

SPARTACIST



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To the Brink and Back:

FRENCH REVOLUTION

The immediate origins of the French struggles can be traced to student activity at Nanterre and the Sorbonne, but these student rebellions had revolutionary significance only insofar as they were the spark which set off a conflagration within the working class. It was the social crisis, not the student movement, which led to the workers' occupation of factories, the paralyzing of French commerce and industry and the largest and most powerful general strike in history.

The struggle is reminiscent of the Hungarian workers' revolt of 1956, although in France it did not result in the spontaneous generation of workers' councils. Thus, the elements of dual power were not clearly present. But both exemplified, in laboratory situations, the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism, just as in both cases struggles on the part of students and intellectuals struck a chord within the working class. This has become almost a classic model of social upheaval in our era.

Revolutionary Leadership Lacking

There was a period of about a week, the high-tide of which was 29 May, when France was in the grip of a pre-revolutionary situation. The initiative was with the workers; it was within their grasp to take state power and establish the proletarian dictatorship. The old order and the Gaullist government were incapable of ruling, incapable of imposing their order on the subordinate classes or of solving the social crises tearing apart the nation. General discontent among parts of these subordinate strata—students, some farmers, the urban petty-bourgeoisie—was acute. The French state, racked by its own internal contradictions, the crisis of bourgeois order and far-reaching discontent, was for the period of a week more fragile than at any other time in a generation.

Yet the situation did not reach the point of *dual power*, which is characteristic of all revolutionary crises. In a few cases, factory committees, replacing the existing representation in the several trade-union federations, were elected by the striking workers, but this embryonic form of workers' councils was limited to perhaps ten factories. The *comités d'action* which sprang up all over France were essentially district or neighborhood groups, not based specifically on the working class in the enterprises.

What was missing in France was a revolutionary party which could have raised the necessary demands to take the situation from a general strike to dual power, to shatter the control of the Confereration Générale de

Travail (CGT) over the strike through the building of workers' councils. That the revolutionary French workers were unable to take power was principally, although not solely, due to the treachery of the French Communist Party (PCF).

Communist Party Sabotages

The PCF leaders, along with the CGT, their trade union arm, did everything in their power to derail the movement. They attempted to split the initial student-



UNITED FRONT New York march on 22 June protests outlawing French revolutionary groups.

worker alliance at the factory gates, slandering the students as "provocateurs." In their patriotic fervor they German-baited Cohn-Bendit. They attempted to steer the whole thrust of the demonstrations, strikes and factory occupations into narrow, exclusively economic demands. They established back-to-work movements. They misdirected the struggle back into the parliamentary swamp. They allowed De Gaulle a breathing space, allowed him to retrieve the initiative and to rally back to himself wavering middle-class elements, to ally himself with the military command and a whole bloc of proto-fascist elements. The PCF's betrayals in May led directly to De Gaulle's victory at the polls on 23 June.

The PCF, long the most "Stalinized" party in Western Europe, has in its Brezhnevite transfiguration maintained the same rotten policies it upheld in 1936, 1945

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REBELLION AT COLUMBIA:

New Left Flounders

Most of our readers are familiar with the events of the Columbia University Crisis: the occupation of Hamilton Hall on 23 April by protesters led by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Afro-American Society (SAS), the week-long occupation of Hamilton by black students and Morningside community residents and of four other campus buildings by white students, the brutal bust on the morning of 30 April, the student strike, the second Hamilton Hall sit-in on 21 May in protest against the reprisals.

The Columbia events provided the campus radicals, and especially SDS, with an enormous opportunity.

Students who had not previously been "political" were enraged by the cop invasion of their campus and the extent of the brutality. Columbia was ripe for rebellion; its structure is particularly feudal even in comparison to most other universities. And Columbia's long history of injustices against Morningside ghetto residents—especially as landlord in the area—culminating in the imperious attempt to build a University gym in a city park provided the students with community support for their struggle against the trustees.

Weakness of New Left

Unfortunately, despite the deep alienation and demonstrated courage of the sit-in participants, the Columbia New Left was unable to take advantage of the opportunity to lead a student strike against the University. Its weakness stemmed in part from its attitude of "minority confrontationism"; when the Columbia action turned, through the intervention of the cops, from a minority action, originated by the radicals in despair and indignation, into a massive strike action, the radical students were unprepared. Many considered that only they, who had "put their lives on the line" in the original occupation of the buildings, could be trusted to support the strike's demands and to determine policy. Thus the attempt by the original Steering Committee elected in the occupied buildings to retain the leadership of the strike in an undemocratic manner, by insisting that the original 11-man Steering Committee be retained as the Strike Co-ordinating Committee (SCC) with new representatives to be added to represent others who supported the original six demands as a precondition for being represented. "Moderate" students, fearful of SDS, opposed this proposal, as did many students who considered themselves on strike and wanted an equal right to determine strike policy. After a long and heated meeting, this proposal was withdrawn, and all students were allowed representation on the SCC. But fear of manipulation remained.

Support for the strike tended to dissipate for other reasons. The SCC's concept of intransigence seemed to consist entirely of flamboyant statements insisting that all six strike demands must be a precondition to any negotiations with the administration. These tactics—or, rather, the lack thereof—of the SCC were by no means accepted by all the striking students; in fact, this approach was contrary to the "Fayerweather Proposals" which were passed overwhelmingly during the sit-in in Fayerweather Hall.

Strike Split

Meanwhile, a split by the shaky "moderates" led to the formation of a competing body, the Students for a Restructured University. Gradually during the course of the strike the black students and SAS began to be less in evidence, and very few took part in the second sit-in. From the beginning, when the black students had demanded exclusive control of Hamilton Hall and urged white students to occupy other buildings, a split between

GLEN ROBINSON



A Self Portrait

We want to inform friends and acquaintances of the Spartacist League of the death of our comrade Glen Robinson, who died in Seattle, Washington on 3 April of this year. Death came as a result of unsuccessful radical treatment of Hodgkin's disease. He was 24 years old.

Glen was born into a trade-unionist family in a small town in Idaho, and later moved to Seattle in order to attend college; he was the first of his family to do so. When he was 18 he learned he had cancer, and spent the last six years of his life with this knowledge and in considerable pain. Yet despite this and other personal and financial difficulties, he never gave up his dedication to working-class revolution, and remained a committed and fighting communist to the end of his life. We mourn his passing.

black and white radicals was an incipient problem but was never discussed by the strike leadership, as they deferred to the black students as automatically 'more militant' and in any case believed that everyone should do "his own thing."

Part of the strike's energies were becoming increasingly channelled into "liberation classes" which were set up by radical students and professors. While this project, which is continuing through the summer, is undoubtedly of value to the participants, it has tended to shift the attention of the radicals onto a parallel "Free University type" body and away from the struggle for student-faculty control of Columbia itself. Another difficulty facing the strike actually stemmed from its success: many professors, refusing to break the strike, held "liberated" classes off campus, and their students became re-involved with course work, far from the picket lines.

Finally, school recessed for the summer, leaving the situation in a confused state, with 79 students suspended and this threat hanging over the rest. What momentum will be left by the time school reopens in the fall remains to be seen. But if the situation for the radicals is both promising and difficult, the "moderates" have found an ally—Students for a Restructured University has received a Ford Foundation subsidy!

We are reprinting below excerpts from a position paper, "A Plea to Save the Columbia Strike," which was distributed to the strike militants. The author, Manuela Dobos, was elected an alternate to the SCC by the Graduate History department in the course of the strike, and was arrested in the second Hamilton Hall bust and suspended from Columbia for a year. A Vice-Chairman of the 1968 Socialist Scholars Conference, she is also running for state assembly as the candidate of the West Side Committee for Independent Political Action.

I. As is apparent, the massive student strike which began at Columbia on April 30 is dissipating. While numbers decrease and discouragement rises on our side, there is growing confidence on that of the Administration; they now feel strong enough to show their determination to throw the book at those 500 arrested and to destroy SDS at Columbia. The general reaction of the striking students has been helplessness and a tendency to let things go as they may with the close of the semester. . . .

II. Before suggesting how . . . a fight can be waged, it is necessary to give the reasons for the current bad scene: it all boils down to the mistaken tactics of the strike leadership, the Strike Coordinating Committee.

Briefly, these tactics have kept the

situation on the level of a protest action, from which it was launched with the occupation of the buildings by several hundred people, instead of bringing it up to the level of a strike action, as was clearly called for on the morning after the bust, when several thousand and infuriated students and faculty refused to let Columbia get away with it. . . . The "purists," however, did not wish to lead such a fight and instead have viewed the striking students merely as bodies to perform the daily actions they, the "purists," have decided upon, actions they term "confrontations" and which are designed to keep things in perpetual excitement and agitation. This situation has been quite clear from the moment that the SDS faction on the SCC got that body to adopt a demand for total victory, i.e., to refuse to negotiate, by putting the two most important demands, amnesty and restructuring, as pre-conditions for negotiations. Although this tactic has provided the "purists" with a self-fulfilling prophecy, the disaffection of many students, including a large number who have basically the same outlook as that of SDS, has made it all the more certain that such key demands, no matter how often they are labelled as pre-conditions, are rapidly becoming unobtainable *because we have not been fighting for them. . . .*

By splitting off from the SCC the "moderates," on the other hand, have also given up the primary job of leading this strike. They have generally emphasized the need to make definite proposals for reform of the university, but without the thoroughgoing social analyses or boldness of the radicals. They have walked out on the mandates from their constituencies by making themselves a lobby-research group. The Students for a Restructured University will debate and conclude a series of proposals which will politely be shelved by the administration.

Elitists and ultra-leftists on the one hand, conciliatory liberals on the other, have made of our strike committee two separate and unrepresentative pressure groups. "Committees," either for deliberation or for protest, have taken the place of what has been the real necessity all along: a representative, functioning, hard-driving strike-central, our bargaining agent.

III. A fight can only be waged by a reunited strike central. The two factions must become reunited by giving up their respective approaches—each of which is sterile without the other—and adopt the following set of proposals:

1) Continue striking for the original six demands. . . . Specifically, this means that no demand be made a pre-condition to negotiations.

2) Demand immediate negotiations any time and anywhere with properly

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delegated negotiators from the Board of Trustees. The onus of intransigence must be placed on *them*.

3) Commence with immediate, aggressive, creative, dramatic, publicity-seeking pressure tactics by which we can embarrass and force the Trustees and Administration to negotiate. The following are a few examples:

- constant harassment . . . of the trustees and key administration figures at their homes and places of work
- occupation of campus buildings . . .
- gathering of pledges from students not to pay tuition . . .
- demonstrations of solidarity with the arrested students. . . .

Obviously, there cannot be a guarantee of victory in this statement. It is impossible to determine how a fight will come out before it has been waged; in any case, up until now, there has not been much of a genuine fight. Even a lost strike would, on the basis of these proposals, leave those involved in a better, less demoralized, and more organized state than will be the case if everyone sneaks off to tend his own affairs and deserts the SCC, actions which can only result in a broken strike: no demands met, 500 students penalized for actions we all supported, and the end to radical political activity on campus for a long while. But this need not be! We have not been beaten; we have scattered our own forces. If we pull ourselves together to *fight* the Trustees we can yet gain much from *this* strike and lay the basis for much more to come until the Trustees and their social order are gone. Today the French students and workers lead the way.

[Passed overwhelmingly by striking History graduate students, 22 May 1968]

... FRANCE

(Continued from Page 1)

and 1947. Through the lack of a revolutionary communist alternative, the PCF and CGT have until now managed to maintain the loyalty of the French workers. The French events demonstrate once more the necessity of building an alternative for the communist workers to the PCF—that is, a communist party which will honor its program and fight for state power in its own right. It is not enough that this party break formally with the PCF or with “Khrushchevite revisionism”; it must also break with the methods and policies of Stalinism. What is needed is not another left-talking agency, but a Leninist-Trotskyist party. Only the kind of party which won the 1917 October Revolution in Russia will be able to get to the roots of the PCF's betrayals.

De Gaulle Cracks Down

The government's crackdown on all the major organizations to the left of the PCF becomes an even more serious threat in this context. To date, there have been eleven working-class and student groups ordered dissolved—most of them, according to the bourgeois press, “Trotskyite.” These proscribed organizations are forbidden to publish their propaganda; militants who continue their work are subject to prison terms.

The ban on these organizations is a fierce attack on the civil liberties of French workers and students. It is a class-determined ban: while the government illegalized the French left, it was at the same time releasing from jail extreme rightists, proto-fascists and the conspirators of the attempted paramilitary *coup d'état* of 1958. And what makes the ban especially damaging now is that it is the militants of many of the banned organizations who best appreciate the pernicious role of the PCF and can draw the necessary conclusions.

Both the Gaullists and the PCF benefit from these decrees; to assume that the PCF was not an accomplice to the crackdown is to stretch credibility beyond the breaking point. It has been acknowledged that from the beginning of the crisis the CGT leadership was in secret, daily contact with the government. At any rate, neither *L'Humanité* nor *The Worker* has to date said one word in regard to these bans.

Proletarian Revolution vs. New Leftism

Many “new” ideas about revolution have surfaced within the American left in the 1960's, and France offers us a laboratory in which to test them. Since so much of late has been made of Herbert Marcuse, considered the mentor of European radical youth, his ideas are of central importance. In one

or another variant, his theories permeate the writings and speeches of practically the whole constellation of the New Left “heroes”—Mao, Guevara, Castro, Fanon, Debray, Paul Sweezy, Lin Piao, C. Wright Mills.

Marcuse's thesis is that the working class has become socially moribund and obsolete. This thesis, an attempt to explain the twenty-year hiatus in revolutionary workers' struggles in the post-war period, dovetailed quite nicely with the liberal capitalist line that “post-industrial” society was sufficiently flexible to comfortably integrate the working class and dispense with class struggle. This theory deepened petty-bourgeois contempt for the workers and gave impetus to all kinds of elitist conceptions of historical change. By shifting the blame onto the victims of these policies of non-struggle rather than onto the perpetrators, onto the workers rather than the assorted bureaucrats who misled them, this theory dismisses the workers as a revolutionary class and searches instead for a new “vanguard agency.” In favor of Mao's peasants or Guevara's guerillas, the militant of the industrial West is encouraged to become not a revolutionary but a vicarious enthusiast of “other” forces.

The French workers did more than shake up French bourgeois society: their struggle rendered obsolete the whole carefully constructed myth—Marcuse, liberalism, the New Left and its heroes. The “bought-off” workers in action, the strikes, factory occupations, the red flag everywhere, the workers' drive for power and their rejection of the concessions exacted from the terrified French bourgeoisie—these events show concretely where the social agency for change is to be found in our era.

Role of The French Left

The pro-Chinese groupings seemed out of their depth in the complex situation. The question facing the working class was the fracturing of the CGT's power, a situation in which the “thoughts of Chairman Mao” must have appeared even more gloriously irrelevant than usual. The Maoist students understood the necessity of involving themselves in the workers' struggles and managed to build themselves an industrial base, but seemed to have no idea what to do with it. But whatever they did must have had little support from their chosen leaders in Peking; the Chinese themselves consider De Gaulle a “progressive” anti-imperialist. The political work of the Paris anarchist students appears largely to have consisted in “confronting” the police. In three weeks they moved from their traditional concept of super-individuality to participating in the demonstrations in the manner of a super-organized lockstep action squad.

There are three distinct “Trotskyist”

tendencies operating in France, all presently banned. Two groups are affiliated with assorted “Fourth Internationals,” the Organization Communiste Internationale (OCI) with the Healyite International Committee, and the Parti Communiste Internationale (PCI) with the Pabloite United Secretariat. Also associated with the Pabloites is the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire (JCR), a left split from the PCF student federation. The third tendency, the Union Communiste, which publishes *Voix Ouvrière (Workers Voice)*, is organizationally independent of these “Internationals” but has fraternal relations with groups in other countries, among them the Spartacist League in the U.S.

Healyites Screw Up

Despite attempts by the British *Newsletter* and the U.S. *Bulletin* (Healy's English-language propaganda apparatus) to make it appear that the OCI was leading the entire rebellion, its presence in the working class was limited to a few important factory concentrations; its influence in the radical student movement was non-existent. Over-reacting against “student vanguardism,” a real problem, the French Healyites went so far as to oppose student struggle at the very moment the students were building the barricades which triggered the whole revolt.

This reaction was objectively defeatist. After the barricades-building episode many of their rank and filers functioned in the various *comités d'action* as individuals disgusted with their group's policies. The OCI did not even have a propaganda stall at the Sorbonne (although every other left organization did).

Pabloite Revisionism

The Pabloites were limited in a more subtle manner, deriving from their estrangement from the working class and a concept of “student vanguardism.” Thus, within the student milieu they played an active role, with some increase in influence and leadership. But central to their weakness was their inability to break out of the student arena. Their isolation was of course not accidental but stemmed from tactical and theoretical shortcomings of many years' duration, characterized chiefly by a renunciation of the necessity for revolutionary leadership and a consequent adaptation to existing petty-bourgeois and Stalinist leaderships. This revisionist trend has been codified in a number of notorious resolutions on the part of the United Secretariat which declared that the “epicenter” of revolutionary struggle had shifted to the colonial world, and away from the industrial working class.

Their line is only a capitulation, decked out in “revolutionary” verbiage, to a variant of the Marcuse-Mao-Gue-

vara thesis preaching contempt for the workers while looking about for other "agencies." That this theory has borne little fruit has not dissuaded them from their search. In practice the Pabloites have done little more than participate in popular front "peace" demonstrations and lend themselves as a left cover for Stalinists, pacifists and liberals.

And so it happened that, precisely when the French workers went into motion and even a small combat-oriented Marxist nucleus could have by example alone wielded enormous influence, the Pabloites were outside the trade union movement. And then when the issue was posed of linking the students with the workers, it came to little more than an expression of solidarity rather than pointing the way to the assembling of the communist party.

Voix Ouvrière

The Voix Ouvrière comrades are the only organization claiming to be Trotskyist which has carried out a working-class line. Initially, their cadres were concentrated in the factories to the extent that they lacked an adequate base within student and petty-bourgeois arenas. They were, however, able to establish permanent liaison committees with the Pabloite organizations, enabling them to coordinate their intervention with the radical students of the JCR. Such increase in contact between these organizations may in the future allow the VO comrades to aid Pabloite youth in breaking away from the revisionism in their movement and orienting decisively toward a revolutionary proletarian perspective.

However, the axis upon which the VO-Pabloite unity of action is based is a false one. The joint statement called

upon "all organizations claiming to be Trotskyist to join in this move." The VO comrades feel the recent events constitute "the French 1905." Let us remember that the sequel to the 1905 Russian Revolution was a unification of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks! It took Lenin several years to break this over-fraternal unity. What has been pointed up in France by the latest CP-CGT betrayal is not the need for a "Trotskyist regroupment" but the need for a new revolutionary party based on the vindicated Bolshevik program, uniting all those, even from such tendencies as the Maoists and syndicalists, who stand in favor of workers' committees of power. We hope that VO, the French Bolsheviks, have not been disoriented as were the Russians in 1905.

British and U.S. Left

The Healyite organizations appear incapable of learning any of the lessons of France. As of this writing they seem inclined simply to brazen it out with wild claims. A Socialist Labour League congress passed a resolution containing these grotesqueries:

"Congress contemptuously rejects the allegations of cowardice levelled against our comrades as baseless . . . The International Committee of the Fourth International and its French section is the only one that has prepared theoretically and organizationally for this crisis. . . . The general strike called by the CGT on May 13, as a result of the intervention of our comrades . . . is adequate proof of the correctness of their policies and their courage." (our emphasis)

Further evidence that according to the Healyites all you need to make the revolution is a printing press and a lot

of brass!

The Pabloite press has smothered itself in a general line of: "If the French (or any other) revolution hasn't yet taken place it's all the fault of the Stalinists." This serves only as a convenient—if by now rather boring—scapegoat. The Stalinists have been functioning as agents of the bourgeoisie at least since 1933; this has been codified in the Trotskyist movement at least since the 1938 *Transitional Program*. Yet the central premise of Pabloism is that the Stalinist parties are subject to "left" pressure to such a degree that they can at times play a revolutionary role. Thus the Pabloite co-thinkers of the USec. in the U.S. (Socialist Workers Party-Young Socialist Alliance) find themselves caught in a classic centrist trap.

On the one hand, the *Militant* has done an accurate and enthusiastic job reporting the French revolt although seriously flawed by "student vanguard" substitutionism and a vacuous position on the need for the Trotskyist party. And in New York and the Bay Area the SWP-YSA did praiseworthy jobs in building united fronts defending the outlawed French organizations. On the other hand, their pervasive opportunism and capitulation to bureaucratic forces, nationalism, student vanguardism, etc., had already led them to give up on the workers and the vanguard party. The Pabloite press now applauds itself for its formal, generally ignored "Trotskyism," but its "Third Worldism" has certainly done nothing to lay the groundwork for the French events or to push them towards victory.

Trotskyism Vindicated

For those who held to a position of consistent Trotskyism, the French revolt was a tremendous vindication. For the revisionists it was only a setback, an exposé and a tragedy. How can anyone seriously committed to the position that the "epicenter" of world revolution has shifted away from the industrial working class to the colonial world see the French workers' uprising as anything but an embarrassment? They can only try to straddle, like one Bay Area YSA'er's picket-line slogan, "Che Viva in France," or SWP leader Fred Halstead's statement that "The colonial revolutionaries no longer fight alone." These incidents alone should raise some interesting questions in the minds of serious revolutionaries still in the SWP.

One best aids the French communist workers not by tail-ending their rebellion but by furthering revolutionary struggle here. One helps them by building, both in France and here, sections of an international communist party which will take power. One only harms the French revolutionary movement by refusing to learn its lessons. ■

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Scabs, Fake Lefts Push Merger:

SSEU AT THE CROSSROADS

New York City: On 28 June over 6,000 members of the Social Service Employees Union voted on a proposal to re-merge with Local 371 of District Council 37, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, from which the SSEU broke in 1962. Although the merger proposal was defeated—61.8% voted for, 66.6% was constitutionally necessary—the future of the SSEU remains uncertain.

The bitter loss of last summer's six-week strike resulted in a profound demoralization of the officers and many activists. The work stoppage was initiated on 19 June 1967 by the Executive Board, frustrated by the defeatist passivity of the union officers (SPARTACIST No. 10). The morale of the membership was undermined by then-President Mage's acceptance of a salary offer and her failure to adequately explain the issues still in dispute, five months after contract expiration. It is a testimony to the vitality and militancy of the membership that the action was able to continue for six weeks.

SSEU Vs. Lindsay

The work stoppage represented the first serious challenge to Mayor Lindsay's anti-labor Tri-Partite Agreement (SPARTACIST No. 6) and its instrument, the Office of Collective Bargaining (OCB). This scheme, worked out in collusion mainly between the Mayor and DC 37, removes from bargaining—as "management prerogative"—matters of workload, job content, etc., provides for compulsory binding arbitration of disputes and gives DC 37 bargaining rights on city-wide issues. Together with the Taylor Law prohibiting public employee strikes, the OCB aims to emasculate the city labor movement.

The SSEU strike received no support from the bureaucracies of other unions and the response of the official labor movement ranged from a few telegrams of "support" to outright hostility. DC 37's Executive Director, Victor Gotbaum, called it "a non-strike by a non-union." Albert Shanker, of the United Federation of Teachers, due to confront the City in September, referred to the strike as a "jurisdictional dispute." The Mage leadership refused to attack these trade union bureaucrats or to demand support from other public employee unions. Instead, Mage called on "friends" like Sanitation leader John DeLury and Trerotola of the Teamsters to act as brokers for the SSEU.

By the fourth week the strike became extremely hard and bitter. The middle-class background and semi-pacifist attitudes of many SSEU members, which originally made difficult picket line enforcement against scabs, began to give way and the incidents of violence, police brutality and arrests of strikers rose sharply.

Strike Role of Oppositions

Of the internal opposition groups, only the SSEU Members for a Militant Caucus attempted to fill the vacuum created by a passive leadership; they kept the membership informed through weekly strike leaflets of the state of the action and of negotiations and proposed tactics to strengthen the action and win. The strike also tested the other oppositional groupings, the two Rank and File Committees, which originated from an unprincipled split from the Militant Caucus (SPARTACIST No. 10). The larger RAFC (see *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 6, No. 3), led by Ray Agostini, abdicated any oppositional role. The smaller RAFC, later to become "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party," (see *Workers League's Bulletin*, 18 Dec. 1967), and led by Dennis Cribben, played a role that was peculiar by any standards. Their principal demand was to merge with DC 37, the organization that was actively assisting the City to destroy the SSEU! But even worse, these so-called militants—all of them!—actually left the country to attend an English youth conference in the crucial fifth week and did not return until after the strike, revealing the shallowness of their interest in the SSEU and the trade union movement.

Leadership Sells Out

At the end of the fifth week, the City made an offer which represented a defeat on every major demand and included victimization of 29 militants through suspensions and transfers. Most crucial was the loss of the Collective Bargaining Clause, won by the 1965 strike, and a "temporary" waiver of the 60 caseload maximum. The leadership attempted to get this deal approved by the membership *without revealing its terms!* To save face for the City, the sell-out was to be "negotiated" after the union returned to work. The Militant Caucus exposed this arrangement and the secret terms, which were rejected by a huge majority in an angry and determined membership meeting. As the strike continued, the leadership sat on its hands in open defiance

of the membership's wishes. One week later, despite the increased strength of the picket lines, Mage returned with essentially the same package. The Militant Caucus was the lone organized opposition to the settlement terms and the deal was accepted 3 to 2 in a poorly attended meeting. The Agostini Rank and File, hiding behind an "Ad Hoc Committee against Reprisals," urged "Vote 'yes' for the contract, vote 'no' to reprisals."

For a Unified Staff

With the defeat of the caseworkers, the uniting of welfare staff into one bargaining unit, a main point in the Militant Caucus' founding program, became an urgent pre-condition to future bargaining. All levels of the SSEU leadership saw the solution to this problem in simply affiliating with a larger union. In November, Mage revealed that talks were being held with both Local 371 and the Fur, Leather and Machine Workers Joint Board. However, *advantageous* affiliation can only be negotiated from a position of strength and confidence. The *alternative* to immediate affiliation is to win from Local 371 the bargaining rights for supervisors, the first step in overcoming the principal strategic weakness of the SSEU—its representation of only one main title of three in the department. With such organizational strength based on the militant traditions of the SSEU, intervention into City and national labor struggles would take on an entirely different perspective. For example, the SSEU should be the organizing force for the running of a labor candidate for Mayor in 1969. However, this perspective involves serious struggle within the Department and the union as well as confrontations with the bureaucracies of other City unions; this prospect is distasteful to many delegates and officers and to the opportunist fake militants of the Agostini and Cribben groups.

"Left-Center Coalition" Cop-out

Agostini's Rank and File Committee never resumed its oppositional role. Shifting its programmatic emphasis to "bread and butter" issues, it was critical of the successful campaign to have the SSEU call for immediate withdrawal of troops from Viet Nam. (The SSEU became the first NYC union to take an anti-war position by a membership vote.) The RAFC and others tried to postpone the scheduled April officers' election until after a merger vote, so

candidates would not have to take a stand on affiliations! When this failed, they succeeded in sabotaging the elections in several centers by organizing large nonsense write-ins (for Mickey Mouse, Ho Chi Minh, Ray Agostini, etc.). They believe that the SSEU should re-enter the "mainstream" of the labor movement, in which militants should form a "left-center coalition" with the 'present sell-out leadership against that of DC 37. This tactic, further expounded in *PL* magazine (Vol. 6, Nos. 3 & 4), involves the dropping of all "radical" demands in order to secure a bloc with the "center"—opportunists, fake radicals and would-be bureaucrats. But instead of moving this swamp to the left, the RAFC has been gradually sucked below its surface entirely, as happened to the Communist Party when it pursued similar tactics.

Pernicious "TULP"

The now dissolved grouplet around Dennis Cribben shares many of the RAFC's beliefs and tactics, considering the SSEU to have never had any basis for existence and its militant role of the last five years "divisive." Their programmatic points range from opportunist to ultimatic, although they consider too "radical" demands for an end to racial discrimination in unions or that workers should have their unions take a stand against the Viet Nam war (*Bulletin*, 18 Dec. 1967). Their SSEU role has been in most cases simply capitulationist and at other times pernicious. Their supporter, Ronnie Roberts, was publicly censured by the delegates and membership of Kingsbridge Center for a breach of discipline, exposing, in a factionally motivated leaflet, the planned tactics of a secret work action. During a subsequent local election, when a delegate supporting the Militant Caucus issued a leaflet summarizing the history of Roberts and his group, a Roberts supporter confiscated and destroyed the material, assaulting the delegate when he intervened. Five of the six on the Militant slate were elected including two full delegates. In addition Militant Caucus supporters were elected delegates or alternates at four other work locations.

The 15 April election for union officers and the campaign preceding it were a shambles and a mockery. The "majority" slate, headed by Mage-ite demagogue Marty Morgenstern, was a vote-getting hodge-podge including members of almost all previously opposing groups plus three Black candidates supported by the Black Caucus. They took as few positions as possible—as they had very few in common among them—and campaigned on the basis of "experience." They were unopposed by the RAFC and Cribben

of TULP ran alone on a defeatist pro-affiliation platform.

Militant Caucus Gains

The four Militant Caucus candidates ran the only organized opposition slate and received 22% of the regular city-wide vote, the highest vote for a left opposition in the union's history. They carried Kingsbridge Center by 64% and had near majorities in several others. Their wide-ranging, transitional program included demands for union democracy, alliance with client groups, shorter work week, against job discrimination, against "professionalism" (for dropping college degree requirement), for withdrawal from Viet Nam, for independent working-class political action, for winning clerks and supervisors to SSEU, and opposition to entry into DC 37 under the terms offered as a retrogressive step.

After the elections, the SSEU received a revised, unamendable offer from Local 371 which was a technical improvement, provided one accepted the bureaucratization of the merged union. Twenty officers would form the policy-making body of the union, relegating the delegates to a sand-box Delegates

Assembly, similar to that in the teachers' union. Officers would serve unlimited terms without recall provisions and collectively set their own salaries—certainly the preconditions for a conservative, self-interested bureaucracy. A strike vote would require a two-thirds vote of any body. Over half of the increased dues would go out of the local, mainly to DC 37, for very few services.

Bureaucratic Merger Rejected

After the defeat of the merger proposal, the Executive Board majority voted to have a second merger vote, and granted the "yes" side exclusive use of union facilities and funds for its campaign. However, the membership rejected this shameless maneuver and voted on 23 July to reconsider affiliation only after 1 January 1969. What is necessary now is a vigorous campaign to win the supervisors and to win support for the 1969 bargaining from other City workers. The Militant Caucus has declared its intention to continue organizing for militant and democratic unionism, and for the building of an alternate leadership in the SSEU. ■

... REPRESSION

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lice attacked or when suspected provocateurs, calling for violence, broke into the meetings.

On 8 April, four days later, Billy Brooks and comrade Knight were arrested on charges of "inciting a felony" plus some additional municipal charges. According to the New Orleans *States-Item* of 9 April: "Two men, one white and one Negro were arrested for allegedly urging others to 'burn, baby, burn!' and passing out literature in an area of racial tension." But none of this happened! Knight and Brooks, on their way home, saw a large crowd gathered with police massing across the street. As they approached they heard a youth yelling, "Down with the Uncle Tom nigger cops." The police ran after the youth, pushing down a pregnant woman. The crowd charged the policemen and the band of cops began using the butts of shotguns to break up the crowd. Knight and Brooks got in their car and left the scene, having given out no literature either there or anywhere else that night. Two blocks away they were searched by a cop who found copies of the leaflet protesting the Boyd murder and the two were then arrested, ultimately to be held on \$1000 bail each. Despite all this, the march to protest the Boyd murder succeeded, with Brooks, Knight and Charles Sims of the Deacons in the lead. Police terror and reactionary Black Nationalist sentiment succeeded in cutting down its numbers, but the protest was heard

and the march showed that we would not be stopped.

Not Riots—Revolution!

The Spartacist League does not call upon Black people to engage in meaningless riots nor does it call for "non-violence." In the SL document, "Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (SPARTACIST No. 10, May-June 1967), we state: "... ghettos across the country have been rocked by elemental, spontaneous, non-political upheavals against the prevailing property relations and against the forces of the state which protect these relations. . . . Yet despite the vast energies expended and the casualties suffered, these outbreaks have changed nothing. . . . It is the duty of a revolutionary organization to intervene where possible to give these outbursts political direction."

These incidents of police repression are practice runs for their "get-tough" tactics for the summer: frame-ups and police violence are their "law and order." If the radical movement and protests of the oppressed are to survive, all legal terrorism must be fought. If convicted, Billy Brooks will be jailed for 5 years, as he is on parole from the Louisiana State prison because of similar charges against him last year. Similarly, comrade Knight could get a year or more. Statements protesting these police actions should be sent to Jim Garrison, DA, Tulane and Broad Streets, New Orleans, La. Defense funds for Brooks and Knight are urgently needed and should be sent c/o Spartacist League, Box 8121, Gentilly Sta., New Orleans, La. 70122. ■

COPS, SPIES, HUAC:

Repression in New Orleans

New Orleans: During the past two years the Spartacist League in New Orleans has suffered many attempts at repression by state and city police, culminating in the current criminal charges against Thomas Knight of the SL and Billy Brooks, financial director of the United Liberation Front and formerly of SNCC.

The first open police surveillance occurred on 22 June 1966 at a meeting called for members of the International Longshoremen's Association, Local 1419 (black). Two members of the New Orleans Intelligence Squad showed up, claiming "interest in what you have to say." Upon their expulsion from the meeting they threatened to "bring this before the City Attorney as a violation of our Civil Rights"! Of course, the police were there to do what the union bureaucrats' goon squad could not do completely—frighten away ILA members.

Later that summer every member of the New Orleans Spartacist League local was placed under obvious surveillance by the police, as an attempt to pressure them into ceasing their activity. Then New Orleans police Sgt. David Rolland Kent was sent into the organization as an undercover agent. Known as "David Rolland," Kent was good at his job, working as an active member. However, in the spring of 1967, he exposed himself by wanting to "join the police force to work on police brutality from the inside"! He was informed that joining the cops was incompatible with SL membership and was thrown out. He was later commended by the New Orleans police for his activities.

Louisiana HUAC Screams

In the summer of 1967, the Louisiana Committee on Un-American Activities issued a 185-page report on "The Spartacist League and Other Communist Activities in South Louisiana." Though one member's job was lost as a result and numerous threats were received by the local organizer, the Spartacist League stated in its press release that: "... we are said to be a 'revolutionary Communist group with Trotskyite orientation.' ... the Committee and its agents do not realize the full meaning of what they have said in public. If they had, then they would have realized that trained Communist cadre are not driven out by mere public persecution. ... The Spartacist League will remain

in Louisiana and continue its struggle as before."

On 22 August 1967, three SL'ers and one friend, returning from an anti-war conference in Atlanta, were arrested on charges of loitering, reviling a police

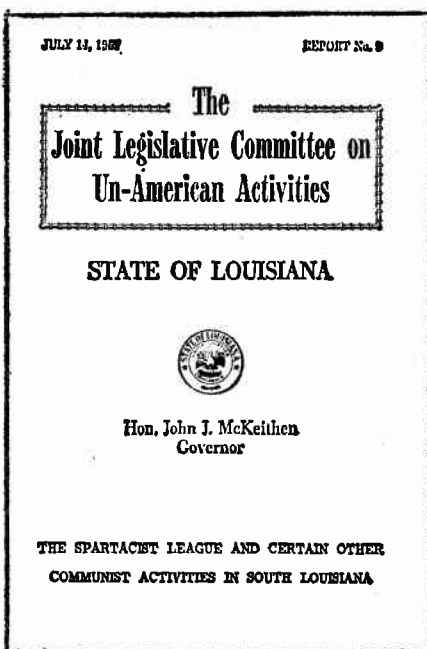
crowd of parade spectators and brutally beaten by eight policemen. While one cop was stomping on this throat and others were clubbing him, he was accused of "assaulting a police officer, resisting arrest and theft of a policeman's hat"! At his trial he was convicted of resisting arrest in spite of testimony of three witnesses who stated that the entire incident was provoked by the police.

White Killer Cop

The latest and most serious arrest was preceded by a sharp rise in tension in the black community. A black youth, 14-year-old Robert Lee Boyd, was shot and killed by a white cop for picking up soft-drink bottles from the back yard of a bar. He had been given permission by the bar manager to take the bottles. The local NAACP called for a protest march but cancelled it, saying: "We feel there might be elements that would infiltrate our ranks, elements we could not control." (New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, 30 May 1968) As a result of this, the United Liberation Front of New Orleans, a coalition of militant black groups, and the Spartacist League issued a leaflet calling for a march to protest the killing and to demand that all cops be withdrawn from the black community.

The day this leaflet was issued was the day of the murder of Martin Luther King; tension sky-rocketed in the black community with marches from every direction. Almost all these marches, led by reformist leaders, were quiet. At the same time, United Liberation and community people were holding mass rallies at several places. These rallies only broke out into violence when po-

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officer and using obscene language. The arrest had political and racist implications, since three of the four were black and several boxes of Spartacist literature were found in the car trunk. The four were eventually found not guilty, after considerable legal expenses.

Another Cop Frame-up

In January 1968, a second arrest occurred, with probably more racist than political motivation. A white comrade, Tom Knight, was arrested in a black neighborhood on loitering charges. These charges were dismissed and a suit for false arrest is now in progress. About three weeks later, comrade Knight was arrested for "interfering with the work of a police officer" because he refused to allow police without a warrant to search the car in which he and Floyd Nichols, one of the five framed-up black students from Texas Southern University, were riding. Then on 27 February, Mardi Gras night, comrade Knight was pulled out of a

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