracies have by and large themselves become capitalist institutions. Wildcat strikes, any attempt by the workers to organize themselves, and union democracy in general are thus crushed by the bureaucrats. In order to serve their fellow capitalists, the class collaborationist union leaders have led the American labor movement to a state of decline and weakness unseen in over 50 years in this country.

That these bureaucrats have a material stake in this system of exploitation and stand diametrically opposed to the fundamental interests of the American workers can be most clearly seen in their stance regarding war. They organized support of the imperialist wars in Korea and Vietnam to guarantee U.S. robbery of these countries. The U.S. fought to control South Korea, whose brutal military dictatorship guarantees enforced robbery of the cheap labor of Korean workers, who are paid pennies an hour. They tried this in Indonesia, but failed, with the Russian imperialists today getting the spoils. It is for these imperialist ends that again today the capitalists and the government revive the tired cold war rhetoric, to be echoed by the even more tired labor bureaucrats. Even when some union leaders finally opposed the Vietnam war, it was only *after* the U.S. was losing the war irreversibly, and *after* a section of the ruling class also saw continuation of the war as hopeless. Even then, they were afraid of mobilizing workers to demonstrate against the war, and limited their slogans to impotent calls for "peace." But today they all tell the working class to defend the "national interest" in the Persian Gulf—that is, the "right" of Exxon, Mobil, Texaco, and Shell to grab even more billions from monopolizing the

world's oil.

To pursue its own class interests the working class must reject the class collaborationist response of the union leaders. The working class must also reject the militant-sounding reformism of the various false "socialists" and "communists." These middle class fakers only aspire to replace the present bureaucrats with themselves, so they can share in crumbs from the imperialist banquet table.

All these false leaders must be exposed as traitors to the working class and agents of imperialism. Workers must fight for real democracy in the unions so there can be a debate and conflict of opinion between the different trends in the labor movement. Then the workers can freely choose between the two opposite roads of reformist class collaboration with capitalism, and revolutionary class struggle for socialism. Unionized workers must never forget that the majority of the working class in the U.S. remains unorganized by the union bureaucrats. The workers require their own centers of organization free from the domination of the bureaucrats.

The genuine, revolutionary Communists are distinguished from the fakers by the fact that they organize the working class for socialist revolution, and do not use the workers merely to climb the ladder of the union bureaucracy. The revolutionary Communists advocate proletarian internationalism and opposition to imperialist war, and not whatever the U.S., the Russians, or some other imperialist advocates.

The coming world war, which is an inevitable product of the imperialist system, will pose even greater challenges to the working class. The increased militarization of society means even less rights to organize for workers. Yet the union bureaucrats support this militarization and will support the next imperialist war.

The interests of the working class require no support for any imperialist or reactionary in the coming war. We must work for the defeat of our "own" government that will get us into this war, and work to transform the coming imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. To prepare for this today, we must begin to struggle against all the chauvinism and opportunism promoted by the union bureaucrats and false "communists." Then we can end this system of crisis, wars, national oppression, racism, and subjugation of women and the exploitation of the working class once and for all.



## International Correspondence

*International Correspondence* is a forum for international debate among revolutionary communists. Its purpose is the reestablishment of revolutionary communism against the many trends of social-chauvinism and centrism which have dominated the workers' movement for so long. We encourage participation from individuals or groups from around the world. The struggle of the international proletariat can only be an international struggle. We can only succeed through the establishment and development of international links.

Lines of Demarcation  
P.O. Box 892 Ste. Toui de la Bourne  
Montreal Quebec Canada

## The Collapse of the American Workers' Movement

A massive offensive of capital against the rights and livelihood of the American working class is taking place. This capitalist offensive takes place on many fronts, — economic, political, and ideological.

The capitalist economic crisis continues to worsen, with inflation and unemployment still going unchecked. Open wage-cutting has hit workers in auto, rubber, government, and other sectors. But the hardest hit are the workers in lower-paying, mostly non-union jobs, especially Black, Puerto Rican, and other oppressed nationality workers.

In some sectors there has been a return to pre-Depression conditions. In "liberal" New York, 50,000 workers toil in 3000 garment sweatshops, a 15-fold increase in the last ten years. Most of these workers are women immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Many are paid \$1.50 an hour for a 50 hour week. Other regressive actions include the proposed "youth" minimum wage, which will bring back legalized discrimination of oppressed nationality youth, who live and work in areas this will apply. Can a return to child labor be far off? The slashing of government inspection of health and safety violations, which itself was very limited at best, is another grave reversal for the working class.

In the face of this economic assault, the AFL-CIO hacks can only offer an impotent, lifeless legislative program that no one even takes seriously. They are too tied to the capitalist system to mobilize workers for even defense of paltry reforms. Although many large unions like the United Auto Workers and United Mine Workers called a rally in Harrisburg, Pa., on the second anniversary of the Three Mile Island disaster, very few rank-and-file workers were actually at the rally.

Politically the capitalist offensive includes the fanning of a vile wave of chauvinism (see *Chauvinism and the Coming Imperialist War* in this issue.) The response of the AFL-CIO is to perpetuate this sickening chauvinism. They demand expulsion of immigrant workers and call for greater tariffs, blaming foreign workers for capitalism's economic crisis. Even on the Atlanta killings, they do absolutely nothing to stop them.

As the imperialists prepare for a new imperialist war to redivide the world, the AFL-CIO prepares workers to support this coming bloody war of plunder. In a recent issue of *American Federationist*, the AFL-CIO's journal, they quote a speech by William Green, AFL head from 1924 to 1952, defending the no-strike pledges during World War II. It is not an accident that they popularize this quote today, as they want the workers to do the same thing in the coming war. Thus they

rabidly support all war preparations from the mammoth military budget to U.S. intervention to suppress the workers and peasants of El Salvador. Of course, they are not against all struggle against the bourgeoisie—but just so long as it is led by Lech Welesa against the Polish and Russian capitalists! But against the red-white-and-blue American capitalists? Heavens, no!

Such a response is to be expected from these labor aristocrats. Yet what is most distressing is that the American workers have no defense units to defend their own interests. The union bureaucracy has successfully paralyzed the working class from resisting these attitudes. The attacks on health care, food stamps, welfare, job programs, etc., go unanswered. There is no nation-wide economic struggle to speak of, and no organizational vehicle willing or able to carry it out. The union hacks have succeeded in disorganizing and demoralizing large numbers of workers. Thus we can see that today in the U.S. there is no real workers' movement.

The class collaborationist union bureaucrats have thus paved the way for the carrying out of this capitalist offensive. But as the crisis worsens, the unions, as the British *Economist* says, "are being cut down to size." (Nov. 17, 1979) The unions have done their job of holding back the class struggle, and thus their success makes them more expendable to the capitalists. While 34 percent of the labor force was unionized in 1955, the year of the merger of the AFL and the CIO, now the figure is barely 20 percent. Ten years ago 70 percent of U.S. miners were unionized. Now only 44 percent are unionized. Efforts at unionizing new areas are also faltering. Unions now lose two out of three organizing drives. In the South, where greater industrialization and more proletarianization of the masses in the Black nation in the Black Belt is occurring, over half the union elections lose. The feeble organizing drives there are generally in retreat, as seen in ACTWU's agreement with J.P. Stevens not to organize at most of its plants (see article on this in *Bolshevik Revolution* no. 7).

As many capitalists feel secure enough to discard their social props in the union bureaucracies, a new wave of professional union-busters, dubbed "special managerial consultants," has appeared. Three of every four decertification votes win, and they are up 400 percent from 1968 to 1979. The unions are becoming so weak that some capitalists fear they may collapse too much, since they still are of use as social props, especially to quell future militancy. Thus, the *Economist* advises the American unions: "All this means unions have to justify their

existence to American workers. And that they have failed to do. . . . American labour desperately needs a more intelligent debate about its place in the 1980's."

The decline of the unions is accompanied by an even more gruesome collapse of any serious rank-and-file opposition, all either co-opted or smashed. The Miners for Democracy leadership, which only had a narrow trade unionist perspective, was easily absorbed into the UMW bureaucracy. Rank-and-file groups were disbanded and the traditional wildcat strikes crushed. Now rank-and-file miners have voted down Sam Church's first contract deal by 2-to-1 margin. But they have no organization of their own to carry through the struggle, and their carnage, as heartening as it is, is not enough to win.

This paralysis of the American working class movement is especially striking when compared to other labor movements around the world. The U.S. is the only advanced capitalist country to have no free, comprehensive health care system, and there is no real struggle for one. It is the only advanced country where May Day is not celebrated in masse despite the fact that May Day originated in the U.S. There is no labor party, even a reformist one, as the vast majority of workers do not even see their interests as separate and opposed to the capitalist parties.

There are many factors for this very low level of class consciousness. But to understand the reasons why, we must first point out that this appalling state of affairs in the American workers' movement was not always the case.

#### The Rise of the American Workers' Movement

The mid-1800s saw a rapid industrialization in the U.S. that created conditions for a mass labor movement. Marx commented on the relation of this to slavery: "In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black skin it is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours' agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California." (*Capital*, book one, chapter ten) Resolutions and activities demanding an eight-hour day, as opposed to the 12, 14, 16, and even 18-hour day then prevailing, were passed all over the U.S. By 1877, the first great nation-wide mass action of American workers took place with tens of thousands of railroad and steel workers in 17 states battling government troops. Although defeated, this battle led to great strides for the workers' movement. The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, grew. One hundred years ago, in 1881, a new organization, called the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada, was founded. Later it changed its name to the American Federation of Labor.

The depression that began in 1884 put the young Federation to the test rather quickly. In that year it launched a campaign for the eight-hour day, set to culminate in a massive strike on May 1, 1886. The eight-hour movement spread like wildfire. The general strike was successful and drew out masses of workers in Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Louisville, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and elsewhere. Nearly 200,000 workers won shorter hours.

Internationally, this growing movement linked up. In 1889, the newly formed Second International called for international

rallies for May Day, 1890. Thousands upon thousands demonstrated all over Europe, and thousands poured into the streets of Chicago, New York, and elsewhere. May Day, born in America, had become International Workers' Day.

Despite its rapid growth and many strengths, the American labor movement of the late 19th century also had serious weaknesses, discussed at length by Marx and Engels. No stable mass socialist or labor party emerged in the U.S. then. Engels gave several reasons for this, but he emphasized: "Then, and more especially, immigration, which divides the workers into two groups: the native-born and the foreigners, and the latter in turn into (1) the Irish, (2) the Germans, (3) the many small groups—Czechs, Poles, Italians, Scandinavians, etc.—who understand only their own language. And in addition the Negroes. Very powerful incentives are needed to form a single part out of these elements. There is sometimes a sudden strong *elan*, but the bourgeoisie need only wait passively and the dissimilar elements of the working class will fall apart again." (Engels to Sorge, Dec. 2, 1893, in *Marx and Engels on the U.S.*, Progress, p. 333-4) Besides this chauvinism (elsewhere called by Marx the bourgeoisie's "secret" weapon—see *Chauvinism* article), he also cited the greater prosperity for American workers (especially native-born workers), and the electoral structure, which hurts any third parties.

Engels also chided those German socialists in America who refused to learn English and organize American workers. Yet he also saw American conditions as especially perpetuating theoretical confusion among the workers: "For, from good historical reasons, the Americans are worlds behind in all theoretical things, and while they did not bring over any medieval institutions from Europe they did bring over masses of medieval traditions, religion, English common (feudal) law, superstition, spiritualism, in short every kind of imbecility which was not directly harmful to business and which is now very serviceable for making the masses stupid." (Engels to Sorge, Nov. 29, 1886, in *Selected Correspondence*, Int'l. Pub., 1942, p. 451)

We cite these passages not for academic reasons, but because the weaknesses of the workers' movement then, so graphically explained by Marx and Engels, ring even more true today. Even though gains at that time were made, these weaknesses were not combatted. The leadership of the Socialist Party and the AFL themselves supported oppression of and defended chauvinism towards Black and other oppressed peoples. By the time of the first imperialist world war, they became open social-chauvinists and supported the imperialist plunder. They represented the bribed upper stratum of the proletariat, the labor aristocracy, which grew as U.S. imperialism rose to become the world's strongest economic power. The AFL, the bulwark of narrow craft unions, even went back on its own traditions, first reducing May Day to a reformist holiday held on a Sunday, instead of, when possible, calling work stoppages. By 1928 they abandoned it altogether, instead supporting Pres. Hoover's declaring May 1st as "child health day." No doubt today's AFL-CIO likes to hide this history.

#### Lessons from the First Imperialist World War

The collapse of the socialist and labor movements again set the workers the task of forming new organizations. The betrayal by the Socialist Party and AFL leaders did not ease the fact that the war years meant an increase in living costs for the U.S. proletariat, setting the stage for several thousand strikes during the first year of the war.

There was great anti-war sentiment among the proletariat. Many organizations came out against the war and actively organized demonstrations, speeches, etc., against the draft. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a loosely-organized union that called for "one big industrial union," opposed the war from its outset. The IWW, which organized mostly the unskilled and semi-skilled workers not represented by the AFL, condemned the war. From their convention in 1916 the IWW adopted a resolution which called for supporting international class unity and struggling against all "nationalistic sectionalism, or patriotism, and militarism preached and supported by our one enemy, the capitalist class."

The Socialist Party finally split over this question of war with the anti-war campaign being vigorously pushed by Eugene V. Debs. Debs travelled all across the U.S. giving speeches exposing the nature of the imperialist war in Europe and urging the American people not to be fooled by all the pro-war propaganda flooding their lives.

Lenin praised him thusly: "Eugene Debs, the 'American Bebel' (the great German working-class leader—WT), declares in the socialist press that he recognises only one type of war, civil war for the victory of socialism, and that he would sooner be shot than vote a single cent for American war expenditures." ("An Open Letter to Boris Souvarine," *IWW* vol. 23)

Samuel Gompers, AFL president, tried to organize support for the bourgeoisie in a pro-war conference for March, 1917. But he faced opposition from the ranks of organized labor. Several unions, the United Mine Workers, Typographical Union, and Ladies Garment Workers among them, refused to attend this pro-war conference. Not only did Gompers try to commit the labor movement to supporting the war by active pro-war AFL campaigns, but he tried to suppress the efforts of the workers to organize and strike so as to keep the war industries running smoothly. Despite this there were over 4,000 strikes in 1917.

Wilson was also concerned about getting Blacks to enlist and support the war. And although Wilson did nothing about the Jim Crow in the armed forces, he was able to seduce Black sentiment with his promise of nothing less than the enjoyment of full citizenship rights after the war was over. The official newspaper of the NAACP, *The Crisis*, first condemned the war as imperialist, but later softened its stance and supported the Wilson administration. Likewise the Black socialist newspaper, *The Messenger*, first opposed the war but then when the U.S. entered the conflict, the paper under A. Phillip Randolph, stated that since the president had announced the purpose of the war ("making the world safe for democracy"), that Blacks should be willing and anxious to do their part.

With the U.S. entering WWI in 1917, the bourgeoisie had to repress all the mass anti-war sentiment. The Wilson administration quickly passed repressive legislation to outlaw demonstrations, speeches, gatherings, job actions that interfered with the war machinery. Many IWW members, workers, and revolutionary socialist speakers like Eugene Debs were jailed under the Espionage Act of 1917, the Trading with the Enemy Act, and the Conscription Act.

The greatest international event during the war was the successful Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. Although many workers in the U.S. did not understand it, it had a tremendous impact. Many called it a workers' state and wanted to know everything about the new regime. A popular cartoon of the time had the caption: "Bolshevism— that means us!" Many U.S. workers supported the Bolshevik Revolution, displaying true internationalism. In 1919, Seattle longshoremen re-

fused to load arms and munitions destined for Admiral Kolchak, who was leading a counter-revolution against the young Soviet republic. The workers beat up strikebreakers who tried to load the arms. In the 1919 Seattle general strike, mass workers' organizations appeared much like the Soviets (councils) of Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers that had seized power in Russia.



"I know what this Bolshevism means, Bill - it means us."

Yet despite these advances, many of the same weaknesses pointed out by Marx and Engels plagued the workers' movement. A low theoretical level and the influence of various reformist, anarcho-syndicalist, and chauvinist concepts had to be split with. Some of the anti-war socialist workers did not split sufficiently with opportunism. But many, however, did begin to travel the path of Bolshevism and, in the throes of the successful Bolshevik Revolution, opened a new chapter in the history of the American workers' movement by founding the American Communist Party, the American section of the Third, Communist International.

#### Briefly on the Rise and Fall of the Communist Party, USA

It is beyond the scope of this article to fully examine the Communist Party, USA. We offer here some key lessons about its rise and fall, and its effect on the American workers' movement.

The CPUSA, despite all its shortcomings, was the one party in America to promote the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, and uphold the model of the Bolshevik Revolution in the Soviet Union for proletarian revolution in all countries, including the U.S. There were many battles to keep it from deviating totally off a revolutionary course, including the one led by Stalin himself against American exceptionalism and factionalism (see *Stalin's Speeches to the American Communist Party*, 1929, Proletarian Publishers reprint). Despite certain revisionist leaders, for a time this was the party that supported socialism where it existed and the genuine international communist movement. Precisely because it was the American section of the Communist International, although it never was a Bolshevized party, for a time it represented the fusion be-

tween scientific socialism and the workers' movement in the U.S. Thus, for example, in the 1932 election, William Z. Foster ran as the CPUSA presidential candidate under slogans like "Towards a Soviet America," and got over 100,000 votes. He later openly repudiated proletarian revolution, promoted "peaceful transition to socialism," defended Khrushchev's attacks on Stalin, supported Mao Zedong, all showing he was, at least by the end of his career, and out-and-out revisionist counter-revolutionary renegade. Yet what the party did earlier, as part of the international communist movement, determined the character of the CPUSA for a time, and not what errors it made or what eventually became of its leaders.

The CPUSA did tremendous work in organizing the immediate union struggles of the working class. It was at the heart of the industrial union movement that organized auto, steel, the mines, and so on. It played a leading role in building the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s. A common remark of that time, both from complimentary and derogatory sources, was "the Communists run the CIO." Although the U.S. was gripped by the depression, with a sizable American section of the Communist International leading millions of workers, tremendous gains were made by the workers' movement. Social security, unemployment insurance, greater rights to unionize, strike, and organize, and the victory of industrial unions in many basic industries were won. It can be said that the American workers' movement was at its peak in this century when the CPUSA was at its peak. When communism advanced, the whole workers' movement advanced. When communism declined, the whole workers' movement declined. Thus, in 1927, Stalin declared, "It can be taken as fully proved that the Communists are the most devoted and courageous fighters of the labor movement all over the world, including America." ("Interview with the First American Labour Delegation," *Works*, 10:133)

Yet the CPUSA, like the SP and its predecessors, fell prey to the same weaknesses that led to its total rejection of the revolutionary path. Browder resurrected American exceptionalism with the slogan "Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism." He converted the tactics of the anti-fascist coalition during World War II into a strategy, and declared U.S. imperialism as benevolent. Instead of following the directives of the Seventh Comintern Congress to form a mass Workers' and Farmers' Party, the CPUSA tailed Roosevelt and led workers back to support the Democratic Party. Some steps were made towards a mass Labor Party, notably the American Labor Party in New York that elected Vito Marcantonio to several terms in Congress, and the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. But by the early 1950s, the CP had abandoned the former for the Democrats, while the Democrats themselves took over the latter.

Browder's liquidationist line tremendously weakened the labor movement. First the CP dissolved all its communist factions in the unions. By 1944 they dissolved the CP itself, guaranteeing the labor aristocrats leadership of the workers' movement and all the CIO unions. Again the anti-theory tendencies so common to the U.S. led straight to liquidationism.

The CP also allowed the bourgeoisie and its agents to spread chauvinism without consistent opposition. In 1928 and 1930 the Comintern issued its "Resolutions on the Negro Question in the U.S." These put forward the right of self-determination, that is, the right of secession, for the oppressed Black nation in the Black Belt South. The CP upheld this in words. Yet in deeds they limited themselves to struggles on partial demands, such as the campaign to free the Scottsboro Boys (nine

Black youths framed for raping a white woman), organizing Black share-croppers in unions, and so on. While these were pioneering efforts at the time, and while the national reformists like DuBois opposed them, the CP, as in the unions, did not link up the struggle on these partial demands to the basic revolutionary demands. In an article written seven years after the first Comintern resolution on the Black national question, a CP leader cited numerous examples of partial struggles against white chauvinism, discrimination, etc., yet could cite not one specific example of how they raised the demand for self-determination. He said, "But this beginning is very small. Self-determination has not been explained in detail, as to the benefits that the Russian workers and peasants obtained after the October Revolution." (*Communist International*, May 5, 1935, p. 512)

After this, the CPUSA only got worse. Self-determination ceased for them to be a revolutionary question, and became one of mere "democracy." By consistently not fighting for self-determination they were not able to combat chauvinism. Thus, at the peak of Browder's social-chauvinism, in 1943 there was a race riot by white auto workers in Detroit against Black workers working in the industry. Whatever its intention, the CP was in no position to counter this, even in unions they helped set up.

The reconstitution of the CP after Browder's dissolution did not completely break with revisionism. After World War II, U.S. imperialism was able to dominate the whole capitalist world economy, and thus expand the stratum of bourgeoisified workers, even those only temporarily bribed. As leader of the imperialist camp it launched a savage campaign against the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and Comrade Stalin. This led, in the U.S., to a mammoth offensive against the CPUSA.

What happened was that the CPUSA totally capitulated to imperialism. It repudiated revolution and later liquidated all its work in the Black nation, just at the time of a wave of industrialization and the birth of the mass civil rights movement. It had already given up leadership in the unions, and, especially since it did not consistently fight for its own existence, and combat chauvinism, it was kicked out of CIO unions and isolated in the workers' movement. Its trade unionism led to open revisionism.

The key event of that time, however, was the assassination of Stalin in 1953 and the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R. Stalin had long ago predicted what the effects of this would be: "What would happen if capital succeeded in smashing the Republic of Soviets? There would set in an era of the Blackest reaction in all the capitalist and colonial countries, the working class and oppressed peoples would be seized by the throat, and the positions of international communism would be lost." ("The Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the E.C.C.I.," *Works*, 9:28-29) This is exactly what happened. The CPUSA collapsed only to become an impotent shell of itself. The international communist movement became dominated by revisionism and collapsed. The result, as we see in the U.S., is the paralyzed state of the workers' movement.

#### Post-CPUSA Disasters

After the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and the collapse of the CPUSA the American workers' movement has never been the same. These are the direct causes of its collapse and paralysis. History has shown that following the path of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin has led to victories,

while all other paths lead to defeat.

Yet all the contradictions inherent in capitalism and the spontaneous movements could not be held back. In the U.S., a sharp political crisis in the 1960's emerge during the Vietnam War and the rise of Black and other oppressed nationality movements. The period after World War II had seen a large influx of Blacks from the rural areas of the Black Belt Nation to the industrial centers in the North and West. This placed large members of Black workers at crucial points of production in large factories. These conditions led to the foundation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the most influential leftist workers' group that had wide support since the demise of the CPUSA.

The League led a number of wildcat strikes in several auto plants in Detroit. Yet its success was short-lived, as it soon split into various factions plagued with varieties of the same maladies that have historically wrecked the American workers' movement. There had been no struggle against chauvinism among white workers, especially since the CPUSA openly repudiated the Comintern position in the Black national

question and proletarian internationalism in general. American dominance of the world economy and the partial capitalist stabilization after the Korean War had led to a temporary situation where political and economic privileges, such as wages and working conditions, could expand for many workers in the U.S. The League did not scientifically analyze these phenomena that heightened the split in the U.S. proletariat, but instead adopted bourgeois nationalist theories. This was payment for the sins of allowing chauvinism to go unchallenged for decades. Nevertheless, it contributed to its collapse. In some cases League organizers even refused to give agitational leaflets exposing factory conditions to white workers. (*Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, p. 117.) Yet today some forces uphold the League as a model and want to resurrect it.

The League also fell into the historically American anti-theory trap. It was never clearly a cadre or mass group (an organization of revolutionaries or an organization of workers,) it was hindered by factions and numerous careerist leaders, it never trained its members to be cadre schooled well in the science of Bolshevism (some of its leaders were even Trotskyites), it catered to various anarcho-syndicalist theories that relied on spontaneous strikes, and its open and legal character led to quick firings of key organizers. After the wildcat movement went into a lull, the League split. None of the factions were able to re-establish anything near the influence the League had among autoworkers. Thus, today, as Detroit and the auto industry are in utter decay, the workers' have no fighting defense unit of their own.

Some League leaders and members did claim to embrace "theory" in the wake of its demise. However, they joined one or another international opportunist current, including the pro-Russian imperialist Communist League (later the Communist Labor Party) and assorted Maoist factionettes. The Maoist "anti-revisionist" movement was a movement which principally came from the petty-bourgeois student movement and also the nationalist movement of the 1960's, (e.g. the Students for a Democratic Society, Young Lords Party, Black Panther Party.) The petty bourgeois Maoist movement proceeded to implant themselves in the factories and tail the spontaneous working class movement.

The "anti-revisionist" groups have consistently failed in organizing the proletariat. The seven false "parties" — the Progressive Labor Party, Communist Labor Party, Revolutionary Communist Party, Communist Party (M-L) [if it still exists], Communist Workers Party, Communist Party USA(M-L), and Marxist-Leninist Party (USA) are really the seven dwarfs. They are largely petty bourgeois sects whose main claim to fame is that they have each vied to crush more rank-and-file workers' groups than the other. Most of them joined hands with the AFL-CIO hierarchy and the U.S. Department of Labor to assist the open reformist labor aristocrats in the union movement, including Arnold Miller, Cesar Chavez, and Ed Sadlowski. Only in isolated cases have members of these groups even climbed the ladder of the union bureaucracy. When they do get limited influence it is used to provoke strikes at the most inopportune times so the militant workers get identified by the company, the unions, and the state, and get fired. They have thus served the bourgeoisie well in squashing sporadic spontaneous struggle, preventing a re-emergence of a nation-wide workers' movement, and demoralizing militant workers, and fueling chauvinism, bourgeois nationalism, and an anti-communism.

#### The Road Back

Engel's advice to the American workers, given at a time of a rise of the spontaneous movement, is even more essential today:

"And if there are people at hand there whose minds are theoretically clear, who can tell them the consequences of their own mistakes beforehand and make it clear to them that every movement which does not keep the destruction of the wage system in view the whole time as its final aim is bound to go astray and fail — then many a piece of nonsense may be avoided and the process considerably shortened." (Engels, *To Sorge*, Nov. 29, 1888) Thus, the construction of a Bolshevik Party remains our central task.

Essential to developing this core is the building of the Bolshevik press. Lenin's *Iskra* plan, outlined in his writings such as *What Is To Be Done?* and *Where To Begin?*, point to the key role of the press as a collective organizer for a Bolshevik Party (see editorial in *Workers' Tribune*, No. 1). One of the most important lessons from the experience of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers is that, despite its ideological and organizational deficiencies, it successfully used the press as a collective organizer in building its ranks. However, our present-day League admirers conveniently ignore this fact.

The workers' movement can be fundamentally strengthened only if the conscious element is strengthened. Even if the sharpening of the capitalist crisis leads to a spontaneous upswing, as is likely, the bourgeoisie can buy out any reformist leader. What they cannot buy off they will attempt to crush, using not only the state, but especially their agents in the unions and the opportunist groups. Thus, a condition for the revitalization of the workers' movement is success in throwing the bureaucrats and opportunists out of the workers' movements. All varieties of reformism leave the exploitative system of private property and production for profit intact, thus guaranteeing more crisis, wars, terror, etc. Any reform won can always be taken back so long as the capitalists retain power.

The escalating steps to imperialist world war will be ushered in by an even more vicious wave of chauvinism. The American workers' movement can only be revitalized if a successful

struggle is waged against this "secret" weapon of the bourgeoisie which has time and again wrecked each wave of new forces. The link must be re-established between the various nationalities in the U.S. proletariat, between the proletariat and the movement of the oppressed nations and peoples in the U.S., and between the U.S. proletariat and the proletariat and oppressed nations and peoples of the world. The internationalist workers in America who courageously fought against the imperialist World War I provide the workers of today with rich revolutionary traditions to be followed. Let the Kirklands and Frasers and Sam Churches wave their blood-stained flags we will follow Debs, Ruthenberg, Big Bill Haywood, and the others who started on the *workers'* path of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. We must not let chauvinism go unchallenged any more! The Communists of the oppressor nationality must especially take up this task, while the communists of the oppressed nationalities must especially combat all bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalism.

Carrying out these tasks must include a struggle for workers' democracy. The union bureaucrats and opportunists try to crush such debate and struggle and shield their members from it. This is because they are afraid of serious criticism of their treachery, because they know these criticism will reach responsible ears, because they know their own support is shallow.

Stalin's advice to the American unionists is thus most timely: "I think that if the American labor movement wants to live and develop it cannot do without a conflict of opinion and of trends within the trade unions, criticism of reactionary leaders, and so forth, will develop more and more in spite of the resistance to it on the part of the reformist labor leaders. Such a conflict of opinion and such criticism are absolutely essential for the American working class so that it can choose between the various trends and finally take its stand as an independent organized force within American society." (*Works*, 10:133-4) This must culminate in the establishment of real centers of workers' organization controlled by the workers themselves, and not union bureaucrats, would-be bureaucrats and opportunists.

The continuing political and economic crisis will likely bring forth moves to such workers' centers spontaneously. This will set new tasks for the revolutionary Communists and put major demands on us that we must live up to if we are to be of any value whatsoever. Already the rise in rallies and spontaneous stirrings in the working class and oppressed nationalities has outstripped our ability to keep up with them.

Those who consider themselves true internationalists can only be worthy of that designation if they assist the spreading of an internationalist press in the proletariat, if they match their internationalist *words* with internationalist *deeds*.

We must also analyze very closely developments in the working class to break with the two main capitalist parties. The crisis may force even some labor aristocrats like social-democrat Winpisinger, head of the 900,000 member International Association of Machinists, to lead the formation of a mass third or labor party. However, this remains just empty talk now designed to revitalize the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party. Stalin pointed out to the American unionists: "The bourgeoisie in America have two parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, but the American workers have no mass political party of their own: Do not the comrades think that the absence of such a mass workers' party, even one like that in Britain (The Labor Party), weakens the working class in its political fight against the capitalists?" (*Ibid.*, p. 146)

Whatever course happens, and whatever the labor aristocrats do, the construction of a Bolshevik Party must focus on the core of the proletariat, on those workers "lower and deeper" who are least infested with bourgeois ideology and enjoy little or no political and economic privileges. The growing gap between higher-paid and lower-paid workers plus, the influx of large numbers of oppressed nationality, Latin American immigrants, and women workers to key industries in large factories, makes fulfilling this task even more imperative.

Working men and women of all nationalities! The proletariat in the U.S. has a rich revolutionary history, part of the revolutionary traditions of the international proletariat. Let us avoid the pitfalls and traps that have been laid bare for us by that history and by revolutionary theory. Let us allow ourselves no more to be deceived by the charlatans who seek to divert us from the revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism and build socialism and communism and keep us on the road to defeat and demobilization.

If this revolutionary path is in your interest, fellow workers, then you should contact us, debate with us, and take up these tasks as your own. The time to act is now, *before* the coming war. Let us waste no more precious time in preparing for the momentous class battles to come.

**WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!**

## LITERATURE AVAILABLE FROM BOLSHEVIK LEAGUE

### WORKERS' TRIBUNE

*published by the Bolshevik League of the U.S.*

6 issues . . . . \$5.00  
12 issues . . . . \$8.00

Send orders to  
B.L., P.O. Box 1189  
Bronx GPO  
Bronx, New York 10451

Make checks payable to *Bolshevik*

- Report to the Founding Conference of the Bolshevik League of the U.S. \$2.00
- Regarding the Question of the Party of Labor of Albania \$ .50
- Regarding the Question of Bolshevism - two reprints from the works of J.V. Stalin, "Mastering Bolshevism" and "Some Questions Regarding the History of Bolshevism" \$1.00
- 1928-1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Negro National Question in the U.S. (reprint) \$1.00