

Alabama: The Negro & Independent Politics

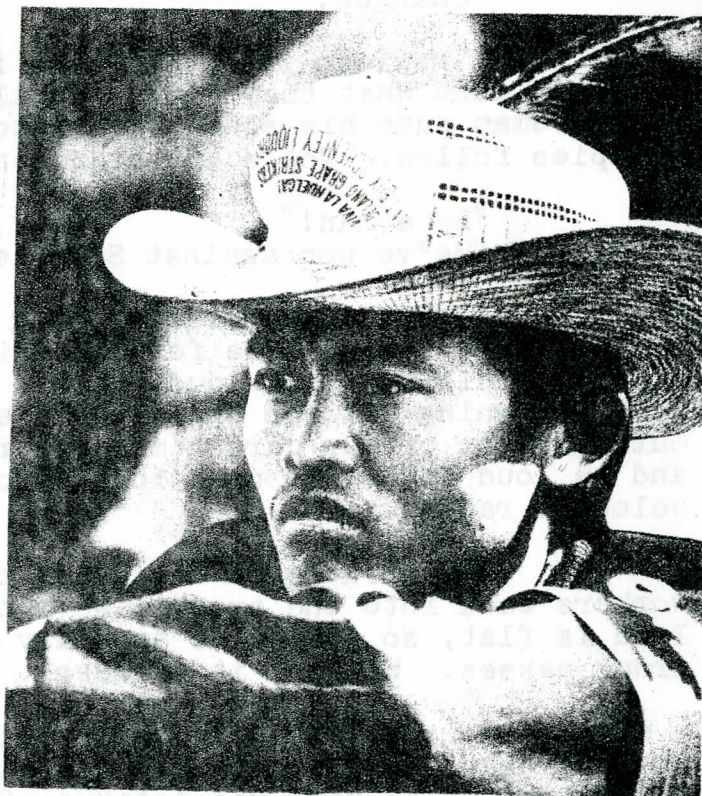
Bulletin

OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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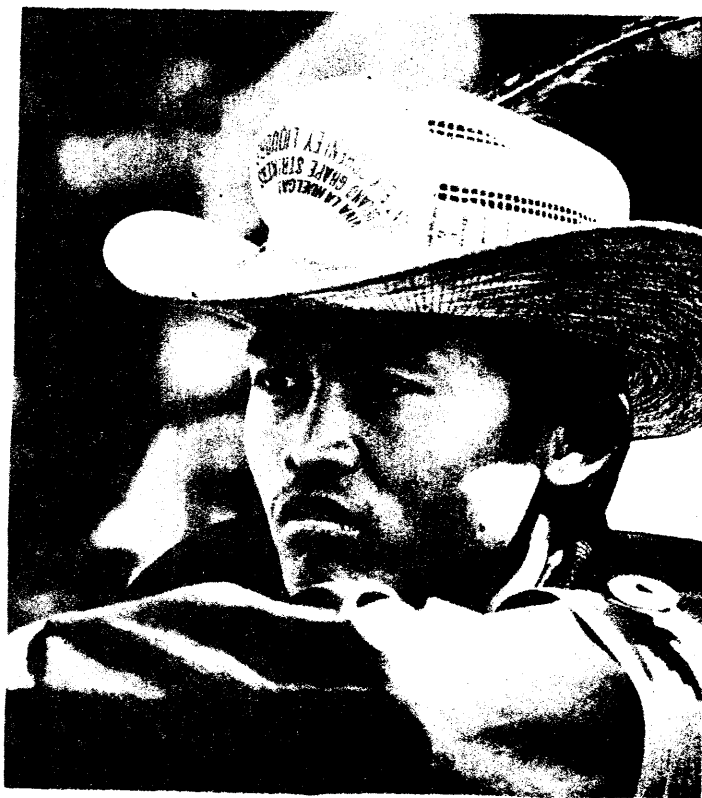
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FARM WORKERS FIGHT FOR UNION RECOGNITION

By a West Coast Correspondent

Delano, Calif.---On the vines the grapes are just forming -- small clusters of green dots. We wave in the faces of the scabs, our red flags decorated with the black eagle.

"It's not your fault you're ignorant, it's your parents' fault because they never fought for their rights." The scabs pretend not to hear us. According to the radio it is 92 degrees.

"DiGiorgio closes in 5 minutes!"

"Esquiroles."

"Changos."

A Mexican picket yells a few words of Filipino he's learned. He isn't sure what they mean. A Filipino worker yells out: "Huelga!" The foreman puts his scabs back into the truck. Our procession of jalopies follow. The scabs start pruning. We arrive.

"Be a man!"

"We've won against Schenley and Christian Brothers!"

A middle-aged man pruning the vines looks up and appears to be listening to us. The foreman drives up next to our picket line. On top of his car is a loudspeaker. He turns on his car radio full blast drowning out our shouting. Several of the pickets start dancing. Out from one of our cars comes a large drum. A picket pounds as hard and as loud as he can next to the foreman's ear. The result is a colossal racket.

The work isn't finished, but the foreman puts all his workers back into the truck. We run back into our jalopies. The land is flat, so the scabs are easy to spot. An orange Schenley truck passes. We give it a cheer.

We start yelling again telling the scabs that there's plenty of work they can get outside of Delano, that the only reason they were being treated so good was because of the strike, that we are losing our patience... The middle aged scab looks at us. Suddenly he comes toward us. He's joined the strike! We give him a cheer and one of the cars takes him downtown for ice cream. The foreman puts his workers back into the truck. We sing the unofficial anthem of the strike, a song of love of a land which does not belong to us:

The colors, colors
Of the countryside in springtime

The colors, colors
Of little birds coming from afar

The colors, colors
Of the rainbow we see shining
And that is why my love is for many colors
And that is why my love is for many colors

The rooster sings, the rooster sings The chicks, the chicks
With a ki ri ki ri ki ri ki ri ki ri With a pio pio pio pio pi
The hen, the hen And that is why my love is
With a ka ra ka ra ka ra ka ra ka ra for many colors
And that is why my love is
for many colors.

We head back to the union dining hall. Opposite the union building we pass giant antennas surrounded by barbed wire. Here the Voice of America broadcasts to South-East Asia telling them about the best of all possible worlds.

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The National Farm Workers Association has won one major victory; the promise of the Schenley Corp. to negotiate a contract. (Christian Brothers has also promised to negotiate but this decision was made from above almost without the intervention of the workers concerned.) It is improbable that the boycott of Schenley products had any effect on their sales, though it no doubt disturbed the "company image." On April 6th the Teamsters Union agreed not to pick up or deliver at Schenley's San Francisco distributor. On his own a railway engineer decided not to switch on a freight car of Schenley liquor and left it on the siding. After taking a look at the Teamsters picket line the Western Union boy decided not to deliver his telegram. Schenley decided that day to negotiate. Though it could have obtained a court injunction, Schenley probably agreed because its properties in the Delano area are only a small part of its total empire. Thus it had little to lose economically through an agreement with the union, and at the same time got rid of a nuisance.

The N.F.W.A. is now taking on the Di Giorgio Corporation, manufacturer of S & W, Treesweet, and White Rose Foods. Net sales in 1965 were \$231,800,000. The union is again relying of the weapon of boycott. But victory may not be so easy. Di Giorgio is almost wholly based on agriculture. It has more to lose than Schenley. On the other hand, its products are in a highly competitive market. In the supermarkets shelf space is at a premium. Store brands are pushing out name brands such as S&W. And Di Giorgio is no doubt aware that if S&W loses shelf space through a boycott, it will not regain it.

Beginning May 9th the Teamsters have agreed not to pick up or deliver at Di Giorgio's plants in California. Di Giorgio will probably obtain an injunction and at the same time start large scale advertising to counteract the boycott. Few boycotts have ever really worked -- the boycott of S*W will need manpower to be successful. The real test will be whether the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war movement is ready to make the Delano strike and the boycott part of its own fight.

What Next for the Farm Workers?

The N.F.W.A. itself must confront the question whether it intends to be a Mexican community organization or an agricultural workers union. Community organization through co-ops and credit unions, laudable as they are, consume enormous amounts of time and capital which right now are needed elsewhere, i.e. in extending the

strike. The N.F.W.A. also provides funeral benefits and life insurance for its members. But in order to do so it must charge \$3.50 a month dues, an amount out of the reach of most farm workers!

The N.F.W.A. must also confront the fact that many farm workers are not part of any community. These workers, largely single men, are forced to spend their lives in company barracks. They have little interest in life insurance and funeral benefits, but still need a union to protect them. If the N.F.W.A. is to organize the unorganized, it must learn to place less importance on dues paying membership and more on bringing the message of unionization to the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers to whom the strike is just a rumor.

The N.F.W.A. consists of disparate elements. Part of the leadership (Chavez, Huerta) are Catholic pacifists. (Recently Chavez told pickets not to call strikebreakers "scabs." The pickets continued to yell it, though.) Because of their religious ideology and the enormous pressures on them, this leadership may end up betraying by simply being unprepared for the results of their own actions, or in winning may end up being corrupted by the "practical" necessities of being trade union officials. Several "Anglo" ministers from the Migrant Ministry have been taken into the leadership of the strike. They have taken leadership away from Mexicans and on at least one occasion overruled a part of the Mexican leadership. (A company security guard with the help of the police had beaten several pickets. The Mexican picket captains wanted to picket the police station. Jim Drake, a minister who is an assistant to Chavez, ordered them back to the office.)

There is also within the leadership of the N.F.W.A. leaders who are not tied to pacifism or the Church. To maintain unity they are going along with the Virgin of Guadalupe, the pacifists, and the Mexican nationalists. But they will have to think further. The chant of the thousands of N.F.W.A. marchers as they entered Sacramento was: "We want Brown...OUT!" (Brown is Governor of California). The next stage for the N.F.W.A. is independent political action if it is not to become another part of the labor establishment of liberals who pass resolutions and collect dues.

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REPORT ON LBJ'S VISIT TO MEXICO

Mexico D.F.... According to the American press "enthusiastic crowds of more than a million" greeted President Johnson on his visit to Mexico. The real story is a little different.

On April 13th several planes of the American Air Force landed in Mexico City. Their cargo consisted of pictures of Johnson and welcoming banners. Leaders of the radical groups which are precariously legal were picked up and brought before the head of "Special Services" police, Raul Mendiola. They were told all public demonstrations were prohibited and that all constitutional guarantees were suspended. The print shop of the Communist Party was invaded by police and the plates destroyed.

Meanwhile the trade unions and the peasant organizations which are nearly all part of the government party, the P.R.I., and thus controlled directly by the government, were told to mobilize their

members. It would be compulsory for every member to attend the "welcoming celebration" -- attendance would be taken. In the city owned public markets the shop keepers were ordered to close down their shops and attend the celebration.

The secretary of the officially approved Stalinist party, the Partido Popular Socialista, expressed his approval of the visit of President Johnson. The secretary general of the P.P.S., Lombardo Toledano, stated that "his opinion was that he didn't have an opinion."

On April 14th Johnson arrived. Policemen posted on the rooftops threw down confetti. The masses showed up demonstrating their compulsory enthusiasm, But despite all the precautions, in the Caballito and the Plaza de la Constitucion there were continuous shouts of "Muera Johnson" (Johnson-Drop Dead), "Viva Cuba", "Yanquis, Go Home". The police rushed in clubbing down demonstrators. There were numerous arrests. At the same time in the National University students grabbed control of the University radio station which is heard throughout Mexico City. Until transmission was out, they were able to denounce American aggression in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam.

At the ceremony inaugurating the statue of Lincoln, the supposed reason for the visit, the attendance consisted of thousands of police and a few hundred American residents. Lady Bird made a speech in disastrous Spanish telling about her honeymoon in Mexico. But of more concern to those listening was the popcorn, Coca Cola, and hot dogs being circulated. And then all the secret policemen waved President Johnson goodbye as he returned to Gringolandia.

WHEN ASSASSINS MOVE IN ON MILITANT TRADE UNION LEADERS

By a Union Painter

When on May 7, Lloyd Green became the second militant official of the Painters Union in the San Francisco Bay area to be murdered by the shot-gun blast of an unidentified assassin, notice was bluntly and publicly served on all painters union militants that the third stage of their fight to keep control of their union out of the hands of employers and their agents had been reached.

The militants, in bitter struggles, had won the first two stages in the continuing conflict. Now, the bosses' men, having lost the democratic stage of the conflict, and the second, bureaucratic attempt by the International Union officials to take over, served notice that they intend to settle this conflict by guns in the third stage. For this sort of fight it appears that the militants are completely unprepared at this time. If the militants somehow manage to win this battle too, then the fourth stage they would have to face would be government prosecutions and harassments for Smith Act violations, marked by charges of terrorism." This is the lesson of the trial of the Minneapolis teamsters union leaders in the early 1940's. The lessons to be learned from this experience vitally concern all trade unionists, especially the militants.

How Economics Determine Politics

The Fight to Control the Union

The militants, led by Dow Wilson, the first victim of the assassins, had successfully mobilized the membership and won the first stage in the fight to control the painters union organizations. The contestants were the old-line leadership--extortionists and collaborators of favored employers on the one side, and the union ... painters mobilized in support of a militant union leadership on the other. The employers employed their "right" to hire and fire painters. They collaborated closely with the old-line leaders in controlling employment opportunities. Nevertheless, they lost control of the largest union organization in the area.

On July 1, 1965, the new leadership led the union into a strike that lasted five weeks. They won the largest gains ever won by a strike in this union in this generation. To win they had to overcome the scabbing of some locals under control of old-line union leaders who unanimously were backed by the international union officials. The scabby union officials sent their members back to work under terms of a contract reached in violation of the provisions of the union constitution. The militants denounced the scabby role played by local and international union officials.

Despite this treachery the militants carried their strike through to a victory which netted the membership the following gains:

- Union control over the use of all labor-saving tools;
- Recognition of the right of union members to take coffee breaks;
- An increase in pension benefits from \$70 to \$150 monthly;
- Wage increases in two stages over a three year period.

(When the strikers went back to work on August 6, 1965, their hourly wages were increased by 35 cents an hour. On July 1, 1967, they were to receive an additional increase of 50 cents per hour.) An increase in fringe benefits of 55 cents in 1965 with an additional increase of 80 cents on July 1, 1967.

By winning these gains, which are outstanding for this union, the militants performed a great service not only for their members but in exploding the widespread myth that the "racketeers" bring the biggest gains in wages to "organized" workers. The militants, not the racketeers, won the best gains on current records.

The Second Stage of the Fight

The International Union Officials Try to Take-Over

The economic costs involved in wages, working conditions and fringe benefits dictated the policies of the contending forces. When the employers got a drubbing, the old-line union officials may have had a loss of income for "labor peace" services. The heads of union moved in against the militants. The employers had already lost control of the union and then lost the strike. They wanted to

regain their lost control. The International union officials tried to remove the militant leaders on charges of slander, but they had to retreat. The militants in the New York City area had already won a famous appeals court decision which the U.S. Supreme Court refused to overturn, which prohibited union officials from suspending or expelling union members as they had done for generations.

The employers brought in their top agents in the union because it was costing them more money when the militants took over than it had cost them previously to pay-off the racketeers for "labor protection" and "collaboration." In addition, there was another costly experience when the employers were exposed in the tie-in of employers, union officials and government officials connected with extensive and intensive cheating of government contract painting work. This expose had been aggressively and persistently pressed by the militant leaders of the painters union. They had finally broken through and exposed this racket. The union militants established a sort of workers' i.e., union, inspection on government painting jobs, insisting that the employers live up to their contract responsibilities. The cheating by employers robbed the workers of employment. In this fight the militants built-up political ties with reform, capitalist politicians which apparently proved advantageous to both parties in the fight against the bureaucrats and crooks in the union and government who controlled the setup. But this collaboration of militants and reformers has proved to be worthless as a means of meeting the conditions marked by the assassinations.

The Purpose of the Assassinations

Leon Trotsky used to call attention to a French police adage which tells us that "If you want to find the criminal responsible for the act, find those who benefit from the crime."

The records tell us that employers brought the mobsters of the 1920's and early 1930's into the labor-management field. Particularly during the early-depression years, contractors doing government work brought in strong-arm men to beat up union officials inspecting the contract jobs to see that employers hired union men and paid union wages. It cost the employers less to pay off the mobsters for this service than to pay wages, plus graft, to government officials and inspectors. The organized racketeers, operating the gambling, narcotics, strong-arm, prostitution and extortion rackets "protection" moved into this field, murdered hundreds, perhaps thousands, of honest union officials and terrorized the rest. The political and judicial connections they had established with the police prosecution and government officials were utilized to harass union militants everywhere and to protect and cover up for the mobsters. The organized gangsters were solidly established and connected to the more respectable, established business and government administrations.

When the "Murder, Incorporated" scandals broke in the mid 1930's and early 1940's, these relationships were exposed publicly. The racketeers were forced to abandon their wide-open operations in the labor-management field, but maintained their control more discreetly. They only move in their thugs when controls over the unions and government contracts have been lost at the two earlier stages, as in the San Francisco Bay area in the Painters Union. The "reform"

politicians do not control the police, the investigations, the prosecutors or the government officials anywhere in the country. In this case one of the "reform" politicians, unquestionably a sincere and honest" person, introduced a resolution in the Assembly of the State of California calling attention to the first murder, that of Dow Wilson. Every agent and collaborator of the mobsters in the Assembly voted for this resolution---everyone is for virtue and against sin. But the control of the mob over the unions, the "shylock" racket, the union welfare funds racket, and other related rackets like shaking down contractors to split fringe benefit payments almost universally is ignored by government officials and agencies, including the Congress. This is revealed by every Congressional and State investigation into the practices in this area. There is a legal arm, and an illegal arm of the capitalist setup. At the third stage reached in the fight of the San Francisco Bay area painters, they have come up against the core of the problem facing the workingclass movement: the question of which class holds the state power and the method for overcoming legal and illegal power in the hands of the capitalists.

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INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION IN THE SOUTH

Discussion on Perspectives for the Negro Movement

The voter registration campaigns in the South following the enactment of last year's Voting Rights Act put some hundreds of thousands of new Negro voters on the books. These Southern Negroes cast their first votes in the recent primary elections in Alabama and Texas. Government sources and the daily press were equally enthusiastic and satisfied with the results, with the election of Mrs. Wallace being accepted as a mild but expected disappointment. The election of several Negroes in local Democratic primary elections was especially singled out as a history making development.

What the capitalist government is after is a clean and liberal image. U.S. diplomats in the United Nations and elsewhere can now self-righteously point to these elections in the South as great triumphs for democracy. This, it will be said, is proof that race discrimination is really on the way out thanks to the courageous yet moderate policies of the federal government.

The ruling class is also interested in changing the political institutions in the South to some extent. This involves, of course, not the placing of real power in the hands of the Negro masses and poor whites, which would mean a social revolution. What is implied is the patterning of Southern political institutions somewhat more after their counterparts in the North. This means the election of so-called moderates to statewide office. These people are of course not interested in a genuine bettering of the lot of the Negroes, or for that matter, the poor whites. They are simply interested in using more sophisticated means to stabilize capitalist rule. The base of support for the government's policy of moderation comes from a section of the ruling class in the South--predominantly the bigger capitalists who see the need for political sophistication and flexibility.

The Rev. Martin Luther King seeks to lead the Negro masses into alliance with the capitalist government and its Southern representatives. This alliance is in the interests of only the very small section of the Negro population which has achieved a more privileged position as an educated and professional elite. King sometimes (less and less of late) uses militant language but this is only his means of achieving his true aims, which were demonstrated once again when he called upon Alabama Negroes to vote in the Democratic Party primary for the 'moderate' gubernatorial candidate, Richmond Flowers. It is clear that King is interested in helping the U.S. government to improve its image and put across its present "solution" to the Negro struggle.

This would all mean very little if King's reformist program could actually do what it is supposed to--meet the basic aspirations of the Negro masses for democratic rights as well as economic security and a decent standard of living. But it is becoming clearer all the time to militants in the course of the struggle that, as the Marxists state, it is too late for capitalism to solve these problems, that it has too many other burdens and contradictions which prevent it from acting in a progressive fashion as it did 100 years ago.

Some of the militants around the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sense that capitalism's contradictions are catching up with it. In Alabama, SNCC and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), which is known as the Black Panther Party, have broken from the King policy of supporting the Democrats nationally and of choosing between the moderate and reactionary Dixiecrats in the South. They distrust the Johnson Administration and they refuse to unite with the Southern "moderates". They refused to participate in the Democratic Party primary elections just recently held. The New York Times has violently attacked SNCC and the indigenous forces it's leading as extremists. It is clearly worried by even a break with King's policy. The Times attack should be taken as a compliment by SNCC and the LCFO.

But have these forces fully broken from the Democrats and the system the Democratic Party represents? Genuine independent political action means class political action. It must be viewed from a class standpoint and it necessitates a program. Electoral activity must be connected with mass struggles.

If a program is not presented and developed, demoralization will inevitably result. If future obstacles and difficulties are not understood and overcome by means of a clear program, frustration can lead to apathy and despair. This has been seen in the North. The uneven development of American capitalism poses somewhat different tasks in the North and the South, and gives the Southern militants an important opportunity. Precisely because of its relative economic backwardness the South can play a leading political role in future revolutionary developments in the U.S. The combination of great union struggles and the Negro freedom struggle is what makes this possible. Now is precisely the time to confront these issues. The good intentions, the healthy mistrust of Johnson and the Democrats, and other partial steps must develop into a revolutionary program for the struggle of the Southern Negro as well as the entire work ing-

class. Criticism of the tentative steps taken by the Negro movement in Alabama with the aid of SNCC, by revolutionaries who solid-
arize with the goals and aspirations of the Negro struggle, is ab-
solutely necessary.

What is the program of the LCFO and SNCC? James Forman of SNCC indicated in a letter in the NY Times that the major reason for the nonparticipation in the Democratic primary by Negroes in Lowndes County was that participation would have made it impossible for them to also put forward an independent slate in the later elections. Thus the issue is posed in tactical terms, and not by stating that the Democrats represent the interests of the ruling class. Electing "our own" candidates will not be the solution. Black candidates independent of the capitalist parties and relying upon the support of the masses will not be able to accomplish anything unless they also have a program.

'Poor People' or Workingclass in Struggle?

The concept of united action by "poor people" to better their conditions has been advanced by Southern militants. We have seen the Poor Peoples cooperative and other Poor Peoples organizations and activities. This concept cuts across racial lines, at least theoretically, but it does not replace a purely race approach with a class approach. It leaves things still on the empirical level of unity of the poor -- the have-nots.

We must see beyond the superficial to what really unites the poor as well as some who may not be "as poor". It is their position in relation to the system and the way it works that is important. It is their social power and yet their propertylessness which unites all workers. Sometimes the most exploited workers are also the poorest and the most conscious. Often the most exploited workers (in the sense that the capitalists take a higher rate of what the workers produce in surplus value) are not necessarily the poorest, and may be, precisely because of a more powerful position in the productive system, more militant. What we must recognize is that it is not poverty itself, important as it is, which is the fundamental factor, but the class relationships. If the Negro militants see this and form organizations of workers acting consciously in the interests of the politically and economically disenfranchised and exploited workers, they will have made a tremendous step forward. That is the primary requisite for a program of struggle.

This leads to another point. Not only must an independent party seek to speak out on a class basis. It must break from reformism definitively. The ranks of the movement must be warned that the election of a Negro sheriff, even on a good program, will only begin to pose the crucial issues. A confrontation with the entire capitalist system is involved. This means that we must view the struggle not from the view of one town or county or even state. We must examine the national and international connections of the struggle. The dishonest maneuver which the federal government gives the Southern militants must not be seen in moral terms of good and evil but in terms of what the ruling class can and cannot afford to give to the Negroes. This means we must examine the international crisis

and policies of American capitalism to understand the real reasons for its behavior.

A Labor Party in Formation

The struggle must be extended out of the black belt counties to areas where the Negro is a minority of the population. We must have the perspective of demonstrating to all workers, white as well as black, that there is a program upon which they must unite in common battle. This does not mean that the Negroes must moderate their demands to appease racist trends at present dominant among white workers. On the contrary, the Negro movement must develop its militancy and the self defense policy as put forward by the Deacons. The Negro must show that he means business and does not intend to let the racists have the upper hand any longer. The movement must demonstrate power and determination. It must combine militancy with a class program which offers a united front to all who are ready to struggle against the bosses. Its perspective must be one of detaching the white workers from racist control and winning over a significant section of these workers, not on a moral plane but through common struggle.

The question of union organization is a crucial one for the South, where industrialization over the past generation has led to a big migration to the Southern cities in addition to the North by the rural Negro population. The conditions are rotten ripe for a massive campaign of union organization and militant struggle. SNCC has paid some attention to this matter already, and the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union is an effort to organize agricultural workers, but much more energy and thought must be devoted to this question right now. The fight for jobs, housing and schools, which has been a part of the Northern struggles, must also receive more attention in the South, thus demonstrating again that the white and black workers have common interests.

Of course racism will not be eradicated among the white workers overnight. Constant struggle against it will be necessary. But this approach can bring class issues to the forefront and tremendously weaken the capitalist class and its political establishment. All this means that independent Negro political action in the South must view itself as a labor party in formation, as one wing of a labor party which will broaden to include the entire labor movement as well as the unorganized workers across the country. The South can lead the way. Although under present circumstances such a labor party will probably have only token white support in the South, it can be the beginning of the political organization of the U.S. workingclass.

SWP Misleadership

We must fight against all those who refuse to consider these questions, who are blinded by their current impressions of reality instead of seeing how the struggle is developing and what tasks it poses. Self-professed socialists, who even present themselves as revolutionary working class tendencies, at the same time fail to link up the workingclass and Negro struggles. The Socialist

Workers Party is the most important example of those who pay lip service to the concepts of the class struggle, but completely ignore it in everyday practice, and especially in relation to the Negro movement.

The SWP has printed several glowing reports on the ECFO in Alabama. These long reports are completely devoid of any political content. The SWP, almost 10 years ago, passed a convention resolution entitled The Class Struggle Road to Negro Equality, but one would never know that now. This resolution, even with serious mistakes which it made, is miles closer to a revolutionary approach than the SWP's current policy. The class struggle doesn't exist in reality for the SWP. They have nothing to say to Negro or white workers or civil rights activists. All they are capable of is following the line so far adopted by the forces around SNCC, to which they uncritically adapt. This is just an extension of their attitude toward Malcolm X.

Uncritical support and simple reportage is not what is needed, is not real support to the struggle. The SWP is in fact misleading and miseducating whomever might come across a copy of its newspaper. We must solidarize with the struggles as they are taking place, participate in them and aid them in every way possible, and this includes fighting for a class program, the bare outlines of which are sketched above.

Only with this kind of program can the struggle advance from a county wide to statewide and finally Southwide and nationwide struggle. We need a program for the entire class, not just a part of the class. This means bringing more backward sections of the class forward politically, not dragging more advanced elements backward. It also means fusing different aspects of the overall struggle and seeing their real interconnections. We must combine a militant class struggle program with a militant struggle for Negro rights and fight for it, South and North. The the New York Times and those it speaks for will really have something to worry about.

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TROTSKYISM IN POLAND

Revolutionary Socialists Imprisoned

Students of Stalinist mentality and practice have often observed the following: that no matter how negligible or insignificant quantitatively Trotskyism actually is, the mere shadow or reflection of it on the horizon brings forth from the Stalinists raving accusations and punitive measures.

This was always present and quite obvious in the era of "high" Stalinism, 1929 to 1953 -- during the butcher's undisputed reign.

Now, to the chagrin of apologists for Khrushchev-Brezhnev-Kosygin, and particularly the Pabloite drifters from Trotskyism

(who postulate that a basically progressive change has occurred in the European Workers States -- from Stalinism to a Russified and somewhat "soiled" Socialism) "liberal" Poland has repeated the Stalinist pattern. This cannot be regarded as merely "unfortunate" -- no, the campaign against Trotskyism is part of the basic make-up of Stalinism. It is part of Stalinism's fundamental mechanism: the opposition to workers powers (i.e. workers democracy).

Recent Polish events confirm this analysis. Twelve to fifteen people were arrested in April, 1965 in Warsaw for distributing a pamphlet which stressed these points: it called the regime a "bureaucratic dictatorship" and proposed workers councils as the basis of the Polish state. A return to "proletarian internationalism" was also demanded. Regrettably the full text of the 128 page document is not available. How much prior surveillance for political activity these people were subject to is also not known.

These people were mostly young members of the Polish Communist Party, but an outstanding older person, Ludwik Hass, was associated with them. Ludwik Hass is a veteran Trotskyist who joined the Polish Trotskyist Party in 1938, spent eighteen years in Russian prisons (including eight years at the infamous Vorkuta slave labor camp) and was returned to Poland in 1957. No doubt his return was prompted by the general resistance to Russian domination which was in full swing at that time.

At least five of the group were imprisoned, four receiving terms of three years, and one was sentenced to three and a half years. This was consistent with Section 23 of the "Small Penal Code", which is a typical Stalinist "law" gagging free speech. Section 23 was passed prior to 1956 and the "liberal" Gomulka regime did not throw it out. Section 23 penalizes those who distribute literature which "contains false information that may bring essential harm to the interest of the Polish state or bring prejudice to the authority of its chief offices". During the trial Hass openly asserted his Trotskyism. It is reported that at one point spectators joined the defendants in the singing of the Internationale.

Bourgeois Retrogression or Workers Democracy

We cannot claim that there are large numbers of Poles prepared to commit themselves to the extent that **those** imprisoned have committed themselves. Apathy, scepticism and cynicism have been among the by-products of the Stalinist regime -- competing for the allegiance of those (especially the young workers) who could be in genuine opposition.

However, the contradictions of Polish society will become increasingly apparent, and inescapable solutions to these contradictions will become evident to more people -- especially some of those who have grown up in the deformed workers state, and consequently oppose retrogressions toward capitalism. We see these retrogressions arising now: the toleration of an aggressive clericalism (Cardinal Wyszynski can attack the regime, but Hass cannot!); the tendencies toward maximization of profit in separate state industries as against central planning; the encouragement of "small traders";

the increased dependence on trade with capitalist states; the further proliferation of private agriculture; the miserable growth rate, etc.

Without doubt, the Polish clergy and hierarchy is a tremendous power, buttressing these capitalist tendencies within the Polish workers state. The Polish church is a readymade political center for capitalist restoration in Poland as well as all of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The attack on the reactionary role of the clergy by the Polish Trotskyists in their pamphlet is thus a key element of a program for workers democracy through a political revolution.

Under certain exceptional conditions such as existed in the Soviet Union in 1921 (after the havoc and destruction created by the civil war) it may be necessary for a workers state to allow the development of private trade and accumulation: thus, the NEP (New Economic Policy) was instituted by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in the Soviet Union in 1921. But the bourgeois tendencies in Poland described above constitute a mortal danger because they are not under the control of the workers either through the mechanism of workers councils or a genuine Leninist, Internationalist, revolutionary party. The control of the economic process is not in the hands of the working class but rather in the hands of the ruling bureaucracy, an essentially reactionary caste, concerned only with its perpetuation as a privileged strata. To remove the hands of the bureaucracy from the throat of the working class: that is what Ludwil Hass and his comrades went to jail for.

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NOTE: The factual material outlined above is based on a memorandum issued March 21, 1966 by the Ad-Hoc Committee of 100 on Protest for Polish Political Freedom (Berkeley, California).

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The following "Open Letter" by Isaac Deutscher is reprinted from the Newsletter of May 7, 1966.

AN OPEN LETTER TO WLADYSLAW GOMULKA
AND THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE POLISH WORKERS' PARTY

I am addressing this letter to you in order to protest against the recent secret trials and convictions of Ludwik Hass, Karol Modzelewski, Kazimierz Badowski, Romuald Smiech, Kuron, and other members of your Party.

According to all available reports these men have been deprived of liberty solely because they have voiced views critical of your policy or certain aspects of it, and because they have expressed disappointment with the bureaucratic arbitrariness and corruption which they see rampant in their country. The charge against them is that they have circulated leaflets and a pamphlet containing 'false information detrimental to the State and its supreme authorities' -- the Public Prosecutor, it seems, did not accuse them of any crime or offence graver than that.

If this is the accusation, then the persecution of these men is disgraceful and scandalous. Several questions must be asked: Why, in the first instance, have the courts held all their hearings in camera? Surely, no matter of State security was or could have been involved. All the defendants have been academic teachers and students, and what they have tried to do was to communicate their views to fellow students.

Why have they not been given a fair and open trial? Why have your own newspapers not even summarized the indictments and the pleas of defence? Is it because the proceedings have been so absurd and shameful that you yourselves feel that you cannot justify or excuse them; and so you prefer to cover them with silence and oblivion? As far as I know, Prosecutor and judges have not impugned the defendants' motives or cast any serious doubt on their integrity. The accused men have proclaimed themselves to be, and have behaved like, devoted non-conformist Communists, profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of revolutionary Marxism.

I know that one of them, Ludwik Hass, was, even before the second World War, a member of the Communist, so-called Trotskyist, organization, of which I was one of the founders and mouthpiece. He then spent 17 years in Stalin's prisons, concentration camps, and places of deportment. Released in 1957, he returned to Poland so free from all bitterness and so strongly animated by his faith in a better socialist future that he at once decided to join your Party; and he was accepted as a member. No one asked him to renounce his past, and he did not deny his old 'Trotskyist' views even for a moment -- on the contrary, he upheld them frankly and untiringly. This circumstance alone testifies to his courage and integrity.

Do you, Wladyslaw Gomulka, really believe that you have, in your 'apparatus' and administration, many people of comparable disinterestedness and idealism? Look around you, look at the crowds of timeservers that surround you, at all those opportunists without principle and honour who fawn on you as they fawned on Bierut, and as some of them fawned even on Rydz-Smigly and Pilsudski. On how many of these bureaucrats can your government, and can socialism, count in an hour of danger, as it can count on the people you have put in prison?

Recently still your government claimed with a certain pride that there were no political prisoners in Poland since 1956. This claim, if true, was indeed something to be proud of in a country the jails of which had always, under all regimes, been full of political prisoners, especially of Communist prisoners. You have not, as far as I know, jailed and put in chains any of your all too numerous and virulent anti-Communist opponents; and you deserve credit for the moderation with which you treat them. But why do you deny such treatment to your critics on the left?

Hass, Modzwelski and their friends have been brought to the courtrooms hand-cuffed and under heavy guards. Eye-witness accounts say that they raised their chained fists in the old Communist salute and sang the Internationale. This detail speaks eloquently about their political characters and loyalties. How many of your digni-

taries, Wladyslaw Gomulka, would nowadays intone the Internationale of their own free will and choice?

I have been informed that before the trial, during the interrogation, the official who conducted it alleged that Hass and other defendants had worked in contact with me. I do not know whether the Prosecutor took up this charge in the courtroom. In any case, the allegation is a complete falsehood. Let me say that if the defendants had tried to get in touch with me, I would have readily responded. But the fact is that I have had no contact with any of them. I have not even seen a single one of their leaflets or pamphlets. I judge their behavior solely from reports reaching me by word of mouth or through Western European newspapers.

I ought perhaps to explain that since the second World War I have not participated in Polish political life in any way; and that, not being a member of any political organization, Trotskyist or otherwise, I am speaking only for myself. I should add, however, that on a few rare occasions I have broken my self-imposed political abstinence. I protested when you, Wladyslaw Gomulka, were imprisoned and slandered in the last years of the Stalin era. Knowing full well that I could not share all your views, I expressed solidarity with you. Similarly, I do not know whether I can fully approve the views and behavior of Hass, Modzlewski and their comrades. But in their case as in yours I think I can recognise reactionary police terror for what it is and tell slander from truth.

Another occasion on which I allowed myself to have a say on Polish political matters was in 1957, when I explained in a special essay 'The Tragedy of Polish Communism between the World Wars'. You may remember that your consors, Stalinists of the so-called Natolin group, confiscated the essay when 'Polityka' tried to publish it; and that then you, Wladyslaw Gomulka, ordered the essay to be widely distributed among Party members. In those far-off days, just after the 'Polish spring in October', you held that Polish Communists ought to know my account of the havoc that Stalin made of their Party, delivering nearly all its leaders to the firing squad. You knew that I had been one of those very few Communists who, in 1938, protested against that crime and against the disbandment and denigration of what had once been our common Party.

Moscow 'rehabilitated' the Polish Party and its leaders only after 17 or 18 years; and then you, Wladyslaw Gomulka, apologised for having kept silent in 1938, although you had not believed the Stalinist slanders. I do not believe that you are right now in persecuting and imprisoning members of your own Party and your critics on the Left; and I cannot keep silent.

May I remind you of your own words spoken at the famous 8th Session of the Central Committee in October, 1956?

'The cult of the personality was not a matter just of Stalin's person,' you stated then. 'This was a system which had been transplanted from the USSR to nearly all Communist Parties.... We have finished, or rather we are finishing with that system once and for all.' (Your italics.)