

SPARTACIST

ELECTION SUPPLEMENT

OCTOBER 1964

FREE

CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN
OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Vote for DeBerry and Shaw

In the current Presidential election militants, black and white, who are struggling against racial and economic oppression at home, and support the anti-imperialist struggles abroad, whether in Viet-Nam, the Congo or Cuba, can find no comfort in either bourgeois party. The immediate and pressing task is the construction of a revolutionary instrument of struggle, which can wage an uncompromising battle in behalf of the exploited. The need for an independent working-class party--whatever its form or composition may be in the coming period--can best be expressed in this election not by abstaining but by a vote for the Socialist Workers Party candidates: for President--Clifton DeBerry; for Vice-President--Edward Shaw; as well as for the various local campaigns of the SWP and the independent candidates of the Freedom Now Party.

To further the SWP campaign SPARTACIST supporters have worked along with SWP members to get the SWP ticket on the ballot in New York State, have helped build 'Students for DeBerry and Shaw' and supported meetings of the candidates themselves all across the country, and have urged support to the campaign upon such other groups as the Progressive Labor Movement and the Young Peoples Socialist League. But such activity is only part of the responsibility of revolutionists toward this campaign. The centrist nature of the SWP and, flowing from its nature, some of the platform planks the SWP has advanced oblige the SPARTACIST to give its support a sharply critical political content.

The Revisionism of the SWP

The Socialist Workers Party purports to defend the principles of Marxism-Leninism, as developed by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International to meet the new developments of world reaction and the degeneration of the Soviet Union after the failure of the European revolutions following World War I. Previous issues of SPARTACIST have exposed how, over a whole sequence of crucial political issues, the SWP has departed from a revolutionary position

and assumed the role of pressure group toward non-working class forces. In this article, we continue this analysis with respect to a central SWP campaign slogan, 'Federal Troops to the South.'

Every form of revisionism is a flight from struggle. The revisionist party, as it has begun to lose faith in the capacity of the proletariat to emancipate itself, seeks, and eventually finds, allies in other classes, to whom it entrusts the role of historic leadership. Thus it is with the Socialist Workers Party. In the colonial revolutions they turn to petty-bourgeois leaderships at the head of peasant guerrilla bands. The Cuban experience, where such a development culminated in the elimination of imperialist control of the economy, serves as the excuse for neglecting the construction of proletarian parties in the backward and oppressed parts of the Earth. Without reserve the SWP lauded the FALN terrorists in Venezuela, and utter not a word of the tragic defeat of the Venezuelan movement, and of similar catastrophes in Latin America. And in Cuba itself, workers democracy and control are but a luxury in this view, and the arbitrary imprisonment of Cuban Trotskyists goes unprotested by the SWP, while Castro's rightward turn, evidenced in his overtures to the U.S. in his recent interview with the N.Y. Times, is camouflaged.

Likewise in the United States the SWP abstains from the only current arena of struggle, the Negro struggle, on the pretext--a self-fulfilling prophecy--that the SWP is a 'white' party, and cannot presume to advise black militants. They see their task as placing their support behind attractive petty-bourgeois radicals like Malcolm X or, to a lesser extent, Jesse Gray or John Lewis of SNCC, creating hero-worshippers among their youth instead of critical Marxists with supreme confidence in the independent organizations of the working class, whether black or white. Dishonesty is implicit in this method. Hence, for example, the recent capitulation of Malcolm X to the orthodoxy of Mecca goes unmentioned in the Militant, which conceals and distorts to cover its empirical zig-zags.

It is, however, when a once-revolutionary party adapts not to some charismatic faker but to the ruling bourgeoisie that the term revisionism is replaced by a harsher characterization--reformism. A foreshadowing of such a capitulation became manifest over the Kennedy assassination (see SPARTACIST No. 1); the equivocal role of the SWP and its international co-thinkers toward the Ceylonese betrayal was another step. Still another piece of evidence is the SWP's opportunist demand that federal troops, and not the armed working class, solve the problem of segregation in the South.

AGAINST THE SWP SLOGAN "FEDERAL TROOPS TO THE SOUTH"

The slogan of 'Federal Troops to the South' has a long history in the SWP. It first became an issue late in 1955, when the slogan was raised in a lead editorial in the Militant entitled, "For Federal Intervention!" A sharp reaction was provoked among stauncher elements in the party who correctly pointed out that bourgeois governments, in the era of imperialism and the permanent revolution, must not be called upon by the proletariat to carry out

the democratic revolution against feudal or backward ruling sections. The southern police-state regimes rule with the consent and support of the liberal bourgeoisie. In the same way Marxists do not appeal to the imperialists to liberate the South African blacks from their racist exploiters because they know that the U.S. government supports with arms these racists, and reaps great profit from their cooperation. On the contrary, Marxists emphasize the self-defense of the Negroes in the South, and look to them, ultimately in league with the white workers under a Bolshevik program, to accomplish a real shattering of the racist system, North and South.

The slogan was thus withdrawn and lay dormant until, with the increasing tempo of struggle, the opportunism of the SWP had another chance to reveal itself. In the interim the revisionist infection spread throughout the Majority leadership of the party.

The SWP's Appeal to President Kennedy

The incidents in Birmingham in May 1963 fetched up a new response from the SWP. Following the introductory heading "Socialist Workers Party to Kennedy," a banner headline in the Militant demanded, "Deputize, Arm Birmingham Negroes for Self-Defense Against Racists!" Within the party, only those in left opposition condemned this call as an act of faith in the Federal Government and its apparatus, exposed the slogan as a fraud and another evasion of the needed call to self-defense. Should the Federal Government intervene at all--and the desirability of this was sharply questioned--which Negroes would it deputize? Would it legalize an armed Negro workers militia in the South? To ask the question is to answer it--No! This appeal was recognized as simply a cloaked reincarnation of the old troops slogan.

Indeed, the SWP came close to raising the original itself, when its National Committee editorialized, "Kennedy...finally invoked federal authority. But only as a threat--in the form of federal troops 40 miles away." The NC concluded with the demand: "The time for President Kennedy to act is Now!" (Militant, May 20, 1963). But for what purpose might federal troops be used in Birmingham? The answer was already brutally clear. Already in May the Negroes of Birmingham, frustrated and infuriated by police prods and the imprisonment of thousands of young people in the cause of a few meaningless, token integration proposals by Martin Luther King--who does the bidding of the Attorney General in moments of crisis--resorted to violent self-defense against the bombs of their racist attackers. This was Kennedy's cue to bring federal troops to the area. But the SWP learned nothing.

Only once in all this time--well after the struggle had subsided in Birmingham and when Negroes had already organized to combat racist terror--did the SWP screw up its courage and after the murder of Medgar Evers clearly advocate armed self-defense for the Negroes. The troops slogan served as a cover for their loss of confidence in the black workers to take the lead in securing their own emancipation. Accordingly, the SWP gave them no guidance, but looked to another force to carry out the task--the American bourgeoisie!

The party did not at that time put forth the troops slogan in its original form. Why not? Because revolutionary minorities, the conscience of the party, spoke up vigorously against this departure from Leninism as a recourse to the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary gadfly, however, was subsequently largely removed by a series of bureaucratic swats (see SPARTACIST Nos. 1 and 2).

The SWP Reverts to the "Troops" Slogan

This summer, however, at the murder of the three civil rights workers near Philadelphia, Mississippi, the SWP revived as a major propaganda slogan the call for federal troops to the South. In their revisionist consistency, which has a logic of its own, the SWP outdid even the reformist civil-rights organizations which generally confined their demands to federal protection for rights workers in the south: a non-revolutionary approach to be sure, but quite different from requesting a federal invasion in behalf of the oppressed Negro. But this is what it means to ask the bourgeois armed forces to liberate the South.

Most recently, the troops slogan--in its most vulgar and ludicrous form--has appeared on a campaign sticker for Clifton DeBerry. The sticker reads: " 'WITHDRAW THE TROOPS FROM VIET NAM AND SEND THEM TO MISSISSIPPI,' says Clifton DeBerry, Socialist Workers Party candidate for President." So the bourgeois imperialist army, currently engaged in massacring peasants and workers in South Viet-nam, in burning their villages and defoliating their land, and imprisoning the people in 'strategic hamlets'--this army, says the SWP, should be transferred to the American South! To advocate sending the U.S. Special Forces into Mississippi is treachery to the Negro struggle. It is also an absurdity which no one has failed to observe.

There is an argument, tacit to be sure, which is raised in private by some conscience-stricken members of the SWP. It is that the SWP calls for troops in order to reveal the unconcern of the federal government for the civil rights cause. It need only be remarked that nowhere in its press has the SWP affirmed a conviction that the bourgeoisie will not in fact take real action in the South, and that, should it move militarily there, it would serve to block the Negro struggle.

Johnson has been maneuvering behind the scenes with Southern businessmen to eliminate some of the most conspicuous sore-spots of Southern segregation. Business in the South is concerned at the high overhead, in police expenses and losses caused through mass unrest, which the apartheid has produced, and is prepared to make some token concessions. The subtle operations of the administration carefully shift the burden of 'desegregation' from the crucial sectors of the economy--the great industrial plants in the South--to the service areas, such as theaters and motels, so that the basic patterns of economic and residential segregation remain the same, while the added revenues from a few Negro patrons may be welcome to some proprietors. We do not need Goldwater's slash at Johnson's civil rights record to realize that the Republicans will

act in much the same way. Any analysis of the role of the federal government must include the federal indictments of civil rights leaders in Albany, Georgia, and the record of over 200 unsolved bombings in the South.

Toward a Revolutionary Party

It is the task of militants to begin now the construction of an independent political party of struggle which can be the instrument of social emancipation. In the concrete, this means no support for the capitalist parties. It means a vote now for the party which, if it cannot lead the masses toward a solution, at least poses the problem of independent anti-imperialist struggle. All forms of sectarian abstentionism must be vigorously opposed: in the hands of revolutionists this campaign is an excellent vehicle for bringing the idea of class politics into the Black ghettos and throughout the working class. Militants must take a position of critical support in the coming campaign for Clifton DeBerry and Edward Shaw of the Socialist Workers Party, for President and Vice-President of the United States.

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REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY IN YPSL

CALLS FOR CRITICAL SUPPORT TO DeBERRY-SHAW CAMPAIGN

SP Suspends National YPSL

The Young Peoples Socialist League by a large majority at its Chicago Labor Day convention repudiated any support to the capitalist presidential candidates. The day after the convention the YPSL's parent body, the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation, retaliated by suspending the YPSL with the charge that its new leadership does not 'accept the basic principles of democratic socialism.'

Given this definition of 'democratic' socialism, it is a matter of some pride to the SPARTACIST that one of the evidences the SP later advanced to support their charge was the seating at the YPSL convention of a Spartacist delegation as fraternal observers. The Spartacist was the only outside group, of those invited, to respond by attending the convention where the Spartacists urged the following five points upon the convention delegates as a possible basis for initiating a revolutionary regroupment:

1. For defense of the Cuban Revolution against U.S. imperialism.
2. Against U.S. imperialism's war to crush the South Viet-Nam Liberation Front; for military support to North Viet-Nam against U.S. imperialism.
3. Against federal troops to the South; for self-defense by the Negro People.

4. For critical support to the SWP's DeBerry-Shaw electoral campaign.
5. For YPSL disaffiliation from the SP-SDF.

Revolutionary Tendency Formed

These five minimal points largely coincided with the views of the extreme left wing present which by the end of the convention had coalesced as an organized grouping, the Revolutionary Tendency, supported by five of some 40 delegates attending. One of the RT's principal stands at the convention was their call for critical support to the DeBerry-Shaw ticket, a position which was voted down by a large convention majority.

What the Militant Didn't Print

Following an interview by Militant writer Barry Sheppard with a YPSL convention delegate, the Militant of 21 September printed the gist of the above story (only deleting all reference to the role of the Spartacist which, however, was mentioned in the National Guardian story on the YPSL suspension). But the Militant did not print any reference to something of great interest to its readers-- a scathing attack upon the SWP's capitulation over the Kennedy assassination, and by the historically reformist YPSL no less! At the YPSL convention several of the most left-wing delegates had introduced a draft resolution repudiating the outgoing YPSL leadership's own conduct at the time of the assassination. With only slight modification, the resolution was adopted by the national convention. The opening paragraph of the resolution dealt with the SWP:

"The Kennedy assassination proved to be an acid test of all groups professing to be socialist. In the face of the public hysteria and the possibility of a witch-hunt which followed the assassination many groups abandoned their socialist politics for cowardly liberalism. This nauseating reaction on the part of the social-democrats and stalinists was to be expected; the response of the Socialist Workers Party was more surprising, but merely underlined that organization's retreat from a revolutionary posture. Our own National Action Committee put itself into the same class as the SWP, CP, and SP with its statement expressing 'grief' over the assassination and committing their organization to 'mourn' for Kennedy."

Something Else the Militant Didn't Print

While Militant writer Barry Sheppard was publicly commiserating with the suspended YPSL over being subject to a party whose constitution provides for the expulsion of any member who supports the candidates of the Socialist Workers Party, YSA National Chairman Barry Sheppard was fresh from his own Labor Day YSA Plenum where he was reporter on the 'internal situation,' the high point of

which was the expulsion of eight YSA members, most without any notice until after the fact. The basic motion presented by comrade Sheppard authorizing the expulsions and adopted by the plenum is as follows: 'Membership in, support to, or collaboration with the Spartacist group is incompatible with membership in the YSA.'

The YSA and SWP Majority have clearly met one more requirement for entrance into the camp of 'democratic' socialism.

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(Statement to the Oct. 15 Rally Against Fascism sponsored by PIM, etc.)

INDEPENDENT CLASS POLITICS--THE ONLY ANSWER TO GOLDWATERISM

The nomination of an overt reactionary as the Republican candidate for President reveals that the contradictions of capitalism pose serious problems for the American bourgeoisie even in the height of prosperity. Goldwater is backed by precisely those supporters of the existing order who have benefited least from the rule of liberal capitalism. On the one hand, heavily capitalized industries, where the rate of profit is depressed; armament industries; and enterprises with foreign holdings directly threatened by nationalization or already expropriated, have shown impatience with the Johnson administration and sympathy for the Senator from Arizona. Here the only difference from recent elections in the response of various sections of the bourgeoisie is that this time an unusually large section, especially of the finance capitalists, are themselves for continuing Johnson in office. On the other hand, Goldwater relies upon votes from the frustrated and conservative petty-entrepreneur and from fearful, vengeful, racist whites ranging from the poverty-ridden South to 'Parent and Taxpayer' elements in Brooklyn and Queens.

In the rising tempo of the Negro struggle and the insecure stalemate which imperialism faces abroad, combined with the racist and chauvinist support which the Goldwater forces enjoy, have given rise to the mistaken impression that the Goldwater campaign poses an immediate threat of fascism in the coming election. Those so-called socialists who make this error a pretext to abandon the struggle of the working class and join the camp of the Johnson imperialists, have cast their lot with the ultimate bearers of fascism; they become traitors to socialism and, in this thermo-nuclear era, to the very future of humanity.

Fascism--Specific Menace or Catch-All Word?

Revolutionists who would fight effectively the motion to the right symbolized by Goldwater must understand that not every movement of bourgeois reaction constitutes fascism. We have seen over the Harlem riots how easily democratic rights wither in times of crisis. But to imagine that bourgeois democracy has perished and that fascist political revolution has occurred or looms imminent

is to lose all historic perspective. At bottom those who confuse current reaction with fascism display a naive utopianism about bourgeois democracy as it really is. Thus, it remains urgent for all militants to press a vigorous and mass-based legal defense campaign for Bill Epton, framed up for 'criminal anarchy' as a scapegoat in the Harlem police riots, as well as for the Cuba travel-ban breaking students!

The historic function of fascism is to smash the working class, destroy its organizations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists find themselves unable to govern and dominate with the help of democratic machinery. When the fascist threat does become urgent it can only be smashed by the mobilization of the working class against the capitalist class and its state. In preparing today for that fight our immediate and pressing task is the construction of a revolutionary vanguard instrument of struggle, which can wage an uncompromising battle in behalf of the exploited. This is an arduous task, which can only be retarded by the confusion of fascism with conservative reaction, and doomsday prognostications concerning the Goldwater campaign.

Vote Socialist Workers!

The need for an independent working class party can best be expressed in this election, not by abstaining, but by giving critical support to Socialist Workers Party candidates: for President--Clifton DeBerry; for Vice President--Edward Shaw; for U.S. Senator--Richard Garza; as well as for the Freedom Now Party candidate for State Senator--Paul Boutelle.

* * *

PLM ERRS IN OPPOSING SWP ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The Progressive Labor Movement, in the Oct.27 Challenge, has finally come out with an electoral statement and against the campaign of the only serious anti-capitalist party which is running candidates. Challenge exposes, in its own peculiar way, the rottenness of the demand to send federal troops to the South. This is their only significant point of difference with the campaign platform of the SWP (which party the editorial manages to avoid mentioning by name), and, as the lead article in this issue of SPARTACIST has shown, is not in itself a sufficient reason for opposing the SWP slate.

Political Revolution in China

A second point over which PLM challenges a standing position of the SWP is not contained in the election platform and is taken out of context and distorted. That is, PLM attacks the SWP election campaign because of the policy of the party which allegedly 'includes overthrowing the government of the Peoples' Republic of China.' This is a distortion of a position which the SWP once held but is in the process of abandoning: that the establishment of workers democracy can be brought about only through a political revolution by the working people. This position is today held by the SPARTACIST. The SWP, in its 1963 Resolution on China, stated that 'a program of struggle for workers democracy would run up against the resistance

of the regime. It would be preferable if the resulting confrontation between the bureaucrats and the people could be resolved by mutual agreement of the contending forces.' The SWP leadership, while discounting this as 'the least likely of variants' not only admitted its possibility, but specifically rejected the call for 'political revolution' against 'the ruling bureaucratic caste.'

It would appear from reading the Challenge editorial that the SWP is for an imperialist counter-revolution in China, whereas the SWP has always defended the Chinese Revolution.

Use the SWP Campaign to Build Revolutionary Movement

But most important, PL opposes a vote for DeBerry and Shaw because 'these candidates offer no solution' to the problems of the American workers. Does PL think that a better election platform, put forth in a parliamentary struggle, can solve the workers' problems? If so, then the details of one's program are of paramount importance. However, Marxists approach the election not from the point of view of winning parliamentary power and thereby solving the workers' problems, but rather as a means of reaching the masses with the idea of class politics, and as a weapon for organizing the workers in struggle. Parliamentary struggles are tactical, and are always subordinated to the need for building a vanguard party of the proletariat that will be able to solve the problems of the class.

The SWP campaign can serve this tactical purpose. The SWP is an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist party opposed to the cold war, for unemployment benefits at full wages for the full period of unemployment, for thirty hours work for forty hours pay, an end to Jim Crow, and recognition of and peaceful relations with Cuba and China. Moreover, it is still by far the best working class party running candidates and therefore it is not only justifiable but necessary at this time to give it critical support.

No Answer

PL's vague call for independent political action in the coming Mayoralty election must be seen in the light of its present concrete opposition to such action. That PL could have participated in this campaign in order to prepare for the next perhaps did not occur to its leading committee; or the failure to mention the SWP by name perhaps reveals a certain sectarian fear. Whatever the reason, the comrades in PL will have to approach the problems much more seriously if they are to accomplish what they set out to do. Most immediately we urge the PL comrades to reconsider their position against the SWP election campaign.

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