

SPARTACIST-WEST

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Revolutionary Buddhism?

The current unrest in South Vietnam is, of course, a good thing. It weakens the military potential of the puppet regime, and demonstrates to the world the unpopular character of the Ky government. The anger expressed toward US troops and civilians should raise a lot of doubts in American minds about the desire of the South Vietnamese to have the US in their country.

However, while every partisan of Vietnamese freedom can only welcome these demonstrations, we should not delude ourselves about the character of their leadership. Among the ranks of the demonstrators, and among the urban poor in South Vietnam generally, are undoubtedly many who bitterly resent the American occupation and who wish to see the completion of the social revolution initiated by the Viet Minh.

But it would be false to believe that this is the goal of the demonstrators' Buddhist leadership. The support they have received from various leaders of the South Vietnamese military apparatus and from some secondary government figures should demonstrate that they still stand opposed to the revolutionaries in the countryside; what they want are "free elections" which would give them a greater say in the government, with the attendant advantages that this would bring. These religious leaders and their government allies have no intention of committing social suicide. They will be as serious opponents of the NLF as the present human garbage running the show in Saigon.

These demonstrations raise another point for consideration. It is a popular belief among some circles that only peasant-based guerilla struggles can be successful against imperialism and its puppet regimes in the underdeveloped countries. Such struggles can sometimes succeed in defeating imperialism, it is true. But the origins of the ruling political group which emerges from such a fight determine that it will go only part way in the revolution. Capitalism will be defeated but political power will not fall to the working class; instead, power remains in the hands of a bureaucratic caste, which will also put na-

tional limits on the revolutionary process, having no direct political stake in spreading the revolution. (The recent "right turn" of the Castro regime is a vivid example of this process.) Only revolutionary parties which come to power based on the urban working class, supported by the poor peasantry, will put in power a regime that will not be able to impose a "socialism in one country" (i.e., no foreign revolutions) development on its own population. The recent events in Vietnam, added to last year's experience in the Dominican Republic, show that urban struggles are possible, and that the working class of the under-developed countries is not drugged on high wages and therefore incapable of playing a revolutionary role.

The emergence of genuine, proletarian-based revolutionary parties, which have assimilated the experience of authentic marxism, alone can guarantee the end of imperialism, both in its cruelly-exploited colonies and in its metropolitan centers.

--Doug Hainline

Trotskyism in Poland

A recent protest rally at the Berkeley campus of the University of California has called attention to the imprisonment in Poland of a group of oppositionists led by Ludwik Hass and including Karol Modzelewski, Jacek Kuron, and Kasimierz Badowski. Leading left-wing spokesmen, intellectuals, and civil libertarians here and abroad are being asked to join in protesting to the Polish government.

Because of the political character of the opposition group, however, this particular case has significance beyond that of the usual atrocities against civil liberties in the Stalinist countries. Hass was a member of the central committee of the Polish Communist Party in the thirties and the liquidation of that organization by Stalin led him to join the Trotskyist left opposition. Arrested by Soviet authorities after the

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Castroism, Trotskyism

A new step in the evolution of the Castro regime was signaled at the Havana Tri-continental Congress last month by Castro's closing denunciation of "counter-revolutionary Trotskyism." The tendency of the conference itself was to paper over the profound differences which exist among the groups represented there with militant and left-sounding phraseology.

Castro's closing speech contained a long section denouncing the role of Trotskyism and the Fourth International. He characterized Trotskyist participation in the Guatemalan guerrilla movement as "infiltration" and the pushing of the program of the Fourth International there as ". . . a true crime against the revolutionary movement, to isolate it from the masses by corrupting it with stupidities, the dishonor, and the repugnant and nauseating thing that is Trotskyism today within the field of politics." He also attacked as Trotskyist and "villanous" articles by Adolfo Gilly in the Monthly Review giving political reasons for Guevara's departure from the Cuban scene. Raising these specific attacks to the level of political generalization, Castro said: "If Trotskyism at a certain stage represented an erroneous position within the field of political ideas, in later years it became a vulgar instrument of imperialism and reaction." Thus Castro, in 1966, embraces in its most crude form the rationalization of the purge trials of the thirties, and paraphrases Vyshinsky's orations to the Moscow court.

Castro's espousal of a line which would cause embarrassment to even the more sophisticated Stalinists of Moscow today raises serious questions on both the immediate and long-range levels. Why did Castro find it desirable to push this line at this particular moment? The conference took place at a time when the revolutionary movement, especially in Latin America, is in a serious state of disarray, and at the same time revolutionary pressures from the masses are on the rise. The Latin American revolution can no longer be contained by a purely reformist and constitutional program. Hence the constant emphasis on "armed struggle" at the conference. But the bourgeois reformists like Allende of Chile and Jagan of British Guiana and the Stalinists and Stalinoids who dominated at least the Latin American section of the conference are faced with

the problem of maintaining their control of the movement and keeping it within acceptable bounds. These bounds are defined as those which will not upset the international diplomatic appletart of coexistence, or by providing an example of victorious genuine proletarian revolution, undermine the political position of the entrenched bureaucracies. An attack on Trotskyism by the conference's most prestigious and untainted figure, an attack in which even the Monthly Review is included in the amalgam, serves a double purpose. In the first place, it makes it more difficult for Trotskyists, semi-Trotskyists, and other left elements in Latin America to take advantage of the left rhetoric of the reformers to develop a genuinely revolutionary movement. In the second place, it serves as an indication to the bourgeois and Stalinist reformists of the region and to the co-existers of the Kremlin that the conference forces will keep the revolution within the limits that they define as acceptable. Anti-Trotskyism thus serves simultaneously as a prophylaxis against the effects of the left turn required by the objective situation and as the cement to bind together widely divergent social and political elements.

That Castro should follow such a course should be no surprise to serious Marxists, although the crudity with which the job was done is indeed surprising. In the category of "serious Marxists," however, we cannot include the leadership of the SWP-YSA and its chief spokesman (we would blush to say theoretician), Joe Hansen.

The SWP has for years sought to ride the coat-tails of "The Lenin of the Caribbean," has proclaimed Cuba to be a genuine uncorrupted workers' state, and has reduced its own role largely to that of a spokesman and apologist for Fidelismo. Minorities which attempted to make a serious analysis of the new Cuba and who committed the unpardonable crime of warning that this peasant-petty bourgeois anti-working class regime would evolve in precisely the Stalinist direction it has taken were expelled. These groups became the nuclei of the Spartacist and ACFI organizations, all that is left of Trotskyism in the USA after the SWP revisionists completely degouted the movement.

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ism, Castro's counter-revolutionary attack creates a major crisis. The attack could not be ignored, and in the January 31 Militant, Joe Hansen, the SWP's international expert, undertook the thankless task of disguising the extent of the disaster. Hansen's and the SWP's history and deeply revisionist world outlook make it impossible for him to present a Marxist analysis, however. The key to his approach is in the headline: IN ANSWER TO CASTRO'S ATTACK ON "TROTSKYISM." The quotation marks around "Trotskyism" reflect the basic "Who? Us?" approach of Hansen's article. A major section of this piece is devoted to attacks on the Posadas group (which merits attack well enough, but not in this context). However, this attempt to get out of the line of fire is obviously not enough, and Hansen does go further. He speculates on Castro's reasons for the attack, suggesting two possibilities; one, that "It was a political concession made in the Kremlin's direction" and two, that it was designed for "camouflage" for the left line of the conference.

Neither of these explanations is remotely adequate and what is missing from both is any political analysis of the role of Castroism itself, its ideology and its social character. Hansen can only regard Castro's attack as a regrettable error and end by saying: "It is to be hoped that he will soon see the necessity to rectify his stand on this important question." The trouble is that in a state in which the working class does not have and never did have political power, in which power is vested in a petty bourgeois formation based on mass peasant support and collectivised property, the political and ideological needs of the new bureaucracy are essentially similar to those of the other established bureaucratic leaderships. In a deformed worker's state not qualitatively different from Yugoslavia or China the dramatic attack on Trotskyism is not only totally in character but even a political necessity. No arm twisting from the Kremlin is required. Hansen and the SWP, however, can never admit this. They have called on the Cuban working class to rely completely on the Castro regime, and condemned those who would call on Cuban workers to organize their own independent party. They have subordinated their own political work to the Fidelista cult and to the peasant guer-

illa, and have sought to influence others abroad to do the same. Thus the SWP-YSA is hopelessly tied in with and compromised with Castroism, and it is too late for them to disentangle themselves.

Committed to Castro as they are, were the SWP leaders principled politicals, only two courses would be open to them. One would be to accept Castro's evaluation and liquidate. The other would be to admit their errors in accomodating to Castroism, and more important, to analyze the reasons, ideological and social, why they followed this disasterous course. Were they to choose the latter, a necessary corollary would be to restore the party membership of those minorities whom they excluded for the crime of having a correct analysis of the character of the Cuban state.

However, being vulgar empiricists and opportunists, they will do neither, and will sweep the mess under the rug while waiting for a new and better Messiah. In an editorial accompanying the Hansen article, they demonstrate their unwillingness to change even in the face of such a blow. The Havana conference is hailed as "...a step forward for the revolutionary struggle in Latin America." The strongest word they can find to criticise the false unity of the conference is "dubious." One paragraph mentions Castro's speech--in the context of a breach in the United Front. The SWP and its co-thinkers abroad, however, will pay a heavy price in loss of prestige, influence, and membership, to say nothing of revolutionary honor. Honest revolutionaries in the SWP-YSA will see to it that this price is not mitigated.

For those who are involved in principled politics, or who take principled politics seriously, Castro's symbolic embrace of the most sordid aspects of Stalinism is of profound significance. To be dazzled by numbers, power and prestige, to seek to short circuit the arduous and most often undramatic task of organizing and clarifying the working class independently and against all reformist and opportunist middle class tendencies. is to render oneself helpless in the face of such developments as Castro's speech, which are unexpected to opportunistic hero-worshippers. The building of revolutionary and Trotskyist movements takes on in this context a renewed and pressing importance.

--Geoffrey White

Trotskyism in Poland

(Continued from front page)

partition of Poland in 1939, he was held in Russian prison camps for 18 years, eight of them at Vorkuta. Released as a result of the Gomulka-Khrushchev agreement of 1957 for the repatriation of Polish nationals, he returned to Poland and rejoined the PPR, openly proclaiming his Trotskyist views. The circumstances of his trial indicate that he was able to build around himself a group of younger intellectuals opposed to the reactionary character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and that it was the preparation by this group of a 128-page political platform that precipitated the arrests and trials. Since the pamphlet was of course suppressed, authoritative statements as to its content cannot be made, but unofficial Polish sources friendly to the defendants state that the group regarded the bureaucracy as a form of a new class and called for proletarian internationalism and workers' democracy. At the trial, Hass and his associates reaffirmed their Trotskyism, and made a demonstration in the courtroom in which spectators joined them in singing The Internationale and giving the Communist salute. Hass and a number of others were sentenced to three years, although some defendants may have been released.

One of the most baleful political contributions of counter-revolutionary Stalinism has been to divide the working class along east-west lines. Seeing the miserable and politically dispossessed conditions of the working class in the Soviet bloc countries, the workers of the west have preferred, when offered merely this dark prospect as an alternative, to stick with the program of seeking a larger cut from imperialism, whether under social democratic or Stalinist leadership. As for the workers in the east, many have been convinced that any political attacks on the Stalinist bureaucracy is tantamount to attacks on the gains of the October revolution and the East European overturns. They are therefore reluctantly tied to the bureaucratic Communist Parties in much the same way that American workers are tied to the Democrats. This situation has also led to a tendency among those in the Soviet bloc who do break with the bureaucracy to have illusions about western democracy, to adopt existentialist, nihilist, or neo-Christian attitudes, and to identify with the kind of politics represented by Imre Nagy. This is to be seen among the dissident Russian intellectuals today, and was most sharply

demonstrated at the time of the Hungarian revolutions of 1956.

It was widely believed that Stalin's terror had wiped out all traces of the left opposition, if not the very memory of Trotsky himself, in the countries under its sway. However, the Hass case not only gives at least one example of the survival in the flesh of this opposition, but of its ability to win adherents and to make itself relevant to the conditions of today. The Hass group's highly principled and courageous conduct at their trial, disdaining to conceal or gloss over the subversive content of their politics as has too often been done in political trials in both east and west, is heartening as well as inspiring. Thus the left opposition is of more than historical relevance in the east as in the west. If the legacy of Stalinism, the division of the world working class along east-west lines is to be overcome, it cannot be done on the one hand by those who are apologists for the system of political and social oppression of the working class in the Soviet bloc countries -- the Communist Parties and their hangers on, both Maoist and Kreninite. Nor can it be united by those whose centrism and pathological anti-Communism compromises their opposition to their own ruling class. We believe that it is only the program of the world Trotskyism which can break through this bind. To re-establish the unity of the world working class, the importance of such eastern groups as Hass's is out of all proportion to its numbers.

Nor need we feel dismayed about the outcome of this particular case. Poland in the '60's is not Russia of the '30's. Then all protest against the terror was helpless to save a single life. Now, however, the Polish government is peculiarly sensitive to world opinion because it seeks to balance itself to a degree on western as well as eastern support. We therefore urge the mounting of the strongest possible campaign to free the imprisoned members of the Hass group, not only as an elementary defence of civil liberties, but as a necessary forward step for the ultimate emancipation of the world working class.

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