

Confidential for Members Only

TOWARDS BUILDING THE AGITATIONAL PARTY

a Preliminary Statement

**Spartacist League
September 1, 1966**

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Introduction

This document is one which was produced in the greatest haste, a bare 2 days before the opening of the Spartacist convention. Due to its lateness, all the positions advanced are not necessarily fully formulated. It is our hope, therefore, that support for the document be determined by consideration of its general outline, rather by acceptance or rejection of specific details. Normally, the lateness of a document such as ours is inexcusable (especially, when it doesn't base itself on an already existing discussion bulletin, as is the case with ours.)

Consciousness is the fuel for functioning as a revolutionary. Therefore, it was by reading the first discussion bulletin, and not receiving until the last moment the second one, that we came to the conclusion that solving Spartacists' problems didn't lie exclusively in choosing between a couple of perspectives documents, but rather in analyzing why Spartacist hasn't been able to function effectively, as a propaganda group since its formation. The conclusions (if one would like to call them such) we reached are expressed in a predominately organizational form. Finding only the organizational differences, evidences a low key understanding--we admit to that. We are confident though, that these organizational differences will, in the long run, express themselves in a political form.

It's time all of us step out of petty cliqueism, and grumbling (some of which we have been responsible for), expose where we stand on the organizational questions, and strive to find their political roots. We have made the first step in the belief, that by bringing out the real politics of our differences, we can lay the groundwork for building a workingclass vanguard, based upon genuine programmatic unity instead of fake 'hardness' and sloganeering.

Where We Stand

The revolutionary movement, numerically speaking, today is on the verge of extinction. There is a strange contradiction involved, in that as opposed to the time when the 4th International was formed, not just 8% of the worlds population, but over 33% fall outside capitalist market relations. This naturally makes world capitalism more unstable, resulting in its having to more extensively exploit the colonial and semi-colonial world, in addition to giving the worker in the advanced countries a diminishing percentage in wages of what he produces. Objectively aiding capitalism, in its efforts to reestablish itself in the post war period, were the Stalinist parties. Now these Stalinist parties have virtually slipped over to their own bourgeoisies, and/or are showing signs of becoming organizationally extinct (as in the USA). In addition the superiority of workingclass property forms, coupled with economic planning, is demonstrated by the Soviet Bloc countries ability, despite bureaucratic mismanagement, to produce surplus capital within a predominately national economy.

Never has the utter inability of capitalism to solve the problems of mankind become clearer. Bridled by economic anarchy, capitalism has made only the most limited use of cybernetics (the ability of production machinery to function as if it were a living organism, by reproduction and adaptation). Cybernetics, long proveable by mathematicians, opens the possibility of the total abolition of labor. Not only has capitalism not made an extensive use of cybernetics, its use of automation (labor multiplication) has barely kept profit production at an "acceptable" level. Compared to the 1930's, labor has become much more productive (for instance, Inland Steels' new mill at Burns Ditch Indiana, with 9,000 production workers, will produce 10% of the nation's steel), this in light of the fact that capitalism has fought tooth and nail since then against a further shortening of the work-week from 40 hours, is proof in itself of the crisis capitalism is facing.

Propaganda? A Model Situation

The recent fight against the airlines machinists strike by the government, was prompted not so much by the wage demands exceeding Johnsons 3.2% guidelines, but by the insistence of the union rank and file that an inflation escalator clause be included in the contract, so that what wage hikes they received wouldn't be inflated away by the next contract. The fact that the capitalist government has effectively dropped the wage guidelines, is a recognition by them that inflation has now taken over the dirty work of pushing the workers into the hole. The fear Washington has now is that workers will react in defensive manner, and try and re-negotiate contracts (as with the auto workers), or include inflation escalator clauses into new contracts (airline machinists).

In the next period, the battle in the trade unions will be largely against the effects of inflation. This will have its political effect, because with the advent of a new spiral of inflation, the government is placed in the role of the direct defender of corporation profits. Almost every airline employee was acutely aware of that fact. Strikes in the future will tend to approximate the airlines strike, which placed the workers in direct opposition to the government they elected and perhaps support in Vietnam.

Intervention? Program?

Of course it was out of the question for Spartacist to intervene directly in the airline strike, but didn't the strike open the door for us to draw the necessary conclusion for other vanguard workers, we are in contact with? Shouldn't the revolutionary propagandist group be prepared to intervene directly, or indirectly, at every important juncture of the class struggle constantly criticising, exposing, and presenting an alternative program? Although the airline strike is one among many issues, it seems as if Spartacist is silent on

the majority of important events in the workingclass movement. How do we expect someone to join us unless we can demonstrate that we have more than slogans and militancy, but a program which is both understandable and reasonable to the advanced worker? We have to be able to demonstrate what lies ahead for the workingclass movement, how to intervene, and how victories are to be won.

It is probably agreed among us that one of the primary tasks is that of winning new cadres to the revolutionary movement, from such organizations as SDS. But where was Spartacist for the past year when there has been intense right-left battle going on in SDS? We made all the correct criticisms of Wohlforth's entry tactics in PLM, but when a perfectly opportune moment came for us to send some of our comrades into SDS it was completely ignored. Incidentally, we wonder how many comrades have been reading accounts of what has been happening in SDS thru their newspaper New Left Notes?

Are We A Propagandist Group?

Why is it that practically not a deadline is met, a paper published, a public meeting held? What public face Spartacist has is because of its unique politics, or some flamboyant action the organization has engaged in. The examples of hard consistent work which netted results are few and far between. Where is the Trotskyist newspaper? Wohlforth disgusting Bulletin? How is anyone to know the difference? Why is it when the question is posed, why so many important things aren't done that the answer is that we don't have the time, or we're too deeply involved in other things, or we don't have the talent, or the money or something? What's holding us from putting out a monthly newspaper? The fact that our comrades are out every morning leafleting a factory, or in the evenings propagandising door to door in a workingclass neighborhood? Is it that the police have cracked down, and all of us are out of jobs, and are destitute? Perhaps it's that our printer has been terrorized,

and our mimeo seized? What is the holdup?

More Bitches

Among the leading comrades in Spartacist, there is no sense of immediacy in the class struggle. Somehow the workingclass movement will have to operate on these comrades schedules. Even their own comrades (at least the ones in Baltimore) don't seem to deserve a mailing, detailing conference preparations (we had to make a phone call at the last minute). In addition the first discussion bulletin appeared slightly over a month from the convention date, despite the fact that the two main documents, have been in existence since the London fiasco. Might we ask what sort of discussion this is supposed to be?

It is always said that out of consciousness, comes discipline. What concretely has been done in our outlying organizing committees, to bring consciousness to the membership? Of course Spartacist lacks a regular press, so written correspondence would have to be more heavily relied upon, to help give new comrades a guide to action. It is hard to believe that a new comrade, for instance, some place in Texas, is bound to operate in a particularly effective manner, when his education in the Marxist movement is limited to reading a handful of books, seeing an issue or two of Spartacist, and reading once in a long while a few copies of our national minutes. Until this comrade can be reached, it would be hard to expect more than just the most mediocre results, that includes correspondence, recruitment, and paying regular dues.

Organizational Decrees or Discipline Thru Consciousness?

It must have come as a surprise to some of the comrades, to find a bare one month before the convention, that they would be counted as some sort of political non-entities, if they didn't choke up their back dues by the convention date. It isn't the fact that comrades should be members in good standing

to exercise their national vote and have speaking privileges at the convention, that is being contested but it is the manner in which such decrees are carried out. Coming from the well oiled, efficient, political machinery in NYC, the order to meet the deadline and come thru with the money, had a slightly ludicrous quality. What has our National Office done to bring consciousness to a new comrade out in the boondocks somewhere that would deserve lumping him in the same boat with some habitual slacker who sits around all day in his plush uptown NYC apartment? With the same blow of revolutionary justice, it could be decreed that since the comrades in the National Office didn't come thru with the discussion documents in time for a three month discussion period, that they along with other slackers should be deprived of their vote and voice. Let's propose a uniform standard for functioning as a revolutionary and see how long comrades who speak 'hard', but on the other hand procrastinate and delay important political tasks would last. All too often Spartacist is marked by super hardness, super Bolshevism, and super discipline, as some sort of substitute for consciousness and program. This is the characteristic marking of the sectarian groups of 'true believers' that Lenin expressed such contempt for in 'Left Wing Communism'.

The Roots of Our Difficulty

It is difficult to believe that as things are now constituted, that Spartacist will be able to even constitute itself into a well functioning, small propaganda group, much less become an agitational party. Much of the problems Spartacist is facing, is that which comes from groups which are predominately petty bourgeois in their social composition, as was the 4th International. The leadership of these groups was won to the revolutionary movement, on the basis of an intellectual committment, rather than on the level of programatic agreement, as are many workers recruited. Going thru long years of a

relatively dormant class struggle, and/or simply lacking roots in the class struggle, these leaders tend to lose their faith in the ability of the workingclass to take power. Providing that these comrades maintain their intellectual honesty, they will not look to alien class forces to achieve socialism as has the SWP, but the losing of faith in the role of the workingclass, is bound to take its toll. Hopefully the price of several comrades pessimism will not be the building of the vanguard party.

Comrade Geroges Kaldy writing for Voix Ouvriere on May 2, 1966 on the London conference in his article, included a paragraph which could well apply to Spartacist "We found ourselves confronted with organizations, which were incapable of discussing the real problems, the methods, and tasks of the construction of the world revolutionary organization. We found people who made pretense of analysis by playing with words. We were confronted with people who, instead of making an attempt to explain the reasons for the failure of the International, spent their time congratulating themselves on the past, which, as one of them said, "gives us no cause to blush."

Concluding...

It is with full knowledge of our rights as a minority, and the price that inevitably must be paid for factional struggle, that we, with this document wish to declare ourselves as a tendency in the Spartacist League.

Bob Sherwood Sept., 1966
Jaime Smith
Joe Clark

Robert Kaldy