

# SPARTACIST

NUMBER 13

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1969

10 CENTS

## *Toward Stalinism or Trotskyism?*

# NEW LEFT'S DEATH AGONY

The heavily publicized SDS split at its National Convention in Chicago was the culmination of a year of factional squabbling and in-fighting between the "National Collective" (NC) and the "Worker-Student Alliance" (WSA). The WSA is led by the Progressive Labor Party (PL), this country's semi-official—although by no means only—Maoist organization. The NC is based on SDS's National Officers and their supporters who included, as it turned out, the Communist Party and the Black Panthers. The NC tendency is actually a bloc of several distinct groups (the old New Left exemplified by Mark Rudd, Avakian's Bay Area Revolutionary Union, National Secretary Mike Klonsky) which crystallized in reflexive reaction to the aggressive assault on mainstream New Leftism mounted by the WSA.

In terms of size and influence, SDS was at its apex. Students newly radicalized by the Viet Nam war and repressions of the ghetto rebellions flocked to SDS in droves, attracted by its professed openness and its activism. In the main contemptuous of theory, SDSers scorned the "Old Left," which they viewed as dogmatic, anti-democratic and faction-ridden, and sought to replace the old disputes with only a few classless phrases: "participatory democracy," "community control," "organize the poor," "doing your own thing," etc. In 1965, PL dissolved its earlier youth group, the May 2nd Movement (which had attempted, unsuccessfully, to compete with SDS) to enter SDS.

### SDS Goes Stalinist

Faced with the pressing lack of program, perspective and theory, SDS began to harden up in a number of directions. The politics of PL, the main group visible in SDS with any kind of proletarian line, had tremendous appeal to the most serious SDSers groping for a class analysis. Partly in response, anti-PLism began to crystallize a strong sentiment to transform SDS into a democratic-centralist youth organization, a disciplined group representing evolving mainstream New Leftism. At the June 1968 SDS Convention held in East Lansing, PL came close to being thrown out of SDS as an "external cadre organization." The recent Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) proposal embodied this attempt to transform SDS into domestic Red Guards, a hard-line youth party.

At this year's June convention, the two currents met head-on. There was no doubt that a showdown was in the wings as the tension ran high, occasionally erupting into fist fights and lapsing into shouting matches with each side waving Mao's "Little Red Book" at the other. The stage was set for a repetition in a higher key of last year's PL-baiting, and it became apparent that this year the NC did not intend to stop short of expulsion. There was only one catch: the PL-WSA wing, by dint of their crude working-class line's appeal and after months of determined organizing, came to the Convention with what was probably a majority of the delegates. The NC was forced to speed up its timing in order to force the intended split *before* the final voting for the incoming leadership. In a heavy-handed maneuver, they brought in the Black Panther Party for an obviously pre-planned denunciation of "racism" and "Trotskyism," including threats of physical violence. Immediately following a harangue by the Panthers, leaflets were distributed—in a masterpiece of convenient timing—castigating PL for its "counter-revolutionary" and "racist" stands on Cuba, the NLF, the Black movement, etc. The splitting faction, representing a large *minority* of the organization, walked out of the Convention hall and SDS. They took with them SDS's funds, mailing lists, offices and newspaper.

The Klonsky-Avakian-Dohrn bloc is united chiefly in its hostility to PL, its uncritical "Third World" enthusiasm, its refusal to tolerate criticism of what used to be called "progressive forces" and its anti-working-class line. They see colonial revolutions as a precondition to any radicalization of the U.S. working class, whose role they see as at best passive allies for the Vietnamese or else as a labor aristocracy bought off by imperialist crumbs. Thus, they reduce themselves to cheerleaders for the "Third World" guerrillas and function domestically as white Black Nationalists.

### Spartacist Intervenes

The Spartacist League intervened at the Convention with several resolutions and position papers (reprinted in this issue of SPARTACIST). After the split of the NC bloc, our comrades remained in SDS (i.e., the WSA wing, to whom we stand closer than to the NC splitters who are both politically to their right and openly exclu-

(Continued Next Page)

**Special Issue on Split in SDS**

## ... AGONY

sionist), functioning as a left-wing opposition to PL. The ex-Trotskyist SWP-YSA was conspicuous by its non-intervention, not surprising since among youth groups the YSA stands qualitatively to the right of both the WSA and NC wings of SDS. As a footnote, the Independent Socialist Clubs have finally provided a demonstration of their "third camp" philosophy by running candidates in the Klonskyite group while proposing motions condemning the splitters to the WSA wing. For those who have been wondering where the "third camp" is located, the answer seems to be—a foot in both camps.

### Theoretical Bankruptcy

In a sense, PL has had its own Stalinism shoved down its throat. In December 1968, at the Ann Arbor National Council, PL blocked with the NC to racist-bait the Marcus group ("SDS Labor Committee") for their critical support to the UFT in the NYC teachers' strike, and supported their expulsion in direct violation of SDS's non-exclusionist Constitution. Now PL is at the mercy of the same degenerate, anti-consciousness weapons in the hands of the NC—exclusion and slander—for their critical attitude toward Black Nationalism and the "Third World" Stalinist leaders, a line which is too far left for the NC and its right-wing Stalinists. In a classic ironic twist PL, after years of denouncing Trotskyists for criticizing Stalinist-led movements and their states, is itself accused of Trotskyism for its present version of the classically Trotskyist position that denunciation of betrayals is vital rather than divisive in the fight against imperialism. Further, before its recent turn, PL spent years uncritically supporting Black Nationalism in all its guises, thus helping establish the precedent that the Panthers—who have now led the anti-PL purge—must be correct by definition.

While the Klonsky-Dohrn-Avakian wing comes out openly for smashing the working class for its racism, the WSA-PL opposes Black separatism and calls for working-class unity across color lines. This is again a crude version of an impulse toward Trotskyism: that is, the program of proletarian revolution rather than Maoist peasant-based "Bloc of Four Classes" national movements. But in typical Stalinist fashion, PL has rejected its former line of uncritical apologetics for Black Nationalism only to jump over the Leninist outlook into the camp of color-blind unity-mongering, denying the need to fight against the special oppression of Black workers.

### Maoists vs. Mao

Avakian and the Panthers were right when they accused PL of deviating from Maoist orthodoxy, since for Maoists, as for Stalin, "national liberation" and blocs with petty-bourgeois class forces must take priority over class struggle. PL's shift on the national question seems a genuine attempt to create a Leninist class-conscious politics of struggle. But PL must at the same time for reasons of power (keeping the Chinese franchise) lug Maoism around their necks like a millstone. Rejection of Stalin and Mao being out of the question, of course, PL cannot inquire into its historical roots or the basis of its present theories, which

### WHO'S WHAT NOW?

"The Progressive Labor Party has attacked every revolutionary nationalist struggle of the Black and Latin peoples in the U.S. as being racist and reactionary. . . . Progressive Labor Party has attacked Ho Chi Minh, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the revolutionary government of Cuba—all leaders of the peoples' struggles for freedom against U.S. imperialism. Progressive Labor Party, because of its positions and practices, is objectively racist, anti-communist, and reactionary. It has no place in SDS, an organization of revolutionary youth."

(from official statement of National Collective wing of SDS following June 1969 Convention, establishing new criteria for SDS membership)

"The Spartacists, in general, want a revolution in Cuba, China (People's Republic), Algeria and the USSR. This position and others has been taken by the Spartacists and other trotskyites. Coincidentally, this is the same position taken by the U.S. State Department. . . . In effect, the trotskyites do the work of the enemy."

(from PL's William McAdoo's letter to the Chicago Epton Defense Committee excluding Spartacists from Epton defense work, 3 March 1965)

would reveal a great deal about its heroes. And without any methodology, PL can only readjust its mistakes by flip-flopping impressionistically every time the wind changes, often to a symmetrical error from the opposite direction.

The Leninist-Trotskyist conception of the role of the vanguard in broader struggles includes recognition of the special oppression of racial, ethnic, national, social minorities and seeks to fight for the special needs of all the oppressed while recognizing the primacy of class issues and the necessity

for proletarian hegemony. Lenin the need for mass organization—transitional organizations—Black people, women, youth—gle for their special needs across national, ethnic and sex sions in order to focus all the on a fight against the real so profiteers of their exploitati recent discovery of the illusor of Black Nationalism is insuffic especially coming from left-wi the belly of the most powerf rialist nation on earth, decis In this country, in which rac sions in the working masses h successfully exploited in the of the rulers for hundreds c any pretention to a perspective unity without an understar how to overcome divisions w across class lines is theoretical rupt.

### Xerox Copy SDSes

The physical act of bringing split exposes the NC as vicio tarian. Crystallized into a within SDS, they sought to t itself into their model of a you with their politics, rather than izing a competitor to PL outs while continuing to function SDS as a tendency. They desire to remake SDS in their own wishing to both retain their national officers and avoid combat with other tendencies: open organization, a fear all share. In splitting SDS, they stroyed the one organization i the programs and analyses of groups could compete for a while still remaining democcr clusive and open at the bot newly radicalized youth. We al like to see an organization of tionary youth organized along rect program—i.e., a Young Sp But to seek to play power pe the hope of turning SDS its such a group would be vicio structive of radicalizing the neers of young people.

The need for a broad-base exclusionary democratic orga of radical youth remains. But the Klonskyites nor the WSA capable of making their rival zations such a group. The Klc immediately adopted an exclu clause barring from members anyone who opposes PL's exclu anyone who does not uncond support "the struggles of the B Latin colonies within the U.S. tional liberation" and the NLI Viet Nam, China, North Ko bania, Cuba. PL's own past hi organizational abuses militates ly against the WSA's affirme

of non-exclusion. PL itself excluded Spartacist supporters from their Harlem Defense Council and committees to defend Bill Epton on the political grounds that Trotskyism was "counter-revolutionary," a policy which they still maintain, and have occasionally used violence against other radicals. For tactical reasons, PL needs to be non-exclusionist in SDS now in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of its accusations against the NC splitters, but PL's own handling of its previous youth group—the May 2nd Movement—shows that PL will not be able to avoid the temptation to turn SDS into a Xerox copy of PL politically by getting rid of dissident individuals and throwing out oppositional tendencies.

### The Check Bounces

The losers in the struggle are the NC bloc, too factionalized and incomplete in their political outlook to maintain any long-term organizational continuity. Their maneuvers at the SDS Convention have tied them to Stalinist manipulation tactics, which they will undoubtedly spend their political future perfecting. The NC is a sorry lot. It took only an indecent three days for one of their uncritical Stalinist blank checks to bounce. At the split, PL was castigated as counter-revolutionary because they criticize Castro's Cuba, the National Collective's Caribbean Vatican. Yet three days later the *New York Times* reported that Black Panthers residing in Cuba have been jailed for organizing Black Cubans. One wonders what the NC can possibly say in a situation like this, where *any* statement they could make (aside from cynical denial of the whole episode) should by rights exclude them from their own organization by their own criteria!

The servile enthusing of the NC for Stalinist bureaucracies from Albania to Viet Nam has nothing in common with either proletarian internationalism

or Marxism. Rather, it is a retreading of the path of the CPUSA, which in the late twenties started down the reformist road by losing its perspective for international proletarian revolution, transforming itself instead into a cheerleader and borderguard for the totalitarian bureaucracy consolidating itself in the Soviet Union. Yet PL, which wrongly considers that the USSR has simply returned to capitalism, maintains at the same time a schizoid ambivalence toward Cuba and North Viet Nam; as a result of their opportunist Avakian-like subservience toward "Maotthought" they render themselves incapable of arriving at a Leninist revolutionary theory.

Would-be revolutionaries must understand that the "revisionism" which PL condemns began *with Stalin*, not after him, that class betrayal can be stopped only by political revolution against the conservative, nationalistic Stalinist bureaucrats and the restoration of the political dictatorship of the proletariat, and that "Trotskyism" is not a curse-word but is the *international, proletarian, revolutionary* perspective in opposition to Stalinism, the neo-Menshevik revisionism which stands for class collaboration and betrayal.

### Stalinism or Trotskyism?

In impulse, PL might be characterized as "Trotskyism with a pre-frontal lobotomy." The essential contradiction for PL is that it has not come down decisively either as an apologist for Third World Stalinism—as its Maoism would dictate—or for proletarian revolution in the U.S. Whereas faithful Maoism necessitates the subordination of the class struggle to the "national liberation" movements, PL actually broke with the Canadian Maoists to adopt a critical attitude towards Ho Chi Minh and the NLF. Time after time they have come up with positions

# SPARTACIST

A Bimonthly Organ  
of Revolutionary Marxism

EDITORS: David Cunningham;  
Managing, Elizabeth Gordon;  
Assistant, Joel Salant;  
West Coast, Christopher Kinder;  
Southern, Joseph Vetter.

BUSINESS MANAGER: Elaine West.

Subscription: 50c yearly. Bundle rates for 10 or more copies. Main address: Box 1377, G.P.O., New York, N.Y. 10001. Telephone: WA 5-2426. Western address: P.O. Box 852, Berkeley, Calif. 94701. Telephone: 525-5243. Southern address: P.O. Box 8121, New Orleans, La. 70122. Telephone: 944-3646.

Published by the Central Committee of the Spartacist League. Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily represent an editorial viewpoint.



Number 13 Aug.-Sept. 1969

which are in essence an unconscious bad paraphrase of Trotskyist analysis, usually several years too late and after denouncing as "counter-revolutionary" these very positions. Unable to stand up against any study of history or theory, which would reveal the betrayals of Stalin and Mao as well as PL's own checkered past, PL *must* continue to denounce Trotskyism and to practice the same Stalinist slander, exclusionism and violence which the Klonsky wing is now employing against them.

This decisive split in SDS comes after years of rejecting the lessons of history and the "old disputes" of the earlier movement as sectarian and irrelevant. The split reflects a clear left-right polarization between those who continue an anti-worker elitism and those who subjectively seek, in an abortive and distorted way, working-class politics. Both sides have now accepted, if unevenly and incompletely, the counter-revolutionary dead-end of Stalinism—a massive tradition of anti-Leninism built upon the physical destruction of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and which has behind it a series of betrayals of the international working class from China in 1927-8 through Spain in 1936-7 to Indonesia in 1965. It is indeed ironic that the New Left, after years of rejecting the "Old Left," should end up embracing precisely that aspect of the "Old Left" responsible for the sterility and failure of the efforts of perhaps millions of dedicated militants who at one time shared SDS's subjective commitment to revolution. Chicago marked the death of a flawed, contradictory and hopeful phenomenon, the New Left. ■

## Defend Black Panthers!

The authorities are everywhere trying to destroy the only existing nation-wide Black movement of struggle.

## Free the New York 21

jailed in a vicious, transparent frame-up and held on \$100,000 bail each for "Conspiracy" charges.

Money for legal defense is urgently needed.  
Send to:

Black Panther Party  
Box 1224  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202