Seize the Opportunity!

REVOLUTIONARY REGROUPMENT

The pressing need in this country for a united Leninist vanguard could never be more heavily underscored than at the present moment. In the past two years, it is clear, the major direction of social motion has been toward the right, with political and ethnic-racial polarization increasing. The country is perhaps more sharply divided now than at any time since the early years of Roosevelt's "New Deal." Flag-waving patriotism with its blatant racist overtones is back in style; the Nixon administration has reassembled the Bourbon Dixiecrat/reactionary Republican alliance; "law and order" is the catchword; and the Black Panther Party faces a government attempt at root-and-branch destruction. All sections of society are deeply split over Viet Nam policy, giving rise to the seeming aberration of the anti-war bourgeoisie's Viet Nam Moratorium. In the midst of this deepening polarization the working class, rebellious and in motion, is turning to reactionary demagogues like Wallace for lack of a revolutionary alternative.

In general, the U.S. left-wing movement, pragmatic and opportunist, has moved to the right in keeping with the general drift. However, in reflexive reaction to the prevailing mood, an impulse to the left has found expression within most of the organized radical groups. Much recent evident fracturing has resulted from leftward-moving internal forces clashing with stand-pat or opportunist groupings within their organizations. The Spartacist tendency itself crystallized in opposition to the Socialist Workers Party's capitulation to Castroism, Black Nationalism and middle-class politics which marked its transformation from revolutionary Trotskyism to revisionism. In fact right/left tensions have recently appeared even in the remains of such fossilized reformist groups as the Socialist Party and Communist Party, and even the Socialist Labor Party has had two recent substantial breakaways.

But perhaps the clearest expression of social motion refracted into left-wing politics is the SDS split in Chicago. The split took place over perhaps the two most fundamental issues facing revolutionaries today—the Black question and an orientation toward the working class. The result was a right/left split which has driven home to thousands of would-be revolutionaries the imperative necessity of political struggle and clarification. The winner in the SDS dispute was the Boston SDS, whose non-exclusionism embodied a recognition of this basic principle of political conduct. However, the behavior of the right wing—already split into violently hostile rival factions, the “Revolutionary Youth Movement” and the “Weathermen”—has undoubtedly served to disorient and demoralize many young radicals and drive them out of political activity.

Groupings like the Boston SDS and its Worker-Student Alliance caucus, and left tendencies in other organizations, are open to revolutionary politics. But simple gut-level "leftism" and a crude working-class perspective only pose the question. Both major factions in SDS have attempted to go beyond mindless activism toward a Marxist programmatic solution, yet large sections of them appear unable to reach beyond an amazed rediscovery of the arch-betrayers of the communist movement, Stalin and his various epigones! Nor was this abysmal nonsense separated out by an otherwise clarifying, if unfortunate, split: the class-conscious WSA is led by the Progressive Labor Party, whose ambivalence toward its most recent impulse toward a proletarian revolutionary line places it in the excruciating contradiction of maintaining Mao and Stalin as official heroes while often surreptitiously (and opportunistically) sweeping into the (Continued Next Page)
...REGROUP...

dust in the grosser revisionist practices most characteristic of these self-same idols (e.g., the bloc of four classes, the theory of the two-stage revolution, peasant-oriented "Third Worldism," the popular front, violence against left critics). An oscillation between a proletarian impulse and the tamed antics of Stalinism is the inevitable result of seeking a revolutionary practice in an anti-revolutionary dogma of Maoism. In fact, in the idiocies of Rood's Weathermen or Avakian's Revolutionary Union, PL, we can see the journey to the Maoist shrine down the same path PL once unambiguously walked, and only marvel that these new Red Guards are more orthodox than they!

But PL is by no means the only organization with contradictions in its makeup. A group like the "third camp" International Socialists, like its sometime ally the Labor Committee of L. Marcus, can draw in young radicals on the basis of a revolutionary facade, although in essential thrust both groups might be best described as the extreme left wing of social democracy.

Left-Communist Regroupment

It would be sectarian and blatantly anti-Leninist to passively accept a situation which allows would-be Marxists to persist in following a program which fails qualitatively short of a revolutionary line. To reverse this process, we call for political and theoretical polarization of the ostensibly revolutionary groupings, leading ultimately to a left-communist regroupment of all organizations, factions, tendencies, and individuals who stand on an anti-revisionist Marxist program, toward the formation of a Leninist vanguard party. The objective preconditions for such a process are, we believe, abundantly fulfilled; however, the subjective desire to transcend the existing organizational lineups is manifestly lacking on the part of many of those who should seek such a regroupment. And the opportunity is transitory.

What "Regroupment" Means

It should not be thought that a call for regroupment means a cessation of political and theoretical struggle; on the contrary, only a conscious strategy of increased polarization separating the future cadre of the Marxist movement from the opportunists and garbage will make any future unity feasible. By analogy, we might say that perhaps the most deserving victim of the SDS split was the postulate—an ideological cornerstone of the New Left—that fundamental political divisions of an earlier era and other movements could be casually relegated to the scrap heap.

For ignoring history carries no guarantee history will reciprocate in like manner! After the Communist Party of France sold out the revolutionary upheaval of May 1968, many of the outlawed groups to the left of the CP felt the need for unity to counterfeit a mass working-class party to the Stalinists. At this juncture a great opportunity was derailed, as the Latte Oeuvre tendency compromised themselves fatally. Rather than proposing unity on the basis of a proletarian Marxist program (that is, the Leninist method of splits and fusions) they retreated to a search for the lowest common denominator, gratuitously abandoning their political positions in favor of the hoped-for programless collective. Rather than unity this brought chaos and a swelling of the ranks of the revisionists within the Trotskyist movement; in the bargain LO actually placed themselves to the right of the revisionists.

Mutual Amnesty

Such a "unity" is of course no unity at all, but merely an ultimately defective strategy for an unprincipled coalition for the purpose of dodging political issues, a mutual amnesty from the testing in practice of competing theories and programs. Speaking of his own struggle within the Russian movement between his own faction and a grouping of "pro-party Mensheviks," Lenin stated that the task facing his group was to organize militants around "a definite party line." "Unity," he said further, "is inseparable from its ideological foundation." The political differences which had formerly existed between Lenin and the "pro-party Mensheviks" were resolved in the course of extended common participation in the theoretical struggle, as he had anticipated. And while Plekhanov and a few other unreconstructed leaders of this Menshevik grouping soon broke with the Leninists, the bulk of its rank and file came over squarely to the revolutionary forces. It was precisely this fusion in 1912 which hardened the political separation and forged the revolutionary faction into the Bolshevik party. This fusion was not different in kind from the infinitely more famous entry of Trotsky's Mekhyanets (Inter-District group) into Lenin's party in the summer of 1917, which set the stage for the successful October Revolution which followed it.

United Front Tactic

In the past few months the left has found itself bombarded with calls for "united actions," for a lessening of "factionalism" and, so far as SDS is concerned, an end to the pitched battles between competing tendencies. It is ironic but no doubt typical that such calls for an increase in political consciousness have emanated from exactly those people who have done their damnedest over the years to ridicule and destroy that consciousness whose lack they now bemoan (as, for ex: Guardian, whose shameless "all the SDS split continued the wash of earlier efforts by the leadership to purge PL from its ranks.

"Unity of action" among Left-Communists who there is a decade of political agreement on th -issue—is essential to the crys of a revolutionary vanguard fronts as formulated by L. Trotsky had as their main regroupment of both the cadr the liberal bourgeoisie by supporting liberal P...
poses the introduction of anti-imperialist, pro-socialist politics into their seemingly endless aggregate of classless "peace" actions while throwing open the door to politicians like McCarthy and Lindsay. The purpose of all such populist front actions is to blur political issues. A revolutionary regroupment must forthrightly stand on a decisive repudiation of these and like betrayals.

Political Basis

As our contribution to furthering a process of principled regroupment of revolutionaries, we raise the following political points as the basis of such a regroupment:

1. For Democratic Rights Within the Workers' Movement! The task of the left is to fight for working-class consciousness. Consistent with this aim must be the repudiation of gangsterism, which substitutes physical for political confrontation. Exclusionism and the "cult of violence" so typical of the frenzied petty-bourgeoisie exposes its practitioners as afraid that their politics will not stand the test of open political debate and competition in action. Concomitantly, the left must repudiate the method of oversimplification and slander against ideological opponents. To attack those with different programs as subjectively "racist," "counter-revolutionaries," "police-agents," "pro-fascists," etc., in order to obscure the issues and play into the hands of the anti-communists — e.g., social democrats, pro-capitalist liberals, etc. — whose pet attack against the ostensible revolutionaries has always been that the pro-Leninist left is "as bad as the right wing," "or even the reverse side of the coin," etc. This is not to grade the necessity to struggle against wrong politics, which certainly serve objectively to disorient and weaken the revolutionary cause. But it is a far cry from this to the allegation — always so appealing to those whose political education has been in the Stalinist movement — that opponent organizations and individuals are subjectively trying to do the work of the enemy. Likewise, regardless of political disagreement, all honest militants must mobilize for the defense of other left-wing tendencies against reactionary terrorism or bourgeois repression.

Revolutionaries must fight the imposition of organizational separations where political differences no longer hold sway. All organizations claiming revolutionary principle must declare their willingness to participate in and actively initiate united actions where political agreement exists, and must refuse to permit necessary political polemic and criticism to be construed as a barrier to principled working-class action.

The central tactic in fighting for communist hegemony in the working class must be an orientation toward building fractions within the trade union movement, rather than toward the doomed, sterile approach of abstract propaganda from the outside propped up by the SLP, Marcus' Labor Committee and others. The concept of "transitional demands" — i.e., demands which lead to revolutionary consciousness and are realizable only through struggle — is fundamental here. The inevitable frictional oscillation between minimal, economist tail-endings of the labor bureaucracy and face-saving ultrarevolutionary rhetoric. Revolutionaries must fight against the intervention of the capitalists state in the trade unions both directly and indirectly through the class collaborationism of the bureaucrats. The reliance of the workers on supposedly "pro-labor" capitalist politicians must be broken by fighting for independent working-class political action.

3. Defeat Black Nationalism by Class-Struggle Politics! Several groupings on the left found themselves in substantial agreement in condemning the recent pro-C.P. turn of the Black Panthers. In general these groups have also come unwillingly and after a history of opportunism on the question — to a realization of the necessity to break with the dead-end Black Nationalism of the sort slavishly tailored by RYM and the SWP. The petty-bourgeois separatist, anti-class approach of these demagogues has assisted in consecrating the racism of the white working class and driving natural class allies further from each other. Likewise the classless demand for "community control" does not remain classless in a class society and can be infused with simple reactionary content as well as genuine Populism.

Yet aspiring revolutionaries must utilize the struggle against Black Nationalism in the sense of Lenin's dictum that the chauvinism of the oppressed is not identical to the chauvinism of the oppressor. Revolutionaries must transcendentally transcend toward colorblind, oversimplified "workerism" in favor of a sensitivity to the pervasive special oppression of black workers.

4. For a Class Line on the War! In the past virtually every organization has climbed on the bandwagon of opportunism, middle-class anti-war politics, although none has exceeded the shameless machinations of the ex-Trotskyist SWP. Similarly, the left let itself be intimidated by the overwhelming mood of moralistic, anti-drug "resistance" confrontationism, refusing to raise the alternative of anti-war struggle in the army among working-class draftees until the creation willy-nilly of massive anti-war sentiment among G.I.'s themselves forced the issue.

Those who are sincere in their anti-capitalist intentions must break from their past mistakes as they would have the working class break from its misleaders. To do so, the so-called "war-peace" tactics of avowed revolutionaries demanding a classless "peace" and catering to the social chauvinism of "Bring Our Boys Home Now" the necessity for a policy of revolutionary defeatism toward imperialism and a strategy of linking it so-called "war-peace" tactics to an understanding of the capitalist system with a program of working-class-oriented anti-war demands, to break anti-war militants from middle-class liberaliism to proletarian insurrection.

5. For Internationalism! Those who recognize the nature of capitalism as an international system must give more than lip service to the need for an international revolutionary movement to fight it. They must condemn the pragmatic know-nothing anti-internationalism of such groups as the Labor Committee, and also the claustrphobic muddle of the SWP. Similarly, the left let itself be betrayed those they profess to "serve" by issuing blank checks to the Stalinist mis-leaders of the "Third World." They must carry further their condemnation of revisionism and recognize it as the inevitable result of a belief in "Socialism in One Country," as the national bureaucracies desperately bargain away other revolutions in exchange for temporary curtailment of imperialism's appetites toward the gains of their own. The urgent need for communist unity against imperialism presupposes political revolution in the deformed workers states to replace Stalinist nationalization with the revolutionary will of the international working class.

6. For a Vanguard Party! The theoretical and organizational continuity of the revolutionary movement cannot be preserved except through a Leninist vanguard. Without an internationalist vanguard party the spontaneous revolutionary aspirations of the working masses cannot effect the overthrow of capitalism. Class-conscious revolutionaries agree on the essentials of principle and program must agree to join together in a democratic and centralist collective of those united in struggle on the basis of the above points.

2. For a Working-Class Orientation!