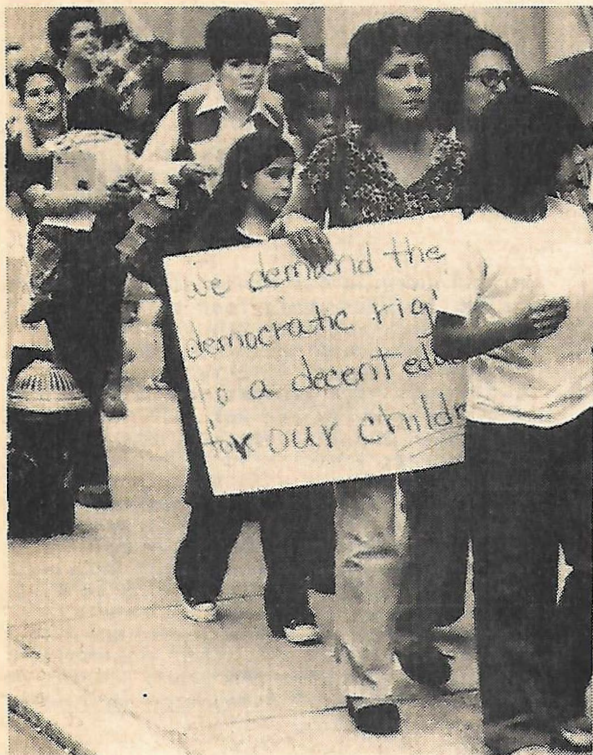


"Community Control" tailing the bourgeoisie or building the Revolutionary Movement?



"Dialectics is the teaching which shows opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they became) identical -- under what conditions they are identical, transforming themselves into one another, why the human mind should take those opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living, conditional, mobile, transforming, themselves into one another."

Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 38, P. 97

Community control, originally a demand of spontaneous mass movements in the late 1960's, has become a potent tool of the American ruling class. In "community control" the ruling class appears to relinquish or to decentralize some of its power, but in essence, the community control tactic is used to:

- 1) Divert and coopt the growing militancy of mass struggles, usually urban Third World struggles, through reformism, and
- 2) Divide and weaken the working class struggle by sharpening national divisions.

Thus, the ruling class uses community control to strengthen the capitalist system, while attempting to disintegrate the peoples' mass movements.

As Marxist-Leninists, we reject both the ultra-left position of liquidating or ignoring the significance of spontaneous community control struggles, as well as the tendency of the Right to "tail" after spontaneous mass movements. Either position ultimately serves the bourgeoisie. We cannot be paralyzed by the fear of being "used" by the ruling class and its agencies but must join the mass movement, grasp its dialectics, and lead its transformation into a revolutionary struggle. Our role is to "divide one into two," to release the progressive forces of the community control struggles by building community movements independent of the Bourgeoisie. We are responsible for developing a Left leadership and ideology which will unite the many against the monopoly capitalists, expose reformism, and serve the interests of the multi-national working class.

COMMUNITY CONTROL AS A RULING CLASS TACTIC

The laws of history teach us that wherever there is oppression, there is struggle. No one knows this better than the monopoly capitalists who rule this country. Historically, they have used two tactics to suppress mass movements: repression and reform. Lenin clearly shows us in Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism that superprofits from international monopoly capitalism (profits above those made from exploitation of workers at home) are used to bribe American workers. On this material basis, together with the co-optation of the labor aristocracy, the revisionism of the Communist Party USA, and the deep-rooted pragmatic ideology for immediate gain, the ruling class shifted its emphasis from violent repression of militant struggles to the use of reform as its predominant tactic.

Repression continues to be used by the ruling class against revolutionary forces when all else fails, but contrary to what some mistaken comrades claim, reform, and not fascism, is the predominant aspect of this period (although there is a menace of fascism.)

Community control is one mode of reformism in that it promotes attempts at making change within the capitalist system, rather than to fundamentally change or overthrow it. As a bourgeois tactic, it has general and specific characteristics which we should understand. In general, it promotes reforms over revolution by propagating reformism in opposition to revolutionary ideology; blurring the absolute contradiction between the monopoly capitalists vs. working class and oppressed nationalities; raising the relative internal contradiction among the people to the principal level; co-opting wavering elements into the monopoly capitalist forces, thereby leading the mass movement in to a "bourgeois Box." More specifically, it:

- 1) Shifts the attack from the capitalist system to narrow institutional forms;

- 2) Weakens the struggle against the State, representative of the ruling class, ie. the State appears to play a neutral role in heated battles over funding--instead of uniting against the State as the common enemy and demanding more funds altogether, communities and groups fight each other;
- 3) Divides the unity of the multi-national working class, pitting oppressed nationalities against each other, and against oppressor nationalities;
- 4) Divides the unity of the working class, pitting consumers against workers within the institutions (usually service workers);
- 5) Diverts the mass movement into purely legalistic battles and electoral politics, often resulting in militant revolutionary potentials being exhausted in the midst of bureaucracy of bourgeois politics, and in leadership falling into the hands of petty-bourgeois or bourgeois nationalists, who can be controlled and manipulated by the ruling class.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF COMMUNITY CONTROL

By the late 1960's, over a decade of Civil Rights experiences were leading the Black movement to more militant positions. Concurrently, the post-war boom cycle of inflation and economic crisis was hitting hardest the black and non-white sectors of the working class and the anti-imperialist influence on the black movement was growing. However, the socialist movement, at that time young and weak, dragged by the tremendous handicap of a thoroughly revisionist CPUSA, was unable to seize the opportunity to fuse the mass movement and the communist movement together.

The new militant Black movement, ranging from Carmichael's Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to the Black Panther Party, was characterized by a combination of lumpen and petty-bourgeois romantic influences. "Integration into white society" as the ideology of the Black movement was replaced by demands for "black power," "cultural autonomy," "alternative institutions," and "power to the people." These demands often united under the banner of Community Control.

The ruling class, always on the lookout for threatening mass movements, responded to this threat with its own brand of "Community Control" -- stressing nationalism, capitalism and cooptation of petty-bourgeois leadership. "Black power" became "Black Capitalism" and "power to the people" meant little more than power to participate and aid in their own exploitation. With the dominance of bourgeois nationalism and the absence of correct communist leadership, the community control movement could not but become reformist.

THE NY COMMUNITY CONTROL OF SCHOOLS EXPERIMENT

Historically, miseducation and the denial of education has helped to keep national minorities at the bottom levels of the working class. They are denied even the limited mobility of their white counterparts. In the "urban crisis" cities such as New York have become depositories of large pools of

reserve labor and service labor--mostly non-white slum dwellers, who are underemployed, unemployed or unemployable. Because of this denial of the basic right to livelihood and decent education, important spontaneous movements have developed around education in Third World communities--issues such as integration, quality education, bilingual and ethnic studies.

It is not a "coincidence," therefore, that one of the first and most significant ruling class experiments with community control began with the "New York Decentralization of School Plan" written by no less than McGeorge Bundy, a leading ruling class liberal ideologist and president of the Ford Foundation, a well-established ruling class tool for finding solutions (often counterrevolutionary) for capitalism's problems at home and abroad.

Monopoly capitalists are concerned with urban and racial crises because they threaten the national and civic peace and stability, and therefore, are willing and able to promote programs calculated to pacify the ghetto. However, these reforms often run counter to the interests of smaller local forces which profit more directly from the continuation of the status quo. These forces and the fact that the Community Control "scheme" is not really designed to be fully implemented anyway (but is actually designed to be a smokescreen against the mass movement) leads to the "for show" nature of most community control programs. This is what happened in the New York Schools.

Between 1963 and 1967, dozens of community boycotts of New York schools were organized in response to the increasing segregation and deterioration of conditions. The Board of Education, blatantly blocking any integration proposals, became the target of minority groups who demanded smaller, more responsive, and accountable school districts. The 1967 Bundy proposal would have divided the large New York educational bureaucracy into smaller autonomous districts with predominantly elected local boards, who would control budget, personnel, and curriculum. It would also have implemented more equitable exam procedures, opening more teaching jobs to minorities.

But class conflicts are inherent in capitalist society, and the NY schools situation was no exception. The Bundy plan was blocked by a coalition of the United Federation of Teachers led by racist Albert Shanker; the Central Labor Council, and elements in the Jewish community who waged a three year campaign based on narrow trade unionism, and highly emotional appeals to fear and ethnic division. The final community control plan of 1970 was objectively a defeat for community control forces: Districts were gerrymandered (with a few exceptions) to assure against minority domination; strong centralized controls were retained over personnel, budget and curriculum; and the teacher hiring system precludes altering the teacher force to include more minorities. The only small gain was the selection of the local superintendent by the community board; even this, as we shall see, has been a struggle in New York's Lower East Side Community School Board District #1. Essentially, the city became

more polarized along ethnic lines, reactionary leadership was consolidated in the UFT, while almost no real community control over education was actually won!!!

TURNING A BAD THING INTO A GOOD THING: THE STRUGGLE IN DISTRICT ONE

The dialectics of the community control of schools phenomenon can be analyzed in the N.Y. District One struggle of 1973-74. Although not a typical district in that it is primarily minority, small and experimental, District One's struggle illustrates some of the potential for involving the masses in intense struggle and how a bourgeois tactic can be utilized to promote the revolutionary movement if given the proper leadership.

Of the District's 17,000 students, 73% are Latin, 14% Black, 6% Chinese and 7% other. In the Summer of 1973, an UFT dominated board voted 6 to 3 to oust Superintendent Luis Fuentes, an outspoken nationalist who supported bilingual education and preferential hiring of minority teachers in schools serving minority pupils. In reaction, a parents' boycott of schools developed under the leadership of the militant Parents Association Council of Presidents; the boycott was 85% effective. Soon after, a court order ruled the UFT board voided on the grounds that election procedures discriminated against national minorities. The school district was placed under Central Board trusteeship and Fuentes was retained, pending a new election.

As a result of the Parents' Boycott movement, a much stronger community slate was formed, made up of former board members, agency heads, independent nationalists, and honest community people. Called the "Por Los Ninos" Slate (For the Children), it was a minimally united slate without a common ideology beyond the demand for decent education and opposition to the UFT "Brotherhood" Slate, which incidentally included one non-white, an opportunist Chinese minister. After an intense and close election, Por Los Ninos won 4 of 9 seats, apparently enough to retain Fuentes, but not enough to approve programs.

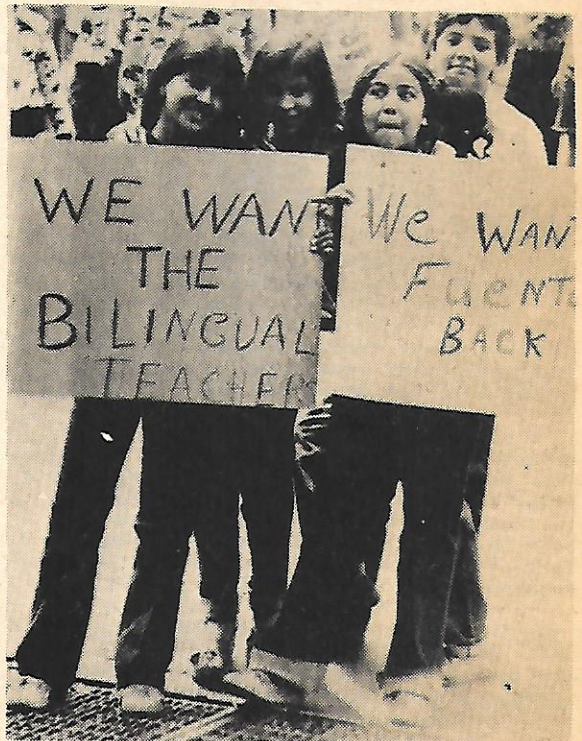
Although much of the leadership of the Parents Council and the community activists were consciously struggling against nationalism and racism in the election, bourgeois influences are still predominant in our society. Under the prodding of the UFT racists the real issues were drowned in ethnic division and demagogy, many community people viewing the struggle as White versus Nonwhite, and Teachers viewing it as Pro-Fuentes and Anti-Fuentes. Social chauvinism and petty name calling became the principal aspect of the campaign.

The complement to Social Chauvinism, i.e. Narrow Nationalism, also played its role (although secondary), even to the extent of supporting candidates of one national group only, rather than to support the whole slate.

Furthermore, some forces such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which has long been active in District One, in fact promoted ethnic division, aggravating the parent-teacher division by purely stressing "racism" as the key aspect, and thereby, encouraging anti-unionism. The SWP, a Trotskyist group, faithfully played the role of lieu-

tenants of the Bourgeoisie, helping to foster the illusion that community control could be a solution, and that reliance on bourgeois institutions and media, rather than waging mass struggle, could bring it about. They actually served as helpmates to the other labor lieutenants in the UFT in being the first line of defense for the monopoly capitalists against the rising revolutionary movement.

Needless to say, because of these forces, there was little discussion and propaganda about the real class nature of the educational system, and the real interests of the teachers, students, and community in struggling against the monopolists. For example, a coalition of teachers, parents, and community groups of all nationalities to fight against increasing cut-backs in education was impossible (see Cutback article in this issue, 5,000 positions involving provisional workers are being sliced in the schools). Little was done to bring advanced elements from the struggle to a level beyond spontaneity and legal battles. In this, the role of Marxist-Leninist forces is key; without clear analysis and correct leadership, advanced elements cannot be won over to socialism, nor can the narrowness of the issue be overcome by linking up with other struggles against the declining standard of living, inflation, taxes, cutbacks, etc. In District One, the Marxist-Leninist forces, the subjective factor, lagged behind the objective mass movement.



THERE WERE ALSO MANY POSITIVE ASPECTS, and from these, lessons can be learned about revolutionary potential, including the latent revolutionary potential among oppressed nationalities. The positive aspects include:

- 1) Increasing unity and dialogue among the advanced elements of the Third World Communities.
- 2) Exposure of the opportunism of Trotskyist forces such as SWP to honest community forces and activists. Although quite influential previously, their attempts at manipulating rather than working directly in building mass movement isolated them from the parent base.
- 3) A limited united front among the minority communities and some white forces.
- 4) Emerging splits among the reactionary and liberal trade unionists. When District Council 37, organizing among the para-professionals in the schools, was raided by Shanker's forces, it resulted in a favorable court decision for District Council 37 and the endorsement of the Por Los Ninos by Victor Gotbaum, its leader.

"ONE DIVIDES INTO TWO"

"...with revolutionary tactics under the conditions of bourgeois rule, reforms are naturally transformed into an instrument for disintegrating that rule, into an instrument for strengthening the revolution, into a strongpoint for the further development of revolution."
J. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*

To summarize, community control movements are a struggle for democratic rights; the thrust of such a struggle has been led by the oppressed nationalities. The ruling class attempts to use these movements to propagate bourgeois ideology, and have even, through the Bundy Plan, formalized its preferred forms, in attempts at strengthening its rule and weakening the revolutionary movement. To transform this into its opposite, we must understand and utilize the contradictions in each case. We saw earlier that in the District One struggle, the weakness of honest Marxist-Leninist forces & the stubborn persistence of thoroughly Trotskyist SWP combined to aid the bourgeois plan. We must learn from our experiences, both positive and negative, to meet our obligations in leading the mass movements to socialism.

I. The PRINCIPAL contradiction is between the monopoly capitalists and its State versus the working class and its allies.

Concretely, we must build the broadest possible united front against the ruling class. We must consolidate the unity of the multinational working class. We must unite all democratic rights struggles--for housing, health, education, employment--and link them up with the working class struggle in industry. We must build unity among "consumers" who are mostly workers with workers in the institutions. We must constantly expose the class nature of the institution, the role that education plays in perpetuating class divisions through the "tracking" system and the class composition of the real policy making boards. We must never let the ruling class divert us away from the capitalist sys-

tem. We must expose ruling class liberalism and reformism as practiced so skillfully by Bundy, who consciously tried to put the blame for the "educational crisis" on the racism of the teachers. His rhetoric deepened the divisions between parents and teachers, while he -- a prattician of the corporate elite-- pretended to be the friend of the minorities!

II. The contradiction between the Racist Labor Aristocracy and the Working Class.

We must fight narrow trade unionism and expose sell-out labor leadership, promoting the progressive elements in the unions, being careful to separate the leadership from the membership, e.g., although the UFT has managed to double wages within 10 years and has played a pioneering role in teachers' unions, Shanker's present collusion with the Board of Education is becoming more apparent. We must help build on the real common interests between parents and teachers and expose Shanker's reactionary leadership, uniting with progressive teachers. Shanker has remained silent on the recent cut-backs and loss of 5,000 much needed jobs; has turned his back on teachers fired for attending anti-war activities; and fought to keep exam and hiring procedures which discriminate against new teachers, especially minorities; and in District One, under the guise of "raising standards" has opposed the rehiring of uncertified but qualified para-professionals, mostly non-white.

III. The Oppressor Nationalities versus the Oppressed Nationalities

Because the national struggle is in the final analysis a proletarian question, we must stress working class solidarity. At present, the ruling class has successfully raised the contradiction between white majority and Third World peoples as the major aspect of community control struggles. Our role, as conscious Marxist Leninists, is to link up the struggle against national oppression to the proletarian struggle. We must not make the error of raising the "contradiction among the people" to the level of principal contradiction, thus objectively tailing after the mass movement; neither can we "liquidate" the national question and ignore the latent revolutionary potential in the struggle against national oppression.

Our position is that the fight against national oppression is an integral part of class struggle and at times, it is at the forefront of class struggle. While the full elimination of national oppression cannot be achieved until long after the victorious proletarian revolution, immediate struggles against national oppression must be waged, not only as a fight for democratic rights and equality of oppressed nationalities, but as an indispensable immediate fight for the unity of the working class, a necessary condition for successful struggle against the bourgeoisie and class emancipation.

In District One, this means linking up with the teachers struggle within the union. We must fully recognize the principal danger of social chauvinism as a main prop to bourgeois rule, relentlessly struggling against every manifestation, especially as seen in reactionary union leadership. Social chauvinism will undoubtedly serve as a vehicle for fascism in this country, the ruling class attempting to mobilize one sector of the working class against another.

IV. The Petti-Bourgeois Nationalists versus the Oppressed Nationality and Working Class interest of the oppressed nationalities

One of the chief goals of the bourgeoisie in the community control movement is to win over ideologically and to co-opt a privileged sector within the oppressed nationalities. We must struggle with and win over the advanced elements of the mass struggle. We must also expose and isolate "Third World capitalists" and "cultural nationalists" who persistently serve as the tool of the ruling class, especially in this period with the unprecedented rise of the petti-bourgeoisie in the oppressed nationalities, including Pan-Africanists and Jesse Jackson-type Black Capitalists.

V. Fight Against the Danger of Fascism

As we stated in the Guardian forum (see article on United Front Against Monopoly Capitalism) and in the C.L. article, the material basis for fascism is ripening. This is due to the increasing inability of the bourgeoisie to make concessions as international markets and resources rapidly shrink and as the capitalist economy collapses.

There are generally two ways out for the bourgeoisie -- shifting the crisis to the working class or unleashing new wars of aggression abroad. Shifting the burden of these economic crisis onto the back of the working class inevitably brings forth unprecedented upsurges of the working class resistance, as we are beginning to witness. New wars of aggression abroad would also bring mounting domestic opposition. Both require far more repressive measures from the bourgeoisie, namely fascism.

Fascism is not an ordinary form of bourgeois rule. Fascism is the open terroristic dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is not an inevitable form of capitalism. It can be smashed with a strong, united working class movement. This form of dictatorship cannot be carried out by a state apparatus of regular police, courts, national guards, etc. under normal circumstances. It is possible only if the petti-bourgeois class and a significant sector of the working class are won over to the side of the surviving monopoly.

This process is particular and distinctive according to particular economic, political, religious, national and other factors. In the U.S., racism and national prejudices, we are certain, are the vehicle by which fascism can ride into power. Thus, national division and consolidation of racism as an ideology is a condition under which the material basis of economic crisis in capitalist countries can become operative. Therefore, the

task of fighting for our multi-national working class unity is especially a fundamental task at this time.

New York City in general and the Lower East Side in particular is one of the most diverse multi-national communities in the U.S. Here the decaying and parasitic condition of the capitalist system has reached a very advanced degree. New York often foreshadows developments around the country, thus, the District One struggle takes on a national significance in that its lessons can be learnt by both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat for their respective class interests.

Divide and rule, this time-honored strategy of the ruling class, flourishes in a community such as the NY Lower East Side. The thrust of the present movement, where one nationality is pitted against another, must be diverted away from the current trend of in-fighting between elements of the oppressed classes, towards struggle against the government and the bourgeoisie. This is the strategy from which all our tactics and methods flow not only for immediate gains of oppressed communities but also as an integral part of our basic strategy to fight against division within the working class and all strata which have objective contradictions with the monopoly capitalists.

Proletarian struggle should be such that the petti-bourgeoisie class can be turned from a reserve of the bourgeoisie into a reserve and ally of the proletariat. The fight against the danger of fascism is a component part of the United Front Against Monopoly Capitalism. Also as a fight to rally and educate the oppressed in the spirit of socialism, this defensive struggle can become (under appropriate revolutionary situations) an offensive fight for socialism.

LEFT AND RIGHT DEVIATIONS ON COMMUNITY CONTROL

As in all questions viewed by Marxist-Leninists, there are two major deviations made by communists on the community control question, right and left. Both are dangerous, both should be combatted to avoid tailing after the bourgeoisie. The "Left" error consists of opposing community control on the grounds that it is anti-labor, thus liquidating and boycotting community control issues over schools, hospitals and other institutions, e.g. National Caucus of Labor Committees. The Left error negates the progressive aspects of the struggle, and raises the reactionary aspects into the only aspect. This is non-dialectical materialist.

Instead, we must recognize the dynamic militant aspect of the struggle of oppressed nationalities in the Harlems, El Barrios, Japantowns, Chinatowns and multinational communities such as the Lower East Side. By saying that these are not "workers struggles" and ignoring the struggle in the community, the Left error does not provide the correct analysis, does no propaganda work, nor does it raise socialism as an alternative in the struggle. In effect, they allow the Bourgeois plan to have full play and help lead the mass movement into a dead end.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT DEVIATION? The substituting of the community struggle for the struggle for state power, the beginnings of the socialist revolution. It is in essence an Utopian outlook, that believes that through "control" of community institutions we can establish "red bases" to lead attacks on the monopoly capitalists, replacing the system part by part. In opposing Cultural National Autonomy, the ASG National Question Paper says:

Some people subscribe to the view that the American economy and politics are an exclusive function of racism; and that Chinese and other oppressed national minorities must concentrate on building their own communities until such time as the racists have sufficiently overcome their racist attitudes. They say only then can we possibly work with them on an equal basis. We feel it is just the other way around.....

We understand that this proposal is one which has its roots in national oppression, but its objective class basis is petty-bourgeois, for it replaces the socialist principle of class struggle by the bourgeois principle of "nationality", thus abandoning the proletarian class position and adopting the path of nationalism.....

Rather than trying to solve the contradictions of capitalism through revolution, it tries to solve the contradictions of capitalism within the capitalist framework, through the strategy of "culturally controlled institutions." Rather than face up to the question of the seizure of state power through proletarian revolution, the only way possible, cultural national autonomy tends to avoid it, and diverts too much of the people's energy into "cultural-self-determination".

Right deviationists, in effect, negate the vanguard role of the proletariat at the workplace, especially industrial concentrations. In the extreme, this narrow outlook attempts to battle against international monopoly capitalism, which has intricate networks and a full State apparatus at its disposal, armed only with a local community struggle (sometimes within only one institution.) It reflects petty-bourgeois aspirations of leadership for "instant" revolution, negating the need to patiently build up a nationwide communist movement through grasping theory, learning from practice in varied locations and institutions, and building a multinational Party which can truly bring an end to the Capitalist system.

IT IS NECESSARY TO DISCUSS briefly, but separately, two examples of Right Deviation which are clearly revisionist and consolidated appendages of the Bourgeoisie today-- the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Social chauvinism is the key to the CPUSA position because they consistently liquidate the revolutionary potential of the struggle against national oppression. As a result, they have either tended to not participate at all, labelling these struggles as bourgeois nationalist; or to support community control uncritically, as in the District One example. This opportunism and revisionism is the Right form.

The SWP, discussed earlier, is much more active in community struggles such as District One, jumping opportunistically into spontaneous mass movements, placing their own organization above the movement. Opportunistically remolding their line to the fashionable rhetoric of the day, their concern not with providing correct leadership and the science of Marxism-Leninism to the mass movement -- this is pure tailism and opportunism.

As a result, they have objectively supported narrow nationalism and cultural autonomy, e.g. in District One tailing after the most backward narrow nationalist "leaders." As demonstrated in the anti-war movement (Student Mobilization Committee), they are "left in form, but right in essence." Trotskyists manifest their disdain for the masses through reliance on electoral politics, demonstrations, and legal battles. This is derived from their class base -- petty-bourgeois -- and their rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in preference for mass party formation. In District One, SWP's historical role has played into the hands of the Bourgeoisie; although the consciousness of the mass leadership was relatively high, SWP helped to promote ethnic divisions and ignored the mass educational aspects of the struggle.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNISTS IN THE MASS STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNITY CONTROL

" Without Revolutionary Theory,
There is no Revolutionary Movement. "

Lenin, What Is To Be Done ?

As Marxist-Leninists, our fundamental premise must be that the goals of community control can ONLY be reached with a socialist revolution. Therefore, community control and all other spontaneous movements must be linked with the working class struggle at the point of production to overthrow monopoly capitalism.

The major aspect of our "movement work" in the past period has been PRACTICE. However, through analysis of major areas of practice, we see the principal weakness of our work as the lack of revolutionary THEORY --unclear line, inadequate summing up of experience, and therefore, no linking up of theory and practice. The principal task at this time is to firmly grasp revolutionary theory, the science of the proletariat, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought.

Only then can we fully learn from the mass struggle, and in turn, provide correct leadership which will raise the consciousness of advanced elements, and thereby, transform mass struggles diverted by attempted bourgeois tactics into revolutionary struggle. The struggle against Right and Left Deviations and against Social Chauvinism must be relentless. Only by uniting all those who can be united against the monopoly capitalists under the leadership of the proletariat, can the struggle for community control as well as all mass struggles lead to the death of capitalism and the birth of socialism in this country.