

Man vs. His Creations: The Great Eastern Power Failure

Bulletin

OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

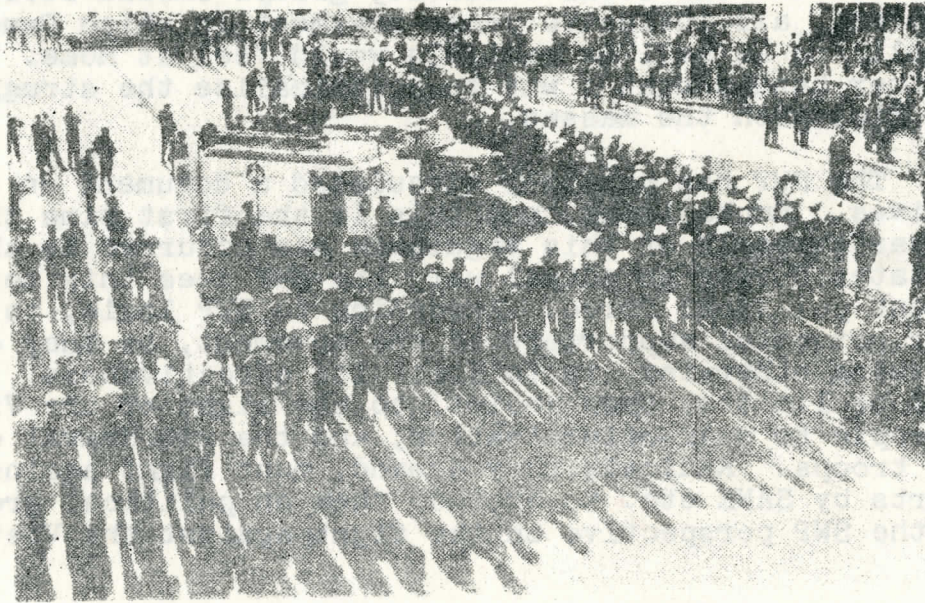
Vol. 2, No. 20

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- 1. The SWP & the split in the NYC Committee**
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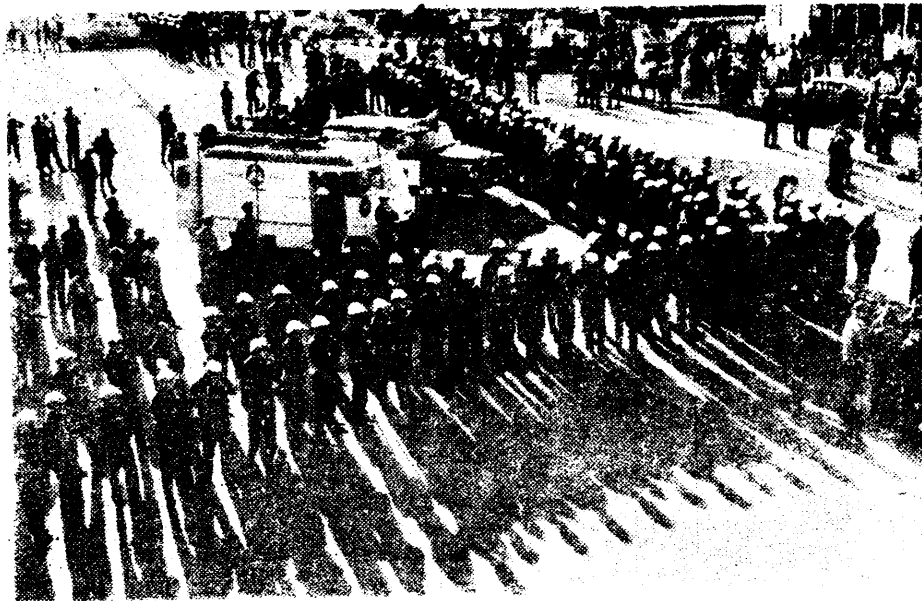
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BEHIND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NEW YORK COMMITTEE
TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The Political Struggle Between the SWP and SDS Raises
Questions of the Greatest Concern to the Peace Movement

On November 1st the New York Committee to End the War in Vietnam was formally dissolved. This action was the end result of a factional struggle between the leaders of SDS in New York and the SWP, a struggle which had been raging for some months. The task of building an effective and united mass anti-war movement in New York City and elsewhere requires a clear understanding of the causes of this struggle. It is these political issues, rather than the organizational measures taken by both sides, which must be our major concern.

The motion to dissolve the Committee was made at a meeting of its steering committee by an SDS member in his capacity as representative of a local community group. Of all those present, only SWPers, YSAers and one additional person voted against the motion.

The New York Committee was an extension of an SDS summer project to organize community groups against the war. However with the intervention of the SWP it had become a battleground for conflicting views on how to build the anti-war movement.

The SWP tried to enforce its right-wing line that the Committee and the local community groups should strive to build a broad, all-inclusive peace movement in which Democrats and Republicans as well as radicals would feel at home. SDS on the other hand sought a way to politicalize the struggle and make ties with the masses.

The SWP has publicly circulated a document on its perspectives. Emphasizing that this is the first time that an anti-war struggle of this magnitude has occurred in the United States during an actual war, the SWP sees this movement as a potent political force. According to SWP logic, to exclude any potential supporters of the movement, be they ever-so-right-wing otherwise, is to limit its effectiveness. Slogans must be limited, they insist, to the right of the Vietnamese people to self-determination; and the withdrawal of American troops. Radicals, they demand, must fight against any efforts by SANE etc. to exclude them on political grounds. This is the SWP perspective on the fight against the Vietnamese war.

SDS on the other hand has sought to build an independent anti-war movement which would establish ties with the civil-rights and other movements of social protest. While SDS itself is a multi-tendency organization there is a left wing within it which understands the need to make the struggle against war a conscious political struggle. So far, SDS has not made

a direct confrontation with SANE and other right-wing peace groups; however the logic of the situation is to polarize the peace movement into a right wing and a left wing.

The Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, an ad hoc formation in which all peace groups including SANE are represented, has been functioning in New York City since the October 16 parade. SDS proposes to support the continued existence of this committee as a coordinating committee for anti-war work in the city.

SDS plans to reconstitute an organizing committee this time explicitly on the basis of its own programmatic objectives. The expectation is that the SWP will exclude itself since participation in the committee will be predicated on agreement with SDS' program. Thus, it would seem that the SWP in seeking to capture the peace movement has ended up in capturing itself.

SWP's Factionalism

The SWP operated in the Committee and in local committees as a disciplined faction, with the aim of taking over local committees and thereby defeating the SDS leadership in the New York Committee. To this purpose they sent their members into the weakest committees. In this way at least two of the local committees became appendages of the SWP, giving the SWP two sure delegates to New York Committee meetings. In other cases, SWP and YSA members would also appear at Committee meetings claiming to represent local community groups although they had never been elected as delegates. A number of free-floating SWP and YSA members would also appear at Committee meetings; and because of the informality of the organization their right to pack the meetings and vote was never challenged.

Instead of engaging in serious work in the movement, instead of seeking to establish ties with SDS people and independents by working with them, instead of engaging in a discussion which would clarify the areas of difference and agreement, the SWP sought to impose its dictate by organizational maneuvers of the crudest kind.

The Old CP Role

The SWP is following the same road that brought the Communist Party to disaster: the road of Popular Front politics--abdication of class struggle politics in order to make an opportunist alliance with liberals. While the SWP runs independent election campaigns these campaigns orient more and more to middle class liberal voters.

Significantly the SWP line on Vietnam does not differ in any respect from the CP line on the Korean war. The period differs, and with it the possibilities for mass action--but the line is the same. Limit the anti-war struggle to "peace" issues.

The recent SWP factional maneuvering is also unpleasantly reminiscent of old CP tactics. Destroy all potential left-wing "competitors" while orienting to liberal peace forces. It would seem that the SWP will have to repeat the CP's experiences in SANE (within which the CP was viciously witch-hunted in 1961) in order to learn the bitter lesson of Popular Front politics.

The SWP has lost its connection with the class struggle today and its perspective of class struggle in the future. This became glaringly apparent after the Cuban revolution. Lacking Marxist theory, the party was reduced to printing Castro's speeches with favorable commentary. Despite the rich theoretical experience of Marxism since the days of the Paris Commune, the party could find nothing to say about the need for class struggle politics in Cuba--the need for workers control.

Lacking Marxist theory, the party answered Malcom X's call for theoretical discussion by printing Malcolm's speeches. At an SWP forum, Malcolm stated that the Negro movement had "to go into a closet" and develop a program for struggle. The SWP had nothing to say beyond calling for an all Black political party--forerunner to the all-inclusive peace movement.

But the SWP has taken another step in its retreat from Marxism. While it tail-ended Fidel and Malcolm, the party is now attacking SDS. No longer does the SWP tail-end political forces moving in a left direction. It has now begun to attack them from the right.

No group develops politically in a vacuum. The weight of American capitalism is too oppressive. Without Marxist politics, in the long run the only alternative is capitalist politics. The examples of His Majesty's loyal opposition are Bayard Rustin and the Communist Party. The SWP has taken another long step down this road.

The Future of the Anti-War Movement

The war in Vietnam is only one expression of American capitalist policy. Emerging out of the struggle for survival of capitalism, the need for the economy to grow or go into crisis, it is the other side of racist, anti-union politics here at home. The war in Vietnam is an essential part of capitalist policy. Neither Johnson nor Kennedy had he lived, nor Goldwater had he won, can be pressured into stopping this war by a show of popular discontent.

This is not the period of the New Deal when the Communist Party was able to sell out the working class in return for a place in the Roosevelt coalition. This is a period when the class struggle on all sides will become increasingly sharp. We can expect more "interventions" by the US government in revolutions abroad and a tougher line here at home. We can expect increasingly militant uprisings like those in the Watts ghetto last summer.

The only way to defeat the war policy of American capitalism is to defeat American capitalism. It is for this reason that SDS members are following the correct policy when they try to build political opposition to the war and to link the anti-war struggle to the community, to mass struggle.

The right-wing in the peace movement must be fought. The call for a pure and simple, single issue, all-inclusive peace movement, is the call for bourgeois respectability. It is to domesticate the anti-war movement and make it ineffective.

We must build an anti-war movement that will effectively fight war by fighting capitalism.

* * * *

EXPERIMENTS IN POLITICAL ACTION

An Analysis of NYC Mayoralty Election Returns Indicates Important Lessons For Future Political Struggles

The victory of John Lindsay in the New York City mayoralty election was based upon certain factors which should not go unnoticed by Marxists. The so-called volatility of the Negro voters as well as the political polarization reflected in part by the vote for Conservative candidate William Buckley are two of the more important points.

Lindsay's victory was of a totally unprincipled nature, something which should of course come as no surprise to socialists. Lindsay won with the votes of the liberal middle class, the professionals, the intellectuals, and relatively large sections of the Negroes and the traditionally Democratic working class. The Kennedy-type image as well as the liberal anti-Goldwater image he tried to project was of great use to him in this regard. At the same time he undoubtedly kept most of the votes of the traditionally Republican sections of the upper middle class and the bourgeoisie itself.

It seems clear that Buckley took as much if not more votes from Beame than from Lindsay, finding his main support among the insecure lower middle classes and professionals, and in the Catholic population, including many Catholic workers. Though the liberal press is reassuring itself that Buckley did only a bit better than conservative Democrat Gerosa, who ran as an independent four years ago, there is no doubt that the sizable vote for Buckley does represent something new. It gives the Goldwaterites in New York State new support and generally strengthens the ultra right in preparation for future battles. The fact that Lindsay managed to get elected in spite of this does not negate its importance in the slightest.

The significance of the vote among Negroes is that it is a further sign of dissatisfaction with the status quo and in a very limited way a sign of increased political awareness,

if not yet independent political consciousness. These very tentative signs of voting independence on the part of the Negro in Cleveland as well as New York and elsewhere will not mean anything until it becomes genuine independence, not just from the Democrats, but from all capitalist politics.

That is precisely why the socialist and independent working class campaigns are important. The votes of these candidates, small though they may have been, are of greater significance in the long run than whether Lindsay or Beame won this particular election.

This is so because these candidacies represent a part of the process of political polarization which is at present organized more strongly on the right. This polarization stems from the fundamental crisis of American capitalism, reflected in its war in Vietnam as well as in its war in Watts. As this crisis develops so will the polarization and so will the opportunities for independent working class political action on a genuinely mass scale.

The Independent Candidates

The independent candidacies of Jose Fuentes (running for State Assembly in the 67th District on the Independent Political Movement ticket) and William Epton (running for State Senator in the 31st District, on the Progressive Labor Party ticket) were harbingers of this mass movement. Fuentes got over 1000 votes, about 5% of the turnout in his district. Epton also got over 1000 votes, representing about 2% in his district, but there were acknowledged "irregularities" in his contest. The Board of Elections admitted that it was impossible to cast a vote for Epton in many election districts (poll watchers reported that his name was either off the machines or the lever was missing next to his name, in over half of the election districts) but arrogantly refused to do anything about it on the grounds that it didn't affect the election outcome! The election districts involved encompass most of South and Central Harlem. It is no exaggeration to estimate Epton's real support, if a free election were held in Harlem, as at least the 5% which Fuentes got, and perhaps much more. In addition it is important to remember that many of Fuentes' supporters didn't vote because of the language barrier, even though this was the first year that literacy in the Spanish language was finally accepted.

All in all, taking into account the apathy and cynicism which still does exist among these most exploited sections of the population, the vote for Fuentes and Epton was very impressive indeed. It was a sign of the beginnings of a connection between the movement of the masses and the radicals. Notwithstanding their weaknesses, these two independent candidates took the very important step of turning out and waging an aggressive independent campaign among the people themselves.

Poor Results for SWP

The Socialist Workers Party contested the major offices of Mayor, City Council President, and Comptroller, as well as the offices of Manhattan Borough President and Councilman at Large. The candidate for Borough President, Paul Boutelle, got about 2700 votes, and the candidate for councilman at large about 2400. The SWP vote for the major offices has not been made available yet. In any case the vote in Manhattan appears to be about $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of the total. The citywide total will probably be under 5,000. It will thus be a bit lower than the lowest the SWP has polled in the last 10 years, which was 7000 in 1961 (excluding the especially low vote in the Johnson landslide of 1964).

In no way did the SWP campaign have the kind of impact in relation to the Negro and Puerto Rican communities that the Fuentes and Epton campaigns had. Whereas these campaigns concentrated on the Lower East Side and Harlem, the SWP vote was primarily a middle class vote, a vote of the steadily decreasing group of older radicals who sometimes cast their votes for independent candidates but do little or nothing else. This vote is of little or no significance -- that unpleasant fact must be faced by the SWP.

It is true that the Fuentes campaign played down the issue of the Vietnam war, and the Epton campaign sometimes avoided strong and clear attacks on all the capitalist candidates and a forthright endorsement of the socialist candidate for Mayor. The advice of the Progressive Labor Party was to ignore the mayoralty race. The SWP, it is true, took on the most unpopular and difficult job in opposing Lindsay.

Of course Lindsay cut into the SWP vote potential by attracting many who would have been somewhat more inclined to cast a protest vote in the absence of a candidate with a liberal image. But this simply reinforces the point that the SWP should not have been concentrating on these "liberal" votes to begin with. The emphasis should have been on taking the program of opposition to the Vietnam war into the ghettos and the working class movement and combining it with a program based on the class struggle of the workers themselves. There should have been and there was some attempt made by the SWP to campaign inside the anti-war movement. In this case, however, there is no doubt that the recent tactics and rotten political line of the SWP in the antiwar movement did not win very many votes for the SWP among the newly-radicalized activists in the movement.

A number of SWP members are questioning the value of spending such a tremendous effort, in time and money, to run election campaigns geared toward the liberal or "progressive" voter. After all, as it must now be clear to everyone, an endorsement by writer Warren Miller does not mean that the SWP has "arrived." SWP members must demand that their party stop ignoring the mass movement, and start putting forward a class approach to the elections.

A POLITICAL POLICY TOWARDS THE DRAFT

A massive confrontation between the government of the United States and a large segment of the American people is rapidly approaching. The issue is Vietnam (certainly the most unpopular war in American history) and the draft. At present it is conservatively estimated that 160,000 American troops are on Vietnamese soil and it is further estimated that it will require between 500,000 and a million young Americans to "pacify" that unfortunate country. The most educated military guesses predict a war lasting from five to ten years. Surely a war of such proportions is no mere "error in judgment" on the part of the powers that be but a cornerstone of policy, not only abroad but at home as well. The peace movement is therefore confronting the state on an issue which the state considers central to its own survival. The fury with which Johnson and Co. have turned upon anti-war demonstrators, draft card burners, etc., is clear proof of this.

Until recently opposition to the war has been largely of a pacifist nature, condemning American intervention as immoral and drawing few if any political conclusions. But with the dispatching of draftees to Vietnam (previously the Marines, Air Force and Navy, volunteer outfits, had been used) a new force has arisen -- the anti-draft movement. The ends of this movement are irrevocably political although as yet this is understood only in the vaguest and most general sense.

The anti-draft movement is questioning the basic right of the state apparatus, i.e. the right to impress men into its armed service -- in the final analysis, the right to enforce its will. Deprived of the ability to make Vietnam-type interventions capitalism simply cannot survive. The Administration can hardly let this go by the boards. The problem facing the anti-draft movement is that of designing tactics based on a recognition of the irreconcilable nature of the conflict it faces.

The past experiences of peace movements (Oxford Pledge, "We Won't Go", etc.) plainly demonstrate that the treatment of political problems as simple moral issues resolves neither political nor moral questions. The burning of draft cards, draft refusal and other acts of conscience serve only to remove militants from the scene of struggle and place them in jail. People who might have followed them into political activity may find it incumbent on themselves to spend huge portions of their time and energies in exhausting legal defense efforts. This leaves little time for the pursuit of the aims of the movement. (The IWW's kamikaze tactics eventually turned them into an appendage of their own defense organization.)

Examination of any one of the major social problems of the time -- poverty, unemployment, racism, the war -- leads to the realization that in attempting to reach large segments of people these problems cannot be dealt with one by one. Effective opposition to the draft entails the mobilization of the Negro

masses, young workers, unemployed and, ultimately, the trade union movement. These forces cannot be attracted by a "pure and simple" peace program. The relationship between these forces and issues must be clearly shown in a comprehensive peace program that will confront the power structure with a set of political alternatives.

The program being forged by SDS and other student and Negro militants is clearly moving in the direction of such a synthesis. In spite of the efforts of Dr. Spock and his SWP brokers to attract Republicans, the peace movement is developing political content. If this development is to mature it is imperative that individual confrontations not take the place of social confrontation.

While remaining inflexibly opposed to the draft and the political system that rests upon it, activists in the peace movement should also take their opinions into the Army with them as they are entitled to do, and continue their work there insofar as possible. The notion that once a young man walks out of the induction center he has been miraculously transformed into something unreachable and unchangeably hostile must be dealt with in no uncertain terms. The soldier is the student - the Negro - the worker. The struggle to end conscription is his struggle. The basis for a new united front against the war, poverty and racism is now within our grasp. But only if we oppose and defeat those who seek to ignore or suppress the inevitable political and social concomitants of the peace movement, can this potential be realized.

PROGRESSIVE LABOR ON CRITICISM AND DEFENSE

Does a Critical Attitude Towards the NLF and the Soviet Bloc Aid or Sabotage the Struggle Against American Imperialism?

Progressive Labor Party is very upset. At the Fifth Avenue March in New York City the Spartacist group issued a leaflet which, while defending the Vietnamese Revolution against imperialism, was critical of the policies of Ho Chi Minh, the National Liberation Front and China. PLP has launched an attack on Spartacist in a statement published in the November 2nd issue of Challenge entitled "LEJ Attacks--With a Right and 'Left'".

Clearly, PLP is stating that those like Spartacist (and we, too, are happy to be counted in this camp) who couple their support to the National Liberation Front with a dose of criticism of its leadership are no more than the "left" agents of Johnson!

This attack is obviously a part of a concerted campaign on the part of PLP and its international allies. The November issue of Progressive Worker, a Canadian publication of a group very close in policy to the PLP, carries a similar attack on the

League for Socialist Action (LSA). The LSA is a group closely aligned with the SWP in the United States. Its line for many years has been one of abject and uncritical support to Fidel Castro and the whole leadership of the Cuban Revolution. However, recently the LSA has been forced to adopt a critical attitude towards at least a section of the Cuban Government which they accuse, according to Progressive Worker, of being "stalinized". Progressive Worker states: "The LSA is guilty of unwarranted interference in Cuba's internal affairs when they undertake to criticise the Cuban people and lecture them on how they should develop their revolution."

There is something terribly paradoxical about these attacks from PLP and its Canadian friends. Both groups were born in reaction to the Sino-Soviet dispute. Both groups were expelled from the Communist Parties of their respective countries for daring to support China in her critique of the USSR. Clearly both groups have therefore been guilty of "unwarranted interference" in the USSR's "internal affairs". If we are to follow PLP's logic one step further we can only conclude that since they criticize the USSR they can not really be for its defense. Thus they, too, must be the "left" allies of Johnson.

Monthly Review's Position

Truly the allies of the Johnson gang are omnipresent. No sooner did we finish reading the Nov. 2nd Challenge and the November Progressive Worker than we started to read the November issue of Monthly Review. We were shaken to find there as the lead editorial of the publication -- a critique of Lin Piao, Vice Premier of China!

Of course the MR editors felt quite embarrassed in their new critical role, but criticize they did. Essentially they stated that China's call for a bloc of the workers and peasants with a section of the national bourgeoisie is not applicable to Latin America, at any rate. There the revolution must be led by the workers and the peasants standing alone and against the national bourgeoisie. MR sums up its position as follows:

What this means is not that carrying through the national democratic revolution as a preliminary to the construction of socialism has lost any of its importance, but rather that in Latin American conditions the national democratic and socialist revolutions are apparently going to be carried out under a single unified program and in this sense are being telescoped into one.

Anyone even superficially acquainted with the past history of the Communist movement is well aware that this view did not originate with Huberman or Sweezy. This was the view Trotsky championed against Stalin. He called it the theory of the permanent revolution.

We suspect soon Sweezy and Huberman will be taken to task for the "arrogance" of differing with the leadership of a successful revolution. What revolution have you led, Sweezy and Huberman? Where do you get the nerve to "meddle" in affairs outside the U.S.?

Arrested Development

The position PLP is presently taking is a sign of their arrested development and a warning to all who seek to become true revolutionaries and internationalists. Having come to a correct understanding of the revisionist character of the world policy of the USSR, they have correctly found it necessary to fight this international line of the Soviet bureaucracy. However, they have broken from decades of uncritical panegyrics of the USSR leadership only to begin the same process all over again in reaction to China. Recognizing that the defense of the Russian workers state demands of revolutionaries in other countries an open and critical attitude towards the present policies of the Russian leadership--policies which hinder the defense of this state--they at the same time slander all critics of China as agents of imperialism.

Thus PL continues to identify defense with non-criticism. Logically we are forced to conclude that their present stance towards the USSR means that they are no longer for its defense. The only other alternative is to conclude that one can only criticize what PL criticizes and still be considered by PL to be a legitimate part of the left. We must inform PL that this old game is done and finished. The new generation of revolutionaries intends to look at all programs and all leaderships critically. No one will dictate to them who and what can and cannot be criticized.

Two Cases in Point: Algeria and Indonesia

In past issues of the Bulletin we have shown over and over again how the international line of the Chinese leadership has actually undermined the defense of the Chinese workers state. Let us sum up here briefly two cases in point.

Algeria: The Chinese, like the USSR, has sought to bolster the bonapartist capitalist leadership of the Algerian Revolution despite the close ties of this leadership with French imperialism. In recent months the Ben Bella leadership moved closer and closer to the USSR internationally and thus undermined China's interests on the African continent.

Rather than seeking to support an independent working class leadership in Algeria, China actually came out in support of the right wing military opposition to Ben Bella led by Boumedienne. It distinguished itself by being the first country to support the Boumedienne seizure of power. Lisa Armand laboriously defended this line in Challenge explaining to PL's periphery that Boumedienne was truly the man of the left. We ask PLP to explain to us how Chinese policy in Algeria did anything other

than undermine China's international position, thus weakening its defense.

Indonesia: China has uncritically supported the PKI in Indonesia in its policy of a bloc with Sukarno as a substitute for an independent working class struggle for power in Indonesia. This policy has led to a paralysis of the PKI during the present crisis in which the military has turned on the PKI while Sukarno fronts for the military. The latest issue of Progressive Labor boasts an article by this same Sukarno and a recent issue of Challenge printed another article by Lisa Armand lauding the PKI as the very model of a modern Marxist Leninist party. We ask PLP to explain how Chinese policy in Indonesia did anything other than undermine China's international position, thus weakening its defense.

The Permanent Revolution

These two questions are not at all unrelated to the criticism MR gingerly makes of Lin Piao's statement on world revolution. Is not the line of support to Boumediene and to Sukarno the concrete expression of the false policy of a bloc with the national bourgeoisie? Is not the theory of permanent revolution, which Sweezy and Huberman apply to Latin America, just as relevant to other underdeveloped countries?

If this be the case, and we maintain it is, then the very future of socialist revolution depends on elaborating a revolutionary program which clearly breaks from the Chinese on these critical questions. It will be the growth of this revolutionary movement, not the praise of Milton Rosen and Co., which will really contribute to the defense of China. We maintain that criticism not only does not detract from defense, but is absolutely essential to defense. We challenge Challenge to seriously answer our position.

MAN VERSUS HIS OWN CREATION

THE GREAT EASTERN POWER FAILURE

The Great Eastern Power Failure of November 9th tore a piece out of US capitalism's slick "Madison Avenue" image, giving the world a glimpse of some pretty unwholesome flesh underneath. Heads of giant power utilities and massive government agencies stood before press and TV fumbling for meaningless phrases which explained nothing.

What had knocked out one after another of the great eastern U.S. and Canadian power systems--in the words of Governor Rockefeller--like a pack of dominoes? It hadn't taken a hydrogen bomb to do it; no ship had broken an underwater cable; no major trunk-line had gone down; there had been no great overload in any part of the system; not even a small transformer had blown up. The gigantic power network, covering 80,000 US and

Canadian square miles of the most industrialized part of the world, had failed of its own accord; this triumph of US engineering and management "know-how" had simply quit...and all the King's horses and all the King's men had had one Hell of a thirteen-and-a-half hours trying to put it together again.

Apart from scattered instances of physical panic--as in some subway escapes--many New Yorkers were stricken by a particular kind of nameless fear. As if to confirm the generality of this fear, a TV newscaster referred to a relevant Mutt & Jeff cartoon from the archives of two-and-a-half decades ago. We paraphrase it here:

Mutt challenges Jeff: "I'll bet you don't know how the electric light works."

Jeff, smiling, walks to the wall switch: "Sure, you just flip this switch and it goes on."

For millions of New Yorkers the magic had ceased to work that night.

Electricity and Alienation

The "magic" does not involve any special "mystery of electricity." The water shortage has produced similar feelings of anxiety. In modern capitalist society ordinary men and women's relationship to all the necessities of life involves a special feeling of mystery and miraculousness which is scientifically known as fetishism or alienation.

One plunks one's cash on the counter and picks up one's groceries. The light switch works as long as one's checks reach Consolidated Edison with a certain regularity. The relationship of the individual to the material necessities of his own existence depends upon money, law, customs, ideas of rights and privileges--but, above all, money. Thus, the assumption of one's power of the purse over the material necessities and comforts of life reduces the most hard-bitten practical businessman to a kind of superstition which is as fantastic in its own right as the cabalisms of a stone-age culture cannibal from the hills of New Guinea.

What seized the New Yorker the night of the blackout was a feeling of loss of that magical power over one of the prime necessities of life. He felt an anxiety deeper than that suffered the night mommy told him there really wasn't any Santa Claus, or the day he realized there really wasn't a God.

This superstitious fear seizing New Yorkers that night can be understood if we examine two of the most fundamental facts of modern capitalist society.

First, the independent farmer of a hundred-fifty years ago in the US produced most of the necessities of his own and his family's life by his own labor. What he had was largely a direct consequence of his natural productive activity. The connection between himself and his means of existence was comprehensible to him in terms of his direct experience. With the growth of capitalist industry and the absorption of the majority of our population into the wage-system that connection of a man's labor to his material

needs was lost. Instead, the wage-system deprived the individual of control over his own labor. Secondly, his relationship to the material necessities of life was transformed from a real relationship (the product of his own labor) into a fantastic connection, that of money.

Second, man cannot overcome this alienation of his labor from himself by returning to a more primitive condition as an independent farmer. The enormous population of the earth can be fed and nourished only by extending the advanced industrial system developed during the past two centuries. No one man can possibly produce each and all of the kinds of commodities and services on which his present existence depends. He depends upon the productive forces of society as a whole.

In order to exist modern man must have some system for commanding the productive forces of society as a whole, he must have some system of compelling other persons to perform the productive acts on which he depends, some system to compel the grocer to part with groceries, etc. He has lost the possibility of independent, individual control of his own means of existence, of his own life. His physical existence depends entirely upon his special powers, called rights and privileges, over society as a whole. Money thus becomes the keystone of his right to existence; the day on which money fails to command the means for his existence, he feels--with some justice--that he has lost the power to exist.

This superstitiousness of modern man, this fetishism of "sophisticated" New Yorkers is maintained by the capitalist system. That is, taking the working class--and others who exist by employment--as a whole, they represent collectively all the human productive forces of society, a force sufficient to meet all of their collective material needs. But for each one, between the two sides of his or her humanity--the one side his ability to produce, the other his need for the material means of existence--there stands an alien being, the capitalist. The capitalist, as employer, controls the individual's power to produce; the capitalist as owner of produced commodities, controls the individual's means for physical existence. It is this intruder, the capitalist, who makes individual life under our society fantastic, who makes human existence a subject of such profound fetishism, such abysmal superstition.

The "mystery of electricity" is not a matter of quantum mechanics, but a matter in which physicists are subject to as much mystification as laymen. The mystery of electricity is the fact that control of its production lies in alien hands. That electricity is not something we regulate; electricity is something "they"--the aliens--control. It is not the technology of society that evokes superstition in us, but the control of the means of production and distribution by an alien species--the capitalists--which makes our relationship to money a matter of religious delusions.

On November 9th one of the fundamental canons of the capitalist religion was violated. God failed: Consolidated Edison failed. Paying the electric bill was not enough. When such Gods fail, man is moved to assail the heavens with Prometheus. Consoli-

dated Edison's fiasco brought the socialist revolution that much closer--the day on which we begin to free New Yorkers from the abyss of degrading superstition, the day on which they cease to practice primitive magic and undertake to consciously become real men and women, rulers of their own lives.

Whether it takes the form of standing orders to men at switches or built-in instructions of automatic control equipment (replacing the man at the switch) the way in which the system is operated is a matter of corporate administrative policies--just as production planning and scheduling procedures are a matter of administrative decision in a manufacturing firm. What the Niagara Mohawk engineers' report tells us is that the fault for the blackout is not in the details of production--so-to-speak--but in the production scheduling system.

In sum, the fault for the blackout is not the quality of performance of any generating equipment, power line, transformer, etc., in itself but in the "lousy system" of production scheduling cooked-up by the "geniuses" in the engineering and top management posts at the home offices. What failed is not the car's motor, but the "nut behind the wheel"--the bosses. That failure is not only the fault of the driver (e.g. the top management of Consolidated Edison) but the regulatory agencies (Federal Power Commission, Public Service Commission, etc.) that gave such an accident-prone "electrical-highway" menace his licence to drive.

It is obvious to Consolidated Edison and other power companies, who will now have enthusiastic encouragement to expand and modernize--including inevitable rises in service charges. Who will make these decisions? The same management that produced the catastrophe of November 9th, with the approval of the same FPC, etc., that gave that same rotten management system their official approval before.

It would seem that the proper thing to do is to clean out the tops in the power companies and the government regulatory agencies. No doubt that would be a constructive step in itself. However, their removal would be a constructive step in itself and

like that of the Northeastern grid.

Concretely, this is the case. The standing orders given to power facility workers at the switches or built into the control equipment (replacing the worker-at-the-switch) are based on the criterion of profit. One example of such a decision from the recent blackout is the fact that standby power generation facilities of Consolidated Edison were not--according to Con Ed itself--in operating status at the time of the blackout. The decision to close a connection between two sections of the grid or break the connection is normally based on the relative cost of power (profit). The decision to supply automatic remote "fail-safe" connection-breaking substations or additional reserve generation capacity is, again, a decision made on the basis of profit.

If we are to have a stable electrical power grid not susceptible to the failures the recent experience warns us of, we must design that system and manage it in a way that is often directly opposite to the dictates of private power companies' profits. As long as the design and management of such a grid is in the hands of financiers the management of that system will lead to the same kind of built-in failures our fathers experienced in the 1929 crash or we experienced in the recent blackout.

We must, in short, approach the question of power generation in the same way we must approach the problems of conservation and planned usage of water. In the recent past the power required to provide our rising standard of living has doubled every generation; now, in the face of the qualitative increase in power requirements, available power must double every ten years. In order to meet that need we must "wheel" enormous volumes of electrical power over long distances via million-and multi-million-watt trunk lines. Grids must become larger--much larger--not more decentralized. If we are to meet our own and our children's needs we must take steps to secure the competent design and management of those vast grid systems.