

# International Internal Discussion Bulletin

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by Joseph Hansen

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# **I.I.D. Bulletin**

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# The Underlying Differences in Method

By Joseph Hansen

## I. THE ORIGIN OF THE DISPUTE

### The Widening Discussion

In the first paragraph of his latest contribution to the internal discussion in the Fourth International, Comrade Germain offers a succinct summary of the course of the debate: "After emerging initially around the issue of the place of armed struggle in revolutionary politics in Latin America, it has now spread to the issue of the relationship between armed struggle and revolutionary mass struggles in prerevolutionary and revolutionary situations in general, the present orientation towards building revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe, the evaluation of the present period and our tasks as precised by the political resolution of the 9th World Congress." (Ernest Germain, "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 4, p. 3.)

The statement is not exact. The discussion did not emerge around "the place of armed struggle in revolutionary politics in Latin America." It emerged around the "turn" adopted at the last world congress; that is, the adoption of a guerrilla orientation for the Trotskyist movement in Latin America. A minority of the delegates at the congress, standing on the position hitherto held by our movement, argued that engagement in guerrilla activities is a tactical matter that should be left to the sections of the Fourth International to decide in the light of concrete circumstances. The majority rejected this position. By doing that, they elevated the preparation and initiation of guerrilla war by sections of the Fourth International into a strategy. A series of questions were thus opened that had to be clarified through discussion.

Accuracy on the origin of the discussion is important. Among other things it helps to avoid false issues. The dialectical method demands that we inquire into the true origin of processes under study, including the development of opposing views in our own movement. The differences at the last world congress were not over the place of armed struggle in general in the development of a revolution but over a specific form of it in a specific area at a specific time; that is, guerrilla war in Latin America in the period following the Ninth World Congress.

Still more concretely, the controversy concerned making guerrilla war the central axis of action for our movement

in Latin America. The issue was so concrete, in fact, that at the congress itself a financial campaign was projected to help our comrades open a guerrilla front in Bolivia. This is the true explanation for the warmth of the debate. The question of immediate practice for the Trotskyists in Latin America was involved; and the implications, as has since been demonstrated, went far beyond that.

In locating the origin of the differences, it is essential to also consider the origin of the two tendencies that have formed, inasmuch as this development obviously represents a qualitative change in internal relations in the Fourth International. Other differences at the time of the last world congress such as judgment of the "Cultural Revolution" in China, estimation of the radicalization of the youth, and assessment of entryism *sui generis* no doubt played a certain role in precipitating the formation of tendencies, but the differences over the guerrilla orientation were decisive. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency was organized in view of the failure of the majority of the members of the United Secretariat to recognize the disastrous consequences of their guerrilla line in Bolivia and Argentina. It became clear that a vigorous struggle would be required to win the majority needed to reverse it. In turn, the comrades responsible for the guerrilla orientation maintained that their guerrilla line had withstood the test of events by and large. They announced that they intended to continue to uphold it; and they formed a tendency to defend this position, to block the effort to reverse it, and to make sure of its ratification at the next world congress.

It is true that they considered the newly arisen differences over orientation in Europe to constitute a point of qualitative change requiring them to form a tendency. It seems dubious, however, that the criticisms of their resolution on Europe in and of themselves necessitated organization of a tendency or would have led to formation of tendencies in the absence of the dispute over whether the guerrilla orientation should be reversed or continued.

Why did Comrade Germain, instead of indicating the actual origin of the discussion and the specific origin of the two tendencies, offer a broad generalization? The answer will become clear as we proceed.

## 'Methodologically Wrong and Misleading'

Comrade Germain opens his defense of the guerrilla orientation by ridiculing my presentation of the three main positions to be found in the Latin American leftist movement. Here is what I said: "Let me repeat: There are three main positions in the 'great ideological debate': (1) Those like the Stalinists who believe in or argue for the feasibility of a 'parliamentary road' to power. (2) The Trotskyists, who have been defending the Leninist concept of party building and who have been struggling to apply it, an outstanding instance being Hugo Blanco. (3) Those under the influence of the Cubans particularly, who advance the 'strategy' of armed struggle in opposition to both the protagonists of a 'parliamentary road' and the partisans of the Leninist concept." ("In Defense of the Leninist Strategy of Party Building," *Discussion on Latin America* (1968-1972), p. 138.)

And here is Comrade Germain's criticism: "It is methodologically wrong and misleading to use the concept of Leninist party building as *an alternative* in debates about key tactical and strategical problems, posed by the development of the class struggle itself." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 3.)

I plead not guilty. Comrade Germain is mistaken as to the *origin* of the deviation. Read the last sentence of what I said again. It is *the partisans of guerrilla war* who, under the influence of the Cubans particularly, have advanced the "strategy" of armed struggle in opposition to both the protagonists of a "parliamentary road" and those who advocate the Leninist concept.

How should the Trotskyists answer those under the influence of the Cubans who make the methodological error of advancing the concept of guerrilla warfare as *an alternative* to the strategy proposed by Lenin? Clearly the Trotskyists should defend Leninism. The fact that the partisans of guerrilla war pose the question illogically is worth noting but it affects only the form of the discussion, not the substance.

Moreover, in a discussion in our own movement the form in which the question is posed ought not to cause any difficulties. For us engagement in guerrilla war is only a tactical matter—or should be. But this brings us back to the "turn" at the last world congress in which the majority rejected this position and elevated guerrilla war into a strategy. Not only did that turn disarm our movement in the ideological struggle with those who stand for the *strategy* of guerrilla war and who counterpose it to the concept and course of building a Leninist combat party, it gave rise in our own ranks to champions of the view that you can't meet the antiparty theoreticians of guerrilla war on their own ground, for it would give the debate an illogical form.

Comrade Germain continues down the track of this false issue. To indicate how wrong it is to pose Leninist party building as *an alternative* he cites four examples:

1. In the debate between the protagonists of the theory of the permanent revolution and the protagonists of the thesis of revolution by stages, should we refuse to support the former and claim that there is a "third strategy," the "Leninist strategy of party building"?

2. In the debate over what to do about imperialist war in which the Leninists advocate revolutionary defeatism

and the opportunists advocate defense of the imperialist fatherland, should we reject both sides by counterposing the "Leninist strategy of party building"?

3. In the debate over whether it is possible to utilize the capitalist state machinery to install socialism or whether it is necessary to overturn this machinery, should we refuse to side with the latter position and propose instead the "Leninist strategy of party building"?

4. In the debate over how to combat fascism there are three positions—alliance with the proponents of bourgeois democracy against the fascists, neutrality between fascism and bourgeois democracy, and mobilization of the masses behind a united front that takes the fight to the streets. "Should we refuse to line up with that third position, and counterpose another orientation to the three main lines defended in the debate, 'the Leninist strategy of party building'?" Comrade Germain asks ironically.

The four examples are more than sufficient for us to ascertain Comrade Germain's general formula: If "A" and "B" are mutually exclusive, then to propose "C" is ridiculous.

A single example will show that the formula itself is ridiculous: At the turn of the century the terrorists in Russia advocated using bombs, guns, and the dagger as the correct strategy for overturning the system. The Marxists opposed the concept and practice of armed struggle in isolation from the masses. Was Lenin wrong then in advancing the concept of a combat party to provide revolutionary leadership for the masses as the only means of assuring victory? Wasn't he in reality proposing *an alternative* course of action for all those who wanted to devote their lives to the revolutionary cause?

No, Lenin was not wrong. His concept subsumed what little was correct in the terrorist position and rejected what was fundamentally false. So far as Marxism was concerned, the alternative he proposed represented an advance over merely opposing terrorism. To have suggested that this was all wrong methodologically might have drawn a sharp rejoinder from Lenin on the advisability of thinking dialectically.

How could Comrade Germain, who is renowned for his polemical capacities—and rightly so—come to use such puerile arguments based on cases drawn from nowhere but his imagination and having but little in common with reality? The answer is that he has assumed the defense of an erroneous line and this inevitably affects the quality of his polemics.

Pursuing this false issue still further, Comrade Germain presents three additional arguments:

1. Separate and apart from the question of party building, there are other questions like permanent revolution and united-front tactics against fascism that arise in the course of the class struggle to which answers must be found, and you can't evade them by counterposing Lenin's strategy of party building.

2. "There is no such thing as a 'Leninist concept of party building' separate and apart from programme, correct strategic orientation and correct tactics."

3. It is a serious disservice to Leninism to counterpose the Leninist strategy of party building to needs of the objective revolutionary struggle such as the organization of pickets in a strike.

The three arguments have very little to do with the key

issue in dispute. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to answer them—but in a different order for the sake of convenience.

On No. 2: Of course there is no Leninist concept of party building separate and apart from program, orientation, and tactics. Was it wrong for me to assume that this was understood by the cadres who are participating in the international discussion?

On No. 1: Of course answers must be found to questions that arise in the class struggle. These are found through correct analysis of the reality and applied through a correct course of action. This holds true even for questions as broad as the permanent revolution, which are ultimately resolved in the class struggle. The main purpose of the Transitional Program is to help us in that.

On No. 3: Of course it would be idiotic to counterpose the building of a Leninist-type party, which is a long-term task, to the immediate need to organize pickets in a particular strike. Just the same that doesn't prevent us from recruiting workers to the party during a strike, or from explaining that syndicalism is inadequate to topple the capitalist system.

Now let me ask a question. Does it follow from these elementary propositions that we must perforce adopt a strategy that throws Trotskyists into guerrilla actions in isolation from the masses, as was the case with the Bolivian and Argentine sections in carrying out the line of the last world congress?

To find rational or semirational grounds for orienting small Trotskyist groups into guerrilla action, something more substantial than the alleged lack of logic in counterposing party building is required.

For example, you might work up a convincing case for the guerrilla orientation if you can show that the pattern of the Cuban revolution will in all likelihood be duplicated. Comrade Germain has been repeatedly challenged to state whether he holds this view. Up to now he has successfully evaded giving a clear answer. Instead he has given us one-sided references to the guerrilla experience in Russia in 1906 and to the partisan struggle in Europe against the Nazis during World War II.

Or you might work up a case for the guerrilla orientation if you think that all is lost and that there is no choice except that of a handful of heroic revolutionists going to their martyrdom, guns blazing, in hope of detonating a civil war. This concept, projected by Comrade Germain as a certain reply to any new attempted fascist take-over in Europe ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," pp. 23-25), may well accord with the ultimate logic of the turn taken at the last world congress. It is not, however, very useful in trying to solve the problems that actually face the Fourth International. A number of dedicated revolutionists sacrificed their lives in Brazil in isolated guerrilla engagements with the police of a brutal military dictatorship. Despite their heroism, we are still faced with the political question, what should be done next in Brazil? Should we repeat their experience? Or concentrate on the necessary task of building a combat party capable of leading the masses to victory when they again move forward?

We are back to where this line of argument began.

Before passing to another topic, I should like to call

attention to the strange example that Comrade Germain uses to bolster one of his arguments:

"Those of the alleged 'supporters of the Leninist concept of party building' who, in February-April 1917, were ready to ally themselves with the Mensheviks and didn't understand the need to fight for Soviet power, would have led the Russian revolution to certain defeat. That is why the Leninist strategy of party building, far from being counterposed to the orientation towards armed struggle today, implies the need to adopt that orientation. Without such an orientation, your 'Leninist strategy of party building' is in danger of becoming what it did become in the hands of Kamenev, Molotov and Stalin before February and April 1917: an obstacle and not a motor on the road towards revolutionary victory." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 4.)

What does the policy adopted by Kamenev, Molotov, and Stalin in February-April 1917 have to do with the situation faced by the Fourth International today, that is, the disasters suffered in Bolivia and Argentina because of the guerrilla orientation adopted at the last world congress?

Does Comrade Germain really believe that our movement, like the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917, stands on the verge of taking power in Bolivia and Argentina? Does he actually believe that the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency—like Kamenev, Molotov, and Stalin—stands in the way of such a victory?

Note what Comrade Germain leaves out in advancing his analogy. Trotsky taught us that the origin of the crisis in the Bolshevik party in 1917 lay essentially in the inadequacy of Lenin's theory—he had not accepted the theory of the permanent revolution. Does Comrade Germain really believe that the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency does not accept or does not understand the theory of the permanent revolution?

For the sake of hygiene in the discussion it would have been preferable for Comrade Germain to have explained his analogy more fully; otherwise the reference to Kamenev, Molotov, and Stalin might be taken as a wrong and misleading insinuation.

## The Art of Turning the Tables

The best defense, it is said, is an attack. And the best attack, Comrade Germain seems to hold, is to try to turn the tables. For a polemic this is no doubt an excellent game plan. Whether it helps to clarify the issues is something else again.

A good instance is his effort to show that the Socialist Workers Party has changed its line on guerrilla warfare. He quotes from an article I wrote on the OLAS conference in 1967 and from the statement of basic principles for reunifying the world Trotskyist movement, which was prepared by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in 1963 and adopted at the Reunification Congress that same year. "One wonders," he argues, "why what was true in the spring of 1963 and the autumn of 1967 ceased to be true in spring 1969, not to say in spring 1971. . . ."

If Comrade Germain were accurate in his contention, the following conclusion could hardly be avoided: At the last world congress the majority made no turn. In-

stead, it was the minority that made a turn. The majority did nothing but hold fast to the pre-congress position of the Socialist Workers Party on guerrilla warfare.

However, this is perplexing. How are we to explain the course followed by the leaders of that majority? They have taken credit for "the turn of the Ninth World Congress," boasted about it, explained in polemical articles how it differs from the focoist concept of Régis Debray and others, hailed the PRT (Combatiente) for providing a model of it in practice, and sharply criticized the minority for "not understanding" the innovation or for resisting it and failing to apply it. The tables have not only been turned; they have been kept spinning in the air.

To help bring things down to earth, let us go back further—back to 1962. Why Comrade Germain did not start there remains a mystery.

At that time Hugo Blanco was engaged in the work among the peasants of the Cuzco region of Peru that brought him worldwide recognition and general acknowledgment of the potentialities of the Trotskyist movement in Latin America. Meanwhile in Lima, the Peruvian section of the Fourth International, adhering in those years to the International Committee, was doing its utmost to rally backing for the contingent operating among the peasants. The Argentine comrades, stretching their resources to extend fraternal aid, sent able organizers and dedicated young cadres. The team in Lima made headway but were not able to mobilize forces on the scale required. The obstacles were particularly great because of the hostile influence wielded by the Stalinists in the labor movement and in the left.

The main difficulty, of course, was the lag in the class struggle in the cities. The ferment in the countryside was deepening, bringing tens of thousands of peasants into action and providing a fertile ground for revolutionary organizing activities. From a distance it was impossible to follow events in detail but it became clear before long that the peasant movement was developing explosively. In Lima, however, the working class remained relatively quiescent.

The correct tactic for our comrades in Lima was to dig in, continually publicize the peasant actions and their meaning to the best of their ability, seek to broaden their base in the working class, and above all carry on a sustained battle in the left for our positions. Unfortunately our comrades became impatient over the slowness and the difficulty of this laborious work.

In the spring of 1962, under the leadership of one of the comrades sent from Argentina, Daniel Pereyra, they decided to take a shortcut; namely, expropriate funds from a bank. Nahuel Moreno argued against the adventure, but could not dissuade them. They split from the movement and set up an urban guerrilla group which they named Túpac Amaru.

In New York our first knowledge of this came when we received a batch of clippings from the Lima newspapers. The Túpac Amaru had staged the biggest holdup in the history of the country. By mischance the police stumbled upon the guerrillas within a few days and after a shootout captured all of them and part of the expropriated funds. The guerrillas were subjected to torture and thrown into prison.

The case created a nationwide sensation, for the main

participants were university students from respectable families with excellent records in their studies. The boldness of the bank holdup, the huge sum involved, and the fact that they had carried out the expropriation for idealistic political reasons won them universal sympathy.

Immediately after the holdup and before they were captured they sent an open letter to the press explaining their action. Here are a few paragraphs that will indicate the bearing of this case in our current discussion:

"The July 26 Movement in its time gave an example of how to rise against a regime that exploited the country. Fidel's uprising was carried out against all the opinion of the traditional left which held that it was necessary to wait until the masses rose and took up arms. Various peoples of America are already following Fidel's footsteps, 'replacing the arms of criticism with the criticism of arms.' They are Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala and Paraguay.

"In our country the traditional left—Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists—with distinct variations, in whose ranks some of us have fought so that we gained close knowledge of their people and their line, continue to hold the same opinions as in Cuba before the defeat of Batista: now is not the time for action.

"In order to propose passivity and coexistence in face of the regime, they advance various pretexts: the FLN [National Liberation Front of Peru] and the Communist Party say that objective conditions do not exist for the revolution.

"The Socialists and the Social Progressives have a positive program. But in participating in the current election they bring doubts to mind. All those who utilize revolutionary declarations to win seats in parliament, are they revolutionists or opportunists?

"The FIR [Left Revolutionary Front], the Trotskyists and the various workers parties, even having Trotskyist leaders, make brilliant and revolutionary analyses of the present regime but believe that you have to wait until the masses go into action by themselves while we, the revolutionists, stay with them and lead them. When will they realize that the masses of our country at the present time are not ready for struggle and that consequently they have to be given an example?

"All these reasons brought us to the conviction that it was necessary to constitute a new organization which we have called TUPAC AMARU and whose first manifestation you already know." (For the full text see *The Militant* of August 13, 1962.)

As can be seen, there are striking similarities between this position and that of the PRT (Combatiente) in Argentina—and not by accident, as we shall see.

In the same issue of *The Militant* in which this letter appeared, a rather lengthy editorial explained the position of the Trotskyist movement on such actions. I happened to be the author of the editorial. Here are some paragraphs:

"While the bank holdup occurred as a political act during an election, the real background appears to be a certain rise in the peasant movement. In the past months reports have appeared of land take-overs, one of them involving a skirmish in which Peruvian army forces had to abandon the area. How extensive and profound this movement is, we are unable to judge.



"The Peruvian magazine *Vanguardia*, in its May 8 issue, sought to connect the bank affair with the peasant forces headed by Hugo Blanco. In noting such reports the June *Hispanic America Report*, published by Stanford University, said that the money was destined for Blanco's movement. It described Blanco as a 'Peruvian Trotskyist who had studied in Argentina and who was reportedly operating in the valley of Convención in the department of Cuzco.'

"Although the Peruvian Trotskyist movement is split into various currents, all of them would probably agree with the attitude toward the holdup expressed by Ismael Frias, editor of *Obrero y Campesino*. In a statement published in the May 2 *Expreso*, he held that any action undertaken in isolation from the masses is an 'adventure,' but at the same time he offered his 'full moral solidarity to those who act in accordance with revolutionary motives even though we reject their methods as mistaken.'

"Actions of this kind, in which anger at social injustice and fervor for change lead inexperienced fighters to attempt to by-pass an unfavorable relation of forces, are bound to occur where objective conditions for revolution are as ripe as they are in Peru and where a powerful mass revolutionary-socialist party does not yet exist.

"But the revolutionists will learn from their mistakes—costly as they may be—and turn more and more toward what is most essential: the construction of a party in which youthful enthusiasm and energy, the burning wish to win freedom, equality and the new world of socialism can find the means adequate to the task."

The inclusion of the opinion of Ismael Frias in this editorial was deliberate. He was an adherent of the International Secretariat. He was also in opposition to Posadas, as were Comrades Germain, Maitan and Frank. Thus what he said represented the authentic position of that wing of the International Secretariat. In this way, I sought in the editorial to indicate the common position of the world Trotskyist movement on this question.

The adventure engaged in by the Túpac Amaru was a total disaster. The entire leading team of the Trotskyist organization adhering to the International Committee was put out of commission. The promising beginnings of their work were destroyed. The sensational publicity and widespread sympathy gained by the youthful participants in the holdup were outweighed by the cutting off of their links with the mass organizations. Instead of being in position to mobilize greater help for Hugo Blanco, they themselves were in dire need of help.

Worst of all, the immediate effect was to still further isolate the Trotskyist revolutionists in the countryside from contact with the workers movement in Lima. Finally, the adventure facilitated the efforts of the government to crush the peasant rebellion and to capture Hugo Blanco. The Peruvian section of the Fourth International was smashed for the time being. Because of a peculiarity in Peruvian-Argentine relations, Comrade Moreno in Buenos Aires was also caught up in the judicial process and had to serve time in prison on charges of involvement in the Túpac Amaru action because of his prior knowledge of what was planned.

The editorial in *The Militant* expressed the hope that the lessons would be learned by the revolutionists. This

proved to be overly optimistic. Not all of those involved learned from the costly mistake.

Upon being released from prison in September 1967 after serving five years, Daniel Pereyra returned to Argentina and soon began pressing there for adoption of a guerrilla orientation like that of the Túpac Amaru. Part of the responsibility for splitting the Argentine section in 1968 over this issue no doubt rests with him. He succeeded in obtaining a majority in the Central Committee under circumstances that still remain unclear and came to the Ninth World Congress as the representative of that majority, the PRT (Combatiente). There his success was phenomenal. Not only did he gain recognition of his faction as the official Argentine section of the Fourth International, but together with Comrades González and Maitan he led the battle for adoption of the guerrilla orientation that constituted the most important element in the "turn" at the congress. No doubt it was a great personal satisfaction to him to see the general line of the Túpac Amaru adopted by the Fourth International.

Since then Comrade Pereyra has either split from the PRT (Combatiente) or been expelled. I do not know the circumstances of this latest turn in his political fortunes. Perhaps Comrade Germain will report them in his next contribution and let us know if he expects Comrade Pereyra to stand at his side at the next world congress to help him defend the guerrilla orientation as he did at the last world congress.

The Túpac Amaru case was an important object lesson for the Fourth International. It showed in the most concrete way how dangerous adaptation to the Cuban line could be. There was no question about adaptation being involved inasmuch as the comrades were completely honest about their views and expressed them quite frankly as can be seen from the excerpt from their open letter quoted above.

Still more important was the fact that the case provided a living example of how carefully the tactical application of guerrilla actions must be weighed. At the very same time that we supported Hugo Blanco's course (despite whatever incidental errors may have occurred), we publicly opposed the action carried out under the leadership of Daniel Pereyra in the very same country—and even though the action was sincerely intended to help Hugo Blanco. The reasons for this difference were absolutely clear. The actions that occurred under Hugo Blanco emerged out of the mass struggle itself. The action taken by Daniel Pereyra was the action of a small group isolated from the masses and trying to substitute for the masses.

This view was held at that time not only by the SWP and other Trotskyist organizations in sympathy with or supporting the International Committee, it was held by the International Secretariat; and its adherents had no hesitation at expressing their opinions on the subject publicly as was shown by the statement of Ismael Frias.

The Túpac Amaru case was still very much before us at the Reunification Congress in the following year (we had the problem of defense work in relation to those involved). The position of our movement on such adventures was so clear and so well established that it did not occur to anyone that it had to be included in the point in the reunification document. As a result only what

appeared to be new in a broad historic sense was written down in this brief statement of principles.

In light of the "turn" adopted at the last world congress, it must now be concluded, it appears to me, that the point should be expanded so as to include a clear indication of the *limitations* of guerrilla warfare.

As for the article on the OLAS conference quoted by Comrade Germain, one can only note that he is really straining in his effort to score a point. In a dispute between those who believe in peaceful coexistence and a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism and those who believe that such a road is illusory, we of course side with the latter even if their concept of armed struggle is not Leninist and they advocate the strategy of guerrilla war as a panacea. In a struggle against the reformists and opportunists it is completely principled to make a bloc with the strategists of guerrilla war, and all the more so if they appear to be learning something positive from their difficulties and setbacks, and are willing to give us a hearing. The elementary condition for such a bloc is maintenance of the independence of our own movement; above all *not* succumbing to guerrillism or adapting to it.

Thus in the final part of the article on the OLAS conference, I offered some criticisms of the Cubans, singling out in particular their depreciation of theory and dismissal or lack of understanding of the role of a Leninist party. Comrade Germain chooses to ignore these criticisms, perhaps because it would upset his contention that the Socialist Workers Party has changed its position on guerrilla war and its relation to party building.

Please note something further. Didn't Comrade Germain just get through arguing that in the debate between those who think it possible to utilize the capitalist state machinery to install socialism and those who think it necessary to overturn this machinery that we should side with the latter position? Wasn't this done in my article on the OLAS conference? Wasn't this one of the main purposes of the initiative taken to send me to the conference as an observer? What happens then to Comrade Germain's polemical construction? The article on the OLAS conference, which he himself cites, intending to bolster a different point, shatters his contention that bringing forward the concept of Leninist party building in a debate with advocates of the strategy of guerrilla war is "methodologically wrong and misleading."

I will return later to the OLAS conference and our efforts in 1967 to take advantage of any possibilities it might offer to advance the Leninist concept of party building and thereby the successful extension of the Cuban revolution.

## Hugo Blanco's Analysis

Comrade Germain appeals to the "forgotten Peruvian example." The analysis in Hugo Blanco's book *Land or Death*, he claims, is proof of the correctness of the guerrilla orientation adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress.

"But there is another side to Hugo Blanco's story, which the comrades of the minority are much too eager to overlook. Although the upsurge of the peasant movement in the valley of La Convencion was still regionally limited;

although the overall situation in Peru was far from equaling the type of prerevolutionary situation characteristic of Bolivia or Argentina; although there was no question yet of a generalised mass upsurge of the working class in the country, *armed confrontation and armed struggle inevitably grew out of this even limited example of upsurge of the peasant movement*. Can one find a better confirmation of the key thesis we have constantly and consistently defended since the 9th World Congress?" ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 20. Emphasis in original.)

Does Hugo Blanco's analysis confirm the guerrilla thesis adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress? Hugo Blanco, for one, does not think so.

Comrade Germain singles out various paragraphs from *Land or Death* which he advances as incontrovertible evidence in behalf of his arguments. The paragraphs deal with but a single phase of the developments in the Cuzco region—the phase in which the mass upsurge, involving hundreds of thousands of peasants, reached such size and intensity as to reach the point of qualitative change, i.e., the point where it was not only feasible but necessary to open armed struggle. The Trotskyists had succeeded in rooting themselves in the masses, had organized a broad, militant, peasant union structure, in which they had established themselves as key leaders. They had participated in revolutionary actions undertaken by huge contingents of peasants—seizures of land. Organs of dual power had begun to appear in the countryside. The tactical use of guerrilla war thus occurred in the context of a mass upsurge in which the Trotskyists had won central leadership.

Comrade Germain overlooks all this. Perhaps with good reason. *It bears out the thesis advanced by the minority at the last world congress*.

Moreover, the example stands in complete contrast to the example set by the POR in Bolivia and the PRT (Combatiente) in Argentina where our comrades were not rooted among the masses, did not stand at the head of mass organizations, and were in fact completely isolated from the masses.

Hugo Blanco advanced some criticisms of his own course in this struggle. The principal one was failure to pay sufficient attention to party building. This failure became one of the main weaknesses of the Peruvian movement, helping materially to block it from advancing to a higher stage. Comrade Germain plays down this self-criticism. Again not without reason. It confirms the key point made by the minority at the last world congress on the priority of party building.

There is more to come. Besides overlooking the context of the guerrilla struggle that broke out in the Cuzco region, Comrade Germain is completely silent about the Túpac Amaru experience. This is the true "forgotten Peruvian example."

It is strange that Comrade Germain should have forgotten it. Let us grant that the account in *The Militant* in 1962 had faded from memory; what about the references to it in *Land or Death*? To remind Comrade Germain of this, and to call attention to another side of Hugo Blanco's analysis, let us turn to the book.

The organization of the Frente de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (FIR), Hugo Blanco states, "gave serious impetus to the preparation for armed struggle. Although

preparation had begun earlier, it was clearly becoming urgent to step it up in view of the advanced level of the class struggle in the countryside.

"Unfortunately, the great deficiency continued to exist: no efforts were made to consolidate the peasant vanguard . . . into the party or into the FIR, although a few members were recruited incidentally.

"The feverish intensification of work without the existence of a solidly formed party required supplementary funds. In Lima, the FIR devoted its efforts to the hasty and indiscriminate recruitment of members. Almost immediately, those new members—untested in struggle—were assigned to such a delicate task as bank expropriations to obtain the required funds for the sharpening of the class struggle in the countryside.

"During this whole stage, the putschist deviation of Pereyra, Martorell, Aragón, and other comrades, together with my syndicalist deviation, was leading us unconsciously, although no less perniciously, to neglect the great task: the formation and consolidation of the party, primarily on the basis of the mass work that had been developed.

"My syndicalist deviation was by then so strong that I was incapable of directing assistance for the formation of the party in the countryside.

"We consider that there is nothing more moral than to retrieve, for the people's liberation, the wealth stolen from them by the exploiters. Nevertheless, the expropriations that we carried out were premature, in that we did not have a solid party apparatus that would guarantee their effectiveness, and we had only untested militants, hastily recruited, to carry them out. Tasks of this nature can be successfully carried out only by comrades of iron, of a fully tested moral fiber.

"After the expropriations, what we had anticipated actually happened: a fierce repression (jailings and persecution) against us that caused a general collapse—the Cuzco FIR, the national FIR, our expropriating apparatus, our military apparatus—everything, except for the one existing solid thing: the peasant movement. Although they could not jail me, thanks to the protection of the peasant movement, my activity was severely curtailed because of the repression." (P. 39.)

Hugo Blanco characterized the guerrilla actions carried out by Daniel Pereyra as "putschism." A more accurate term, I believe, would be "guerrillism." From our vantage point today it might be even more to the point to call it an anticipation of the guerrilla orientation adopted by the majority at the Ninth World Congress. However that may be, Hugo Blanco offers some instructive comments on Daniel Pereyra's course of action in relation to the broad context of the Cuban revolution and its impact on the thinking of revolutionists in Latin America. In view of Comrade Germain's recommendation of Hugo Blanco's analysis, the conclusions reached by Hugo Blanco on this point should certainly be made part of the international discussion:

"The Cuban Revolution opened a new chapter in Latin America. It was a tremendous blow not only to imperialism and all exploiting classes, but also to reformism of all varieties. It proved that the Latin American revolution is a socialist revolution, that this revolution will not be made by peaceful means, and that it is indeed

necessary to destroy—not reform—the capitalist system.

"In this respect, it signified a reaffirmation of Marxist principles, which the Trotskyists had defended during the bleakest periods of the world revolution. In this respect also, it signified a milestone with regard to the tactic of guerrilla warfare, especially valuable for the colonial and semicolonial countries.

"Other positive milestones can certainly be enumerated with respect to the first socialist revolution in our hemisphere. Nevertheless, along with its invaluable positive influence on America and the world, it had some negative effects in the radical movement. Of course, the Cuban Revolution is not to blame for this, but rather that we revolutionaries lacked dialectical maturity and were not equal to the interpretation of such a sweeping and contradictory process.

"The Latin American Trotskyist movement, enthusiastic as it was about this revolution which confirmed the theory of the permanent revolution, could not remain immune from the negative influences, and was also affected by them in various degrees. We can enumerate the most important characteristics of this negative influence: the underestimation of the Leninist principle of constructing a Bolshevik-type party as a fundamental instrument for making the revolution; the underestimation of the transitional program, substituting for it the so-called strategy of armed struggle, or even the strategy of guerrilla warfare; the substitution of audacious actions by a courageous group for mass actions.

"I think, although some comrades do not agree with this estimation, that even the leadership of the Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism (SLATO) felt this influence, although it was mitigated by the theoretical level of this leadership.

"This tendency was stronger in Comrade Pereyra, who was sent to reinforce our work. For this reason, along with the positive accomplishments of his work, there was the negative influence of his putschist pressure, which is the name given to this deviation because of its characteristic reliance on the blows struck by individual hands.

"When I speak of a putschist deviation, I am not referring of course to our armed struggle and its preparation, to the militias and the guerrilla bands. All this comes well within our conception. I believe that our activity in this area was, in general, correct.

"Some activities that can be pointed to as examples of putschist pressure are: the bank holdups; the lack of emphasis on building the party; certain attempts to hasten artificially the process of party-building in some instances in the months before the fall of Pereyra; a lack of extended analysis of each phase. Fortunately, we did not succumb to the pressures for an assault on general military headquarters in Cuzco, nor to other extreme expressions of this current.

"The credit for reacting first and beginning a serious struggle against this deviation goes to Comrade Nahuel Moreno, the principal theorist of Latin American Trotskyism." (Pp. 74-75.)

Comrade Germain stresses that Hugo Blanco, "drawing the balance-sheet" of his experience in the Cuzco area, "comes TODAY" to the conclusion that it was correct to

choose the armed confrontation there "even if all the guerrillas had been massacred and the repression against the peasants had been even more severe." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 20.)

To complete the record, here is Hugo Blanco's opinion TODAY on guerrilla actions carried out in isolation from the masses:

"In principle, we are not against such activities as assaults on banks and police headquarters; they are a part of the revolutionary struggle, of the war of the people against their enemies. But more precisely, they must be the fruit of the growing class consciousness of the people. When the maturity of consciousness of the masses brings them to understand the necessity of these activities, it is correct to engage in them. The secrecy and discretion that are absolutely essential in such cases does not contradict this; for we do not mean to say that the masses must be informed before all actions, but that these actions must be carried out when the masses have arrived at an understanding of their necessity and regard them as their own acts, as *their forms of struggle*

"This applies not only to the question of whether such activities are necessary, for in general all of them are always 'necessary,' since the revolutionary movement always needs money and arms. It applies fundamentally to the political impact of such acts. If they were done when the people understand their necessity and they are understood by the masses as activities emanating from themselves, they fulfill above all the positive function of raising the consciousness of the masses, increasing their self-confidence, when they see themselves as the author of those deeds.

"On the other hand, if they are carried out when the masses have not yet arrived at an understanding of their necessity, they play a negative role, for many reasons, and they are used by the enemy as the ostensible justification for repressive violence. They then endanger courageous revolutionaries. In our case, the very existence of the organization hung in the balance.

"Instead of increasing the masses' self-confidence, they cause it to diminish; some are convinced by the reactionary propaganda, and others at least see us as provocateurs, even though they consider our motives justified; finally, and this is very important, even those sectors that have a favorable attitude toward such acts fall back, for they come under the illusion that a group of redeemers will complete the struggle and that consequently the masses do not have to exert themselves to improve their organization or their struggle. . . .

"Therefore, Marxists persist in showing the masses that their power lies in themselves, in a methodology that sifts the experiences of the world's people, in organizations suitable for actions by the masses. If there are different levels of organization whose vanguard is the party, it is precisely because the party brings together the least alienated and most combative sector of those masses, the sector that believes least in redeemers and that believes most in the power of the masses; the party is not a collection of exceptional individuals who can substitute themselves for the action of the masses.

"When in the course of struggle, the triumphs of our methodology are seen as the individual merit of some

comrade, and this view is encouraged by the enemy, our duty is to continue struggling for the disillusionment of the masses, for their disenchantment, to show them that the merit is in the program of struggle and the methods that that comrade has employed and that are based precisely on a profound confidence in the masses. In this way, the most advanced and decisive elements of the masses will understand that they are capable of mastering those methods in their manifold and complete development, but that in order to do so, it is essential to unite and combine their individual forces in a disciplined organization, in the revolutionary party which is characterized by just such methods." (*Land or Death*, pp. 87-89.)

The lessons of the Peruvian experience provide considerable illumination on the differences that have appeared in the Fourth International, as I hope I have succeeded in showing. Two lines with regard to the utilization of guerrilla actions emerged during the course of participation in the immense peasant upsurge in Peru.

One line, represented by Hugo Blanco, stood in the Leninist tradition. It considered guerrilla action to be a tactical question. Some mistakes were made; these involved not holding firmly enough to making party building the top priority. However, the prime need of becoming rooted in the masses and of viewing resort to arms as flowing out of the mass organizations themselves was never lost sight of.

The other line, represented by Daniel Pereyra, tended to elevate guerrilla war into a strategy. The source of the deviation clearly emanated from the view that the pattern of the Cuban revolution could be duplicated. The needs of party building were depreciated. Guerrilla actions were undertaken in isolation from the masses and as a substitute for mass action. The consequences were disastrous to the Peruvian section.

The two lines again came into conflict at the Ninth World Congress. Hugo Blanco, still held in El Frontón prison, could not be present at that congress. Daniel Pereyra was present, however; and his line carried the day against the minority of delegates who argued for the line followed by Hugo Blanco.

The consequence was that the Fourth International had to try out the Túpac Amaru experiment two more times. Comrade Germain argues that the mass struggles in Argentina and Bolivia "were much wider and more generalised than those of the 1962 peasant movement in which Comrade Blanco was involved," and that therefore it was even more correct in those countries than it was in Peru to turn to armed struggle. ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 21.) However, the results for the POR in Bolivia and the PRT (Combatiente) in Argentina were not substantially different from those that came from the guerrillaism of the Túpac Amaru. Not having learned from the mistakes made in Peru, the two sections were doomed to repeat them.

Before we leave this topic, it is only fair to give credit to Comrade Germain for his sympathetic interest in Hugo Blanco's views. Let us hope that he will use his influence to help break the boycott that such publications as *La Gauche* and *Rouge* have placed on current articles written in exile by the Peruvian Trotskyist leader.

## What Comrade Germain Forgot in the Chinese Example

At bottom, Comrade Germain must not have felt completely confident about his "forgotten Peruvian example." He decided to bring up another example, this one drawn from the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. Comrade Germain has accused us of having unduly broadened the issues in dispute. In this instance, however, it is he who must plead guilty. For our part, we do not mind. Perhaps the time has come to review the lessons of 1925-27 in China in the light of subsequent experience. However, since that really belongs to a separate discussion, I shall confine my remarks for the present merely to the points Comrade Germain brings up.

According to him, Trotsky *regretted* that "a few thousand communists, no more, didn't start to organise a communist-led peasant army behind the rear of Chiang's troops." (Ibid., p. 22.)

Moreover, according to Comrade Germain, Trotsky "even went so far as to clearly state that the building of a really *revolutionary* party was conditioned upon its capacity to lead, organise, arm and steel the peasants uprising into a real army of toilers." (P. 22.)

Comrade Germain emphasizes that "Trotsky was speaking of a party of only 10-15,000 members in a country of then some 450 million inhabitants," and the majority of these party members lived in the cities.

At first sight, Comrade Germain seems to have made a pretty strong case for taking a party of miniscule dimensions and orienting the members toward rural guerrilla war, either as a prerequisite to building a *revolutionary* party or as an essential concomitant. In short, to believe Comrade Germain, Trotsky's writings on the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 show that he advocated rural guerrilla war in that situation, regretted that it was not initiated, and thus it was correct for the Trotskyists of today to launch rural guerrilla war in Latin America, and naturally for the last world congress to have adopted this orientation. Very tight reasoning.

We can add, for good measure, that the case Comrade Germain has made out will hearten those who believe that when all is said and done Mao's course was the correct one in contrast to the line followed by the Chinese Trotskyists. They had not found much in Trotsky's writings to bolster their view before Comrade Germain uncovered this "forgotten example."

Comrade Germain draws his conclusions from a couple of paragraphs in *The Third International After Lenin*. Since he places much store on this quotation, let us repeat it so that everyone can study it with due care and draw the proper lessons from it. To assist in this, the inclusion of a few sentences preceding those cited by Comrade Germain may prove useful:

"It would be unwise pedantry to maintain that, had a Bolshevik policy been applied in the revolution of 1925-27, the Chinese Communist Party would *unfailingly* have come to power. But it is contemptible philistinism to assert that such a possibility was entirely out of the question. The mass movement of workers and peasants was on a scale entirely adequate for this,<sup>59</sup> as was also the disintegration of the ruling classes. The national bourgeoisie sent its Chiang Kai-sheks and Wang Ching-wei

as envoys to Moscow, and through its Hu Han-mins knocked at the door of the Comintern, precisely because it was hopelessly weak in face of the revolutionary masses; it realized its weakness and sought to insure itself. Neither the workers nor the peasants would have followed the national bourgeoisie if we ourselves had not dragged them by a rope. [Comrade Germain left out these sentences indicating the context; he begins his quotation at this point.—J.H.] Had the Comintern pursued any sort of correct policy, the outcome of the struggle of the communist party for the masses would have been pre-determined—the Chinese proletariat would have supported the communists, while the peasant war would have supported the revolutionary proletariat.

"If, at the beginning of the Northern expedition we had begun to organize Soviets in the 'liberated' districts (and the masses were instinctively aspiring for that with all their might and main) we would have secured the necessary basis and a revolutionary running start, we would have rallied around us the agrarian uprisings, we would have built *our own* army, we would have disintegrated the enemy armies; and despite the youthfulness of the Communist Party of China, the latter would have been able, thanks to proper guidance from the Comintern, to mature in these exceptional years and to assume power, if not in the whole of China at once, then at least in a considerable part of China. And, above all, we would have had a *party*." (Pp. 185-86. The emphasis, which Comrade Germain failed to indicate, appears in the original.)

The first paragraph of the quotation, it was no doubt noticed, carried a footnote numbered "59," which was supplied either by the editor of the English edition Max Shachtman or, more likely, by the translator John G. Wright. For the sake of completeness, let us quote that, too:

"Organized workers in China rose from 230,000 in 1923 to 570,000 in 1925, 1,264,000 in 1926 and 2,800,000 in 1927. (*Pan-Pacific Worker*, No. 2, Hankow, July 15, 1927.) More than 800,000 workers participated directly in the wave of strikes which followed the massacre of students by British police in Shanghai on May 30, 1925. General strikes completely paralyzed Shanghai and Hongkong, the latter strike lasting sixteen months. The peasant movement, which took on modern forms of organization only in 1922, directly embraced 9,720,000 peasants by March 1927, in Kwangtung, Hunan, Kiangsi and Hupeh provinces alone where independent seizure of the land was begun by the peasants in 1926 and carried out on a large scale, especially in Hunan, in the Spring of 1927."

What does this "forgotten example" prove? That Trotsky was a partisan of the guerrilla strategy adopted at the last congress of the Fourth International? Was Trotsky voicing *regret*, as Comrade Germain would have us believe, that "a few thousand communists, no more, didn't start to organise a communist-led peasant army behind the rear of Chiang's troops"?

The quotations themselves speak otherwise.

1. Even in these few lines, Trotsky emphasized the scope and potential power of the *mass* movement.

2. He stressed the *disintegration* of the ruling classes, reminding his readers in passing of the irrefutable evidence of this.

3. In this concrete situation, he pointed out, the Communist Party policy should have been to begin organizing *soviets*.

4. Such a policy would have made it possible in the rural areas, in the context of agrarian uprisings and large-scale, spontaneous seizures of the land, to secure a base in the masses.

5. With a mass base and the running start of soviets, it would have been possible for the Communist Party to build *its own* army and to disintegrate the enemy armies and assume power if not in all of China, then in a considerable part.

6. "And, above all, we would have had a *party*." Trotsky himself stressed that.

The quotation thus speaks against Comrade Germain. Stalin's greatest crime in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, as Trotsky taught us, was to saddle the Chinese Communist Party with suicidal policies, not least of which was ultraleft adventurism that included untimely "armed struggle." The outcome was a defeat of major magnitude with consequences to the party that were never overcome. What Trotsky really regretted, it is clear from the quotation, was the undermining of the *party* in a situation that favored its winning power.

### Cuba—A 'Forgotten Example'?

Comrade Germain lists the Cuban revolution as a "third forgotten example" of "the key role played by the armed struggle, under specific circumstances." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 22.) To illustrate his point, he singles out a paragraph from the excellent article by Comrade Peter Camejo in the November 1972 issue of the *International Socialist Review* entitled "Why Guevara's Guerrilla Strategy Has No Future."

The aim of that article was to determine "if it is possible to repeat the strategic path of the Cuban revolution elsewhere in Latin America." Comrade Camejo's conclusion, after considering the relevant material, was that the "general outline" of the Cuban revolution can be repeated; it is possible once again for a mass mobilization to begin in one of the Latin American countries with democratic demands and continue until it passes over into a socialist revolution. "But what cannot be repeated is the conquest of governmental power without the mobilization of far more powerful social forces than were required in Cuba. . . . Thus, the strategic approach of the July 26 Movement is insufficient to achieve the necessary mass mobilization and participation prior to achieving governmental power. This will require political and organizational strategies better than those employed in the Cuban revolution."

*Does Comrade Germain agree with this or not?* It is hard to say. Instead of taking up the material assembled by Comrade Camejo, he limits himself to quoting Comrade Camejo's effort to summarize the main lessons of the Cuban revolution in a single paragraph. Finding this one-paragraph summary to be inadequate, Comrade Germain presents a much longer summary.

One can agree that Comrade Camejo should not have attempted to be so succinct. It would have been more satisfying if he had written something more rounded. It was not his purpose, however, to offer a study on the

Cuban revolution. He was concerned about a broader arena in which the historic pattern of the Cuban revolution, for all its importance, is only a part.

If we were to agree that Comrade Germain presented a better summary, would it follow that Comrade Camejo's conclusion was wrong? Would it follow that Guevara's guerrilla strategy does have a future?

Let us follow Comrade Germain's reasoning more concretely. Leaving aside his incidental arguments, his main point about the history of the Cuban revolution is that the prime role was played by Castro's "*actual armed struggle against the dictatorship*." (P. 23. Emphasis in original.) "Fidel and Che's main contribution to the unfolding gigantic mass mobilisations which determined the course of the Cuban revolution . . . [was] the destruction through armed struggle of the huge repressive apparatus, which enabled the tempestuous rise of the mass movement." (P. 23.) The pattern of the Cuban revolution was "*a typical inter-action between the unfolding of armed struggle and of mass mobilisations, each feeding and strengthening the other*." (P. 23. Emphasis in original.)

Does this constitute sufficient evidence that the pattern can be repeated, as Guevara thought it could in Bolivia? It is necessary to say no; other factors must be weighed. This is precisely what Comrade Camejo sought to do. Analyzing the pattern of the Cuban revolution, the pattern of U. S. imperialist policy since the Cuban victory, the experience of twelve years of defeated guerrilla efforts to repeat the Cuban pattern, and the appearance of new patterns of revolutionary struggle in Latin America, Comrade Camejo found no escape from the conclusion that Guevara's guerrilla strategy has no future. It will be replaced by a better strategy, the strategy of building a Leninist-type party that will view guerrilla action as a tactical question.

What is Comrade Germain's view on the considerations advanced by Comrade Camejo? Sad to say, he equivocates. "Is this a 'model' which can be repeated?" asks Comrade Germain. "In some parts it can, in others it probably won't."

U. S. imperialism hesitated to intervene in Cuba; it is not likely to hesitate elsewhere in Latin America, he believes. "That is precisely why it is correct to raise the perspective of 'prolonged civil war,' with a possible retreat from the cities where the revolution has already triumphed. . . ."

Soviets did not appear in the Cuban revolution. They will probably appear, Comrade Germain believes, "wherever Trotskyists play an important role in the phase during which the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship is overthrown."

Let's be specific. Let's try to answer the question and not evade it. Does Guevara's guerrilla strategy have a future? Comrade Germain finds it very difficult to speak clearly. He seems to say that the specific pattern "is likely to occur again"—which would make him a Guevarist. But he hedges his tentative "likely" with so many qualifications that it is hard to determine whether he actually said it. Judge for yourself, if you can follow the ins and outs of this 106-word sentence:

"But the specific interrelationship between the mass movement and armed struggle which characterised the Cuban revolution (not necessarily in the form of rural guerilla warfare, or rural guerilla warfare only; different combina-

tions will be possible under different social and geographic conditions in different countries) is likely to occur again wherever the basic starting points of the Cuban revolution are repeated, in other words wherever a repressive dictatorship suddenly stopping the rise of the mass movement in its tracks, will be challenged by a determined revolutionary vanguard, progressively gaining mass support and helping to relaunch mass mobilisations till the point of a successful overthrow of the dictatorship." (P. 23.)

If I am not misinterpreting the essence of this convoluted passage, Comrade Germain has what might be called a sneaking hope that the Cuban guerrilla pattern can be repeated. His position might be termed "shamefaced Guevarism."

I hope that he will not interpret this as an epithet. The characterization is not important enough to risk that. What is important is that we have touched the key issue debated at the last world congress. If the pattern of the Cuban revolution is likely to be repeated in Latin America, then we are duty bound to adopt that orientation and take it as the axis of activity for the cadres of the Latin American Trotskyist movement. On the other hand, if that pattern is not likely to be repeated, then it would not only be incorrect to adopt it, it would be suicidal and even criminal. An acid test of political judgment is involved.

A *strategic* line should be based upon the dominant conditions governing the arena of struggle. *Tactical exceptions* fall within this general framework. But this is precisely what Comrade Germain can not accept or acknowledge because it goes contrary to the Ninth World Congress line and coincides with the position taken by the minority.

It was differing judgments concerning the possibility of a repetition of the Cuban pattern that divided the delegates at the last world congress into a minority and a majority. On the basis of these judgments different prognoses were made. The debate now centers on which judgment turned out to be correct as shown by the lessons of events since then.

In arguing about the "forgotten example" of Cuba, Comrade Germain is merely repeating the basic argument heard at the last world congress to justify adopting the guerrilla orientation. He repeats, but does not clarify. In the tangle of phrases there is not an iota of fresh thought. He leaves us still wondering where he really stands.

## The Events in Argentina and Bolivia

Comrade Germain takes considerable space attempting to refute the summary of events provided in "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet." The method he uses does not contribute to clarifying the issues. It consists in the main of saying "no" where the authors of that summary say "yes," and of saying "yes" where they say "no."

An example of this is the nature of the Anti-imperialist Revolutionary Front formed in Bolivia following the defeat. The authors of "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet" said of this front: "The main role of the FRA is to cover up the betrayal of the Bolivian revolution committed by the reformist parties under Torres. In the name of 'unity' this fraudulent front seeks to silence any criticism

by branding it as 'sectarianism' so as to be in position to mislead the masses once again under the same disastrous program that was supported by the Communist Party of Bolivia and the POR (Lora)." (P. 22-23.)

The authors of "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet" called on our Bolivian comrades to break from this "unprincipled front."

In contrast to this, Comrade Germain maintains that the FRA rests on a program that "is substantially that of the theory of Permanent Revolution." Its program is not "bourgeois"; it is "explicitly socialist in character." By comparing a quotation from Lora's paper with a quotation from the May 1971 issue of *Combate* you can "see how brilliantly the political position of the POR/Combate becomes vindicated as a result of the turn by other working class parties in joining the FRA." (P. 14.)

Consequently he concludes that it was not wrong "in principle" for the POR to enter this front.

A closer study of the FRA, of the authorship of its "explicitly socialist" program, and of its activities will settle this factual question and others like it.

This has already occurred in one instance. In "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet," it was asserted that the PRT (Combatiente) had proved incapable of linking up with the masses:

"A crucial question becomes more and more acute for such Guevarist groups—how to 'link up' with the masses. This becomes their central preoccupation. And because they cannot find a solution to this problem they become ripe for disintegration or for a turn toward opportunism. What they fail to see is that their very concept of armed struggle blocks them from forming organic ties with the masses." (P. 41.)

Comrade Germain affirms the opposite. He lists a series of items to show how the PRT (Combatiente) succeeded in linking up with the masses in at least Córdoba. A member of the PRT was able to speak as an open representative of the guerrilla organization and "was given a standing ovation." ERP detachments penetrated into "some 30 factories where special conditions of repression existed" and "held long discussions" with the workers "on the present and next stage of the class struggle in Argentina."

Comrade Germain even goes so far as to picture the ERP at the head of the masses in action: "During the second Cordobazo, the armed detachments of the ERP actually fused with the masses and led many mass actions. The banner of the ERP flew on most of the barricades put up by the fighting masses. Thousands of people followed the coffin of a youth killed during the actions and covered this coffin with the ERP banner."

Fred Halstead of the Socialist Workers Party, who visited Argentina as a reporter for *The Militant* during the election, was able to check up on a number of the facts disputed by Comrade Germain. The evidence reported by Comrade Halstead confirms the accuracy of the account in "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet." Every comrade who feels perplexed over how to determine what the facts really were should read Comrade Halstead's contribution in No. 8, Vol. X, of the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* (June 1973) "On Comrade Germain's Half-Truths: or How the ERP Flag Got on the Coffin."

Comrade Germain's challenge as to the facts will undoubtedly elicit other contributions like Comrade Hal-

stead's. Peter Camejo has taken up a number of points in an article "Bolivia— Once Again on the Facts." Whoever still feels doubtful about this level of the discussion should suspend judgement until more material is available. This is perfectly normal in a discussion of this type.

Pending the publication of further material like that submitted by Comrade Halstead and Comrade Camejo, I will not take up the disputed factual points in detail, but turn in the meantime to other arguments made by Comrade Germain, consideration of which may help to advance the discussion.

## Can the Turn Be Swept Under the Rug?

In his defense of the turn at the Ninth World Congress, Comrade Germain follows three tactics:

1. As noted above, he contends that the differences began "initially around the issue of the place of armed struggle in revolutionary politics in Latin America." With such formulations, Comrade Germain seeks to equate guerrilla war and armed struggle in general, thereby making it possible to shift the discussion away from the guerrilla orientation adopted at the Ninth World Congress.

The effort to sweep the turn and the accompanying dispute under the rug is so obvious that few comrades, one can safely predict, will pay attention to it.

2. He tries to cover up the guerrilla orientation adopted at the last world congress by making out that it was a misunderstanding induced by some poorly chosen phrases:

"There is no reason to deny that the 9th World Congress resolution on Latin America contains several elliptical and synthetic formulas on rural guerrilla warfare and continental civil war open to various interpretations, which try to encompass too many different variants and successive stages of struggle into a single sentence or a couple of sentences." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 5.)

The trouble with that tactic is that Comrade Germain does not seem to be able to get agreement from other leading members of his tendency, particularly Comrade Maitan, to push this interpretation. Although they voted for his document, they are understandably reluctant about saying the fault was merely "several elliptical and synthetic formulas." After all, the main immediate task undertaken by the Fourth International after the congress was to help open up a guerrilla front in Bolivia.

Besides that there is the difficulty of the many public statements praising the guerrilla activities of the PRT (Combatiente) and the POR's preparations for guerrilla war in Bolivia as being expressions of the orientation adopted at the Ninth World Congress.

Finally there is the fact that both the PRT (Combatiente) and the POR (González) saw their guerrilla courses as being applications of the orientation adopted at the Ninth World Congress. Against their testimony you can hardly claim that they made a completely wrong interpretation of the turn because of "several elliptical and synthetic formulas."

3. Besides these two variations, Comrade Germain argues that the orientation adopted for Latin America was but one expression of a more fundamental turn of which we now have various other expressions, especially the European Perspectives Document.

"What was projected," he claims, "was a turn towards the transformation of Trotskyist organisations from propaganda groups into organisations already capable of those political initiatives of a mass vanguard level which are required by the dynamics of the class struggle itself." (Ibid., p. 41. Emphasis in original.)

He offers "four instances where the effects of that 'turn' have been striking."

The first instance is the "role played by the French Trotskyists in the May '68 events. . . ." The second is the "role played by the American Trotskyists in stimulating and helping to organise a mass antiwar movement in the USA." The third is the activities of the Spanish Trotskyists in 1971. The fourth is the initiative taken by our Ceylonese comrades in calling for a one-day general hunger strike last year.

In addition, Comrade Germain mentions the role of the Bolivian Trotskyists on August 20-21, 1971. For some reason he does not refer at all to the rather spectacular actions carried out by the PRT (Combatiente) in Argentina. They didn't understand the real nature of the "turn" after all?

From this catalog, it would seem that the American Trotskyists anticipated the turn at the Ninth World Congress four years in advance, since they took the "initiative" in 1965 to help organize a mass antiwar movement. Thus, so far as the SWP is concerned, the "turn" at the Ninth World Congress was superfluous. The SWP was already on the beam. (I leave aside whether the SWP made a "turn" in 1965 or merely applied policies it had held from its foundation.)

Although Comrade Germain fails to say so, this would likewise apply to the Canadian section of the Fourth International, since it, too, took the "initiative" in 1965 to organize mass protests against the complicity of the Canadian government in the imperialist aggression in Vietnam.

The British comrades, also, had already made the "turn," since they took the "initiative" in organizing demonstrations involving up to 100,000 persons in 1968, a year before the Ninth World Congress.

The role played by the French Trotskyists also predates the Ninth World Congress by a year. The "turn" was obviously not needed to get them going on taking initiatives.

Was the turn made at the Ninth World Congress required to put the Spanish and Ceylonese comrades on the right track? This seems dubious. The Ceylonese comrades are old hands at taking "initiatives" aimed at mobilizing mass actions. The difficulties they face do not stem from any reluctance or lack of know-how in this respect. As for the Spanish comrades they are now divided over the "turn" taken at the Ninth World Congress. Perhaps the "elliptical and synthetic formulas" led to confusion.

The predeliction of the POR (González) for guerrilla warfare was, of course, known long in advance of the Ninth World Congress. As the Bolivian comrades understood it, the majority of delegates at the congress had finally adopted their stand.

Comrade Germain's arguments thus simply fall flat. To picture the turn at the Ninth World Congress as really only an extension of the line followed by the SWP since 1965 will hardly convince the great majority of cadres of the SWP, who are quite capable of distinguishing between



a political line directed at taking advantage of every possible opening in the class struggle and a line that constitutes an adaptation to Castroism such as was voted for at the Ninth World Congress.

To consider the initiatives taken by the American, the French, the Canadian, and the British Trotskyists as *consequences* of the turn made at the Ninth World Congress is absurd. They occurred before the congress, as did the first big resulting gains. (I leave aside the subsequent shift made by the British comrades away from mass demonstrations, since this without doubt *was* a con-

sequence of the famous turn at the Ninth World Congress.)

The description of the turn as being in reality an effort to lift various Trotskyist groups (which ones?) from the level of propaganda to actions at "a mass vanguard level" is rather mysterious unless it refers to the burial of "entryism *sui generis*." That wasn't what the debate was about at the Ninth World Congress.

So we are left with what? A simple fact—these arguments leave out the actual turn: the orientation toward guerrilla warfare. This is another way of disposing of a subject that has become embarrassing.

## II. COMRADE GERMAIN'S COUNTERATTACK

### Instead of Rectifying an Error

At the last world congress the majority of delegates were elated over the adoption of the guerrilla orientation for Latin America. They set out to campaign for funds for the promised guerrilla front and a possible "break-through" in Bolivia. Today most of them would probably agree that the orientation is becoming increasingly difficult to defend. Perhaps some of them would like to be rid of the question. No one thinks of opening a financial campaign like the one in 1969.

The most sensible course would have been to acknowledge that it was a mistake and adopt a different orientation. That was what many of us expected would happen as the lessons of the events in Bolivia and Argentina sank home.

If this had happened, the discussion could have been very fruitful. There could have been a common examination of how the successes of the preceding period, such as the gains in membership made from the radicalizing youth, had increased the danger of bending to ultraleft pressures. A balance sheet on the Cuban revolution and the guerrilla experiences of the past decade might well have had a top place on the agenda for the next world congress. Rectification of the error would have pulled our movement powerfully together, making it possible to reach virtually unanimous agreement on a series of documents and the adoption of a common axis of work for the coming period. The leadership would have emerged heightened in stature and with a new authority that would have extended well beyond the ranks of the Fourth International.

Instead, the comrades exercising the majority in the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee decided to defend the guerrilla orientation come what may. The inevitable consequence was the formation of tendencies and sharp divisions in the discussion—there was no other way to resolve the crisis in leadership that had been precipitated.

The situation in the Fourth International is thus a very serious one. To surmount it successfully, the greatest objectivity is demanded of the leaders of the two sides.

In this respect, Comrade Germain's document "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International" is rather disappointing. He seems more intent on bolstering a weak case in any way possible than on finding

a policy that could help open a way to resolving the crisis. His studied effort to mount a counterattack is telling evidence of this. Distasteful as the task is, there is no choice but to follow his arguments and to answer him.

### The Conversion of Comrade Moreno into a Scapegoat

In November 1970, without the knowledge of the United Secretariat as a whole, Comrade Livio Maitan wrote a political letter to the PRT (Combatiente) that was secretly circulated in Uruguay and Argentina. A copy eventually reached the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, and this body lodged a sharp protest with the United Secretariat over such correspondence being kept from the knowledge of the United Secretariat. The letter included an attack against Comrade Nahuel Moreno that dredged up questions going back nineteen years. The Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party likewise protested this violation of the norms of responsible leadership:

"6. The chief target of Comrade Maitan's letter is Comrade Nahuel Moreno of the *La Verdad* group. In attacking him, Comrade Maitan goes back to 1951; that is, eleven years before the Reunification Congress; and he also raises doubts concerning the relation of the Argentinian comrades with the International Committee before the reunification and at the time of the reunification. This is a very serious matter, in our opinion, for Comrade Maitan has thereby injected differences into the international pre-congress discussion that were considered superseded at the time of the reunification. By doing this, he indicates that he holds doubts about the reunification itself.

"7. The main objective of the letter is transparent. It seeks to advance political grounds for maintaining the recognition of the *El Combatiente* group as the Argentine section in place of the numerical grounds used at the last world congress. The author thereby fans factional fires to the injury of the discussion preparatory to the next world congress, not the least injury being the one done to his own contributions to that discussion by the revelation that they are accompanied by narrow factional objectives of his own.

"8. The attitude displayed by the author of the letter toward the *La Verdad* grouping and Comrade Moreno

is not of recent origin, as is shown by the content of the letter itself. 'The question arises,' says the author, 'why we have not discussed the problems of the Argentinian section in the past. . . . We note . . . that it was difficult for us to intervene in the period immediately following the entry of the Argentinian organization into the International in the aftermath of the reunification and that we relied on a process of progressive assimilation.'

"A declaration of that nature indicates that Comrade Maitan (and whoever else he is referring to when he says 'us' and 'we') held reservations about the reunification in 1963 and that he (in agreement with those he refers to by 'we') has acted since then in accordance with these reservations. It is impossible not to wonder about the role played by Comrade Maitan in the split that occurred in the Argentinian section prior to the last world congress. The circulation of this particular letter—which only came to our attention by accident—inevitably suggests that perhaps other similar actions have been undertaken in the same sub rosa way." (*International Information Bulletin, Discussion on Latin America* (1968-1972), p. 173. This collection contains the text of the secret letter, the protest of the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, a statement by the United Secretariat on the matter, and Comrade Maitan's reply.)

Comrade Moreno was singled out for this type of attack for various reasons, the principal one being to load him with personal responsibility for the deviations of the PRT (Combatiente). The factional advantage to be derived from turning Comrade Moreno into a scapegoat is the assist this gives to covering up the responsibility of the majority of the United Secretariat for elevating the PRT (Combatiente), deviations and all, into an "exemplary" section of the Fourth International, one that up until recently carried out to perfection the guerrilla orientation adopted at the last world congress.

This came out very clearly at the plenum of the International Executive Committee last December. As the reporter for the majority of the United Secretariat, Comrade Maitan listed various deviations of the PRT (Combatiente). At the appropriate point, he turned to Comrade Moreno, pointed an accusing finger at him, and said dramatically: "And you are the father of them!"

Comrade Moreno's response was instantaneous: "And you are the mother!"

Amid the laughter, Comrade Maitan had no rejoinder to this establishment of the parentage of the deviations of the PRT (Combatiente).

When Comrade Moreno took the floor to present a report on Argentina in behalf of the minority of the International Executive Committee, he took time to answer the personal attack that had been leveled at him. He admitted that he had made errors in the past. In fact, he said, he could provide an even more imposing list than the one presented by Comrade Maitan. However, he had never sought to persist in an error, and had never had any hesitation at engaging in self-criticism, since that is the only way to really learn from errors and to overcome them most effectively.

Others at the plenum of the International Executive Committee protested the polemical method of going back twenty years in a comrade's record. This could only create prejudice against the arguments made by the comrade on a current issue. If this procedure were to be fol-

lowed, then everyone's record should be laid on the table. In the Latin American discussion this would mean going back to the decision twenty years ago to back Posadas as against Comrade Moreno. It might be interesting to know what attracted Pablo, and presumably Comrades Maitan, Germain, and Frank, to a figure like Posadas; but what does this have to do with the issues under dispute now?

With this necessary background, let us examine Comrade Germain's pursuit of this question in his contribution "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International." He offers extensive quotations from an article by Comrade Moreno published in 1968. The quotations show that Comrade Moreno advocated a guerrilla orientation that was if anything more extreme than the one adopted at the world congress a year later (it was at least much more frank). "If the 9th World Congress document really had the perspective of generalised 'rural guerrilla warfare' and of 'civil war on a continental scale' in 1969," says Comrade Germain, "the least one can say is that Comrade Moreno's 1968 document was its great predecessor." (Pp. 10-11.)

Comrade Germain then presents quotations from *La Verdad* published in 1971, which, together with the conclusions voiced in "Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet," show that Comrade Moreno made "a 180 degree turnabout" in a three-year period.

From this Comrade Germain draws the conclusion that Comrade Moreno is disqualified as a leader of the Trotskyist movement.

The substance of Comrade Germain's complaint appears to be that Comrade Moreno saw his error, changed his mind, and voted against the guerrilla orientation sponsored by the majority of the United Secretariat at the last world congress.

Does it really disqualify a leader of the Fourth International to see an error and change his mind? Apparently in Comrade Germain's opinion it does. Perhaps this is part of the explanation for his persistence in clinging to the error he, among others, made at the last world congress.

## Two Turns in Cuban Policy

In his 1968 article, Comrade Moreno refers to the OLAS conference held in Havana July 31-August 10, 1967. Comrade Germain does not elaborate on this reference, although it appears in the quotations he selected from Comrade Moreno's article. Elsewhere (page 4 of "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International") Comrade Germain mentions the OLAS conference, but without discussing its meaning. Here is what he says:

"The need to take an unequivocal stand in favour of the 'method' of armed struggle, never mind whether it is a 'strategy' or 'tactic,' or 'orientation,' in the present period and under specific circumstances in Latin America, arises out of the very needs of the class struggle and the experiences of the toiling masses themselves. . . .

"There was a time when Comrade Hansen understood this perfectly. In his article: *The OLAS Conference—Tactics and Strategy of a Continental Revolution* (ISR, November-December 1967), he wrote:

"The question of armed struggle was thus taken at the OLAS conference as a decisive dividing line, sepa-

rating the revolutionists from the reformists on a continental scale. In this respect it echoed the Bolshevik tradition.' (p. 5)."

The OLAS conference was taken with the utmost seriousness by the world Trotskyist movement. We sent three cadres at the time to Havana, two of whom participated as observers at the conference. I was one of them.

Among other things, the OLAS conference marked a considerable step forward by the Castroite leadership in the direction of an international organization standing to the left of Stalinism. A move of that kind was obviously of importance to the Fourth International. If the Cubans continued to move in this direction, the Fourth International stood to gain fresh forces that could give world Trotskyism great impetus. If they paused at a half-way point, this would create special problems for us. And if they adopted an anti-Trotskyist stand, an international organization backed by them would emerge as a dangerous rival. The outcome was not settled in advance. Our own efforts could influence it.

Among the favorable developments was a sharp division between the organizers of the OLAS conference and some of the Latin American Stalinist leaders. Fidel Castro was particularly vigorous in castigating the treachery of the Venezuelan Stalinists. The line of principle drawn by the Cubans against the reformists was *armed struggle*. By this they meant, of course, mainly guerrilla war.

Even though we disagreed with their view of guerrilla war as a strategy for taking power (this was before the Ninth World Congress!), there was no question as to which side we should support. As I have explained above, in a battle between advocates of the "peaceful road" and advocates of the road of "armed struggle," we stand with the latter, however one-sided they are or whatever criticisms we might have to offer.

Something else was associated with the OLAS conference. This was the widely spread rumor in the Latin American left that the Cubans had decided to step up their support of guerrilla struggles in the continent in a major way. We were able to verify that there was substance to the rumor. All the revolutionary currents that had delegates or observers at the conference were discussing the possibilities this turn might open up.

The Trotskyist movement had no reasonable political choice but to take cognizance of the prospect. Guerrilla actions carried on by small isolated contingents were one thing. A regroupment of the left in conjunction with guerrilla actions backed by a workers state was something else again. Under the concrete circumstances, it could mean a well-supplied major effort to extend the Cuban revolution, with all revolutionary currents invited to participate. At one point or another, this would inevitably bring up the question of political leadership and political organization; and along with that the question of program and the role of a Leninist-type party. Clearly, the Trotskyist movement had to consider how, under such circumstances, it could best advance Leninism.

No great problem was involved. For us guerrilla war was a *tactical* question. In relation to any guerrilla movement, we merely had to remain steadfast in our strategic objective of constructing a party capable of guiding a revolution to success.

In the report I wrote of the OLAS conference, as I have previously indicated, the above considerations were borne in mind. That is why I ended the article with some critical observations. These included the failure of the Cubans to examine the reasons for the betrayal committed by the Venezuelan Stalinists, and the failure of the Cubans to anticipate the betrayal. "Study of the question will of itself eliminate the deficiency—which is lack of knowledge of the true history of the world Communist movement and lack of appreciation of what Stalinism did to that movement." (P. 8.)

I called attention to a related question: "How did it happen that in the internal struggle in the Venezuelan Communist Party, the faction that stood for revolutionary principles ended up in a minority while the faction that stood for class collaboration ended in a majority?" (P. 8.) Cuba's nearness to Venezuela, the impact of the Cuban revolution throughout the continent, and the fact that the revolutionary faction had behind it the weight of a workers state made the question all the more pertinent.

Besides that I called attention to the problem of "the revolutionary struggle in the cities." (This was written in 1967, *before* the Ninth World Congress where the majority opted for *rural* guerrilla war.) "The key issue is what to do in situations where the masses are not yet prepared to engage in all-out combat but can be mobilized to at least some degree. Is leadership of the workers and the unemployed to be turned over to the right-wing betrayers? Without a battle for the allegiance of the masses? Are there partial struggles which the workers and unemployed might be prepared to engage in that could prove propitious to the revolutionary cause and which might serve at least to remove the right-wing betrayers from the field as a serious obstacle?" (P. 9.)

As can be seen, these questions implied consideration of transitional slogans, transitional forms of struggle, and transitional stages of mobilizing the masses—all of which Comrade Germain once understood "perfectly."

In battling the Stalinists, I said, "The correct countermove would seem to be to step into the arena of the class struggle in the cities and seek to outflank the right-wing CP leaders to the left. The secret of success lies in the development of transitional slogans which in and of themselves are more realistic than the measures advocated by the reformists yet entail a logic that takes the masses along the road of revolution." (P. 9.)

I also took up the relevance of revolutionary theory and the need to bring it to bear in the Latin American scene. In criticism of the Cubans, I said: "The tendency noticeable at the OLAS conference to discount theory was one of the consequences of leaving out of account the role of Stalinism as a determinant in the betrayal of the Venezuelan Communist Party." (P. 10.)

Finally, in accordance with the position of the Fourth International before the Ninth World Congress, I stressed the need for party building:

"All this is associated with the question of developing a homogeneous leadership and organizational structure in all its aspects. This is what revolutionary Marxists mean when they talk about the necessity of building a party of action. At the OLAS conference this question was colored by the Cuban experience so that one heard such contradictory statements as 'the revolution will be

made with or without a party' and 'the guerrillas constitute the core of the party.' If the revolution can be made without a party why advance the concept of a party being built around guerrillas or of guerrillas performing any political function at all? And while the possibility of making a revolution without a party was voiced, at the same time the necessity for absolute discipline in the struggle, the disciplined combination of the military and political aspects was insisted upon. The question obviously demands deep consideration, the elimination of misunderstandings arising from various sources, not least of all the bad impression created by the Stalinist and Social Democratic record in Latin America and elsewhere. A study of the Bolshevik experience could possibly prove of unusual interest if it were undertaken with due consideration for the peculiarities to be found in Latin America." (Pp. 9-10.)

I have quoted at some length in order to establish among other things that it takes more space to present the truth than it does to suggest a lie through a half-truth. Comrade Germain sought to imply with his extract from the above article that at the Ninth World Congress I had changed from the position voiced in my 1967 article. But what I said in the article proves the opposite—it proves the complete consistency of the position I took in backing the minority at the Ninth World Congress.

This explanation will, I hope, make it easier to place Comrade Moreno's 1968 article in context. He took the reports of the turn of the Cubans at the OLAS conference as proof that a great new perspective was opening up, and he at once tried to move into position to be able to exert maximum influence on further developments. His approach should have been weighed more carefully, and, as he himself has said since then, he considers that it was a mistake. To understand better what made him change his mind, the sequel to the OLAS conference must be remembered.

It was completely true that the Cubans had decided to give a vigorous push to guerrilla war on the continent. Even while the OLAS conference was being held, Che Guevara was preparing to open a guerrilla front in Bolivia.

But some very bad errors were made. Besides deciding to open a guerrilla front in Bolivia in isolation from the Bolivian masses and in isolation from all of the Bolivian left except the Stalinists and a pro-Cuban guerrilla current, the Cubans acted in isolation from the masses and all the revolutionary currents in all the rest of the Latin American countries. Without pausing here to go into more specific errors, these two gross mistakes doomed the perspective of any early advance of the Cuban revolution on the continent.

One of the main consequences of the defeat was that the Cubans drew back from further experiments. Whether they would seriously examine the reasons for the defeat and ultimately come up with a viable political course (which would have pointed in the direction of encouraging the construction of Leninist-type combat parties on the continent) could not be predicted with certainty. This had to be awaited. Eventually they shifted further away from involvement on any significant scale in guerrilla struggles in Latin America and gave ground to Stalinism in disturbing ways (support of the invasion of

Czechoslovakia, support of popular frontism in Chile, etc.).

The indicated task facing the Fourth International at the Ninth World Congress was to draw a balance sheet on OLAS, Guevara's defeat, and the entire series of defeats of isolated guerrilla actions in the preceding period. Instead of doing this, the majority at the Ninth World Congress itself adopted a guerrilla orientation! To use a term which Comrade Germain is trying to revive and popularize in our movement, the majority was guilty of "tail-endism." The majority was guilty of tail-ending Castroism. And this after the Castroites themselves came to realize that their orientation was not working out and moved away from it, albeit in a wrong direction.

## What James P. Cannon and Peter Camejo Said

A word should be said about Comrade Germain's attempt to use a quotation from Comrade Cannon's book *Letters from Prison* against me. It concerns the question of ultraleftism in the Fourth International.

Comrade Germain asks: "But what about the central thesis of 'ultraleftism' as a universal, or in any case the 'main danger' facing the world Trotskyist movement?" ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 25.) He remarks further on: "The record, therefore, does not bear out the assessment of Comrade Hansen of ultraleftism being the universal danger menacing the Fourth International against which a merciless crusade must be organised." (P. 26.)

Comrade Germain holds that the "main danger" is opportunism; and he cites the record to try to prove it. The "record" he offers includes the betrayal committed by the former Trotskyists in Ceylon, who took posts in the Bandaranaike government, and opportunist turns made by Healy, Posadas, Lambert, and Lora.

These are strange examples. None of these figures belong to the Fourth International today. Nor do they meet the proviso laid down by Comrade Germain that the opportunist danger is especially acute in periods of "rapid growth."

On top of that, the reference to my alleged "assessment" is inaccurate. I never advanced a "central thesis" that ultraleftism constitutes a "universal" or "main danger" for the Fourth International. What I did was to *explain* the reasons that led the majority of the United Secretariat to make *concessions* to ultraleftism. In addition, I pointed to the repercussions in various sectors of the Fourth International. I admit to finding this to be of grave concern and I am sorry that Comrade Germain does not agree with me.

As to the main danger right now, I think that is to be found in the crisis in orientation and leadership now facing the Fourth International which opens the way to *shifts* toward ultraleftism or opportunism or combinations of both.

To bolster his points, Comrade Germain admits that while a danger of ultraleftism does exist during a process of rapid growth, this is by no means the only danger, "especially not in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations." At such times the main danger is "opportunist deviations." He adds: "There is a general logic about this, which Comrade Cannon has expressed admirably

in his 'Letters from Prison.'" (P. 26.)

The quotation, naturally, bears out Comrade Germain's point about the "general logic" of such situations: ". . . we hear the astonishing contention," Comrade Cannon writes, "that the Fourth International must be on guard against the left danger. If the perspective is revolutionary, if we are witnessing the beginning of a great revolutionary upsurge, we must rather expect manifestations of the right danger in the sharpest form. That is a historical law." (*Letters from Prison*, pp. 309-310.)

This quotation is beside the point in the current discussion. I was not talking about the "general logic" of prerevolutionary situations but of the *concrete logic* of the concession to ultraleftism made by Comrade Germain and the other members of the majority of the United Secretariat at the world congress of the Fourth International in April 1969. Comrade Cannon's observations, made in Sandstone Prison in a letter dated January 16, 1945, had nothing to do with the concession to ultraleftism made twenty-four years later by part of the leadership of the Fourth International.

From the context of Comrade Cannon's letter it is clear that he was dealing with two questions. One was the opportunist tendency of an incipient faction in the SWP that was looking in the direction of the Shachtmanites. The other was the opportunism that could be expected to come to the fore in the upsurge of the masses that was beginning in Europe as the second world war came to a close. That opportunism was not necessarily any big danger *within* the ranks of the Fourth International although it could *become* so under pressure from the Social Democracy or Stalinism.

Is anything more required to show how hard-pressed Comrade Germain is to find material for his counter-attack?

From a methodological point of view, Comrade Germain's polemic is very revealing. He dissolves the concrete into the abstract. The specific case of a concession to ultraleftism made at the last world congress is diluted by bringing forward cases of opportunism in other times and other places; it is then washed out by advancing the "general logic" favoring opportunism in certain situations. All of this is given a veneer of authoritativeness by quoting Comrade Cannon's observations concerning a general "historical law."

Comrade Germain seems to have a weakness for this method. A strikingly clear example appears on page 6 of his document where he quotes from a contribution made by Comrade Peter Camejo to the internal bulletin of the Mexican section.

In stressing the importance to our movement of carrying on consistent work in the Argentine trade unions, Comrade Camejo called attention to the fact that even under the reactionary military dictatorship there were no insuperable obstacles to this; just the contrary: ". . . it is easier to do revolutionary work within the trade unions of Argentina than in most countries in Latin America, or Europe for that matter."

Seizing on this sentence, Comrade Germain accuses Comrade Camejo of advancing "the thesis that it is 'easier' to do revolutionary work in the trade unions under a military dictatorship than under conditions of bourgeois democracy."

Take a close look at Comrade Germain's methodology.

Comrade Camejo called attention to a concrete fact about the trade unions in Argentina; i.e., that it is easier to do revolutionary work there than in the *rest* of Latin America, whether the regimes elsewhere are bourgeois democracies or *military dictatorships*. The situation in Argentina *in this respect* is so exceptional that it is easier to do revolutionary work in the unions there than in Europe (whether under bourgeois democracies or military dictatorships). Comrade Germain converts this specific fact into a broad generalization (for that is his method) and then ascribes this generalization to Comrade Camejo, having him reach the ridiculous position that *in general* it is easier to do revolutionary work in trade unions under military dictatorships than under bourgeois democracies.

Yet the fact is that it has been notoriously difficult to do revolutionary work inside the trade unions dominated by the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies in Western Europe (and in the United States in unions dominated by bourgeois-minded bureaucrats). In Argentina the difficulties are not as great. This happens to be one of the reasons why the Argentine situation is so important for our movement today and why our comrades in the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (the sympathizing section of the Fourth International) were a thousand times right in paying special attention to revolutionary work in the unions.

To illustrate how flawed Comrade Germain's reasoning is on this point, one need only utilize his method and turn the argument around. By doing that we would have to reach the conclusion that Comrade Germain is advancing the general thesis that it is easier to do revolutionary work in a Stalinist-ridden union under bourgeois democracy than it is in a union where the rank and file have established factory committees and the country, regardless of its regime, is racked by a prerevolutionary crisis.

How did a theoretician of Comrade Germain's caliber fall into such an abysmal pattern of thinking? It is because he is arguing for an erroneous orientation and this inevitably becomes reflected in his argumentation.

Unfortunately much more than a lapse in the polemics of an individual comrade is involved. The same methodology exhibited in these two instances is responsible for the orientations on a continental and international scale that have plunged the Fourth International into a deep crisis.

## Dragon Hunting in the North

In one of the literary flourishes in his counterattack, Comrade Germain has me turning a "strangely blind eye" to the "tail-endist" currents that are "developing today inside the world Trotskyist movement." The cause of this strangely blind eye, according to him, is that I have been seized by an "all-consuming passion for tracking down and slaying the dangerous dragon of 'rural guerrilla warfare' and 'terrorist Guevarism.'" ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 37.)

Comrade Germain, I must admit, is right on target. I can only plead guilty and see what can be done about that strangely blind eye. But Comrade Germain should not have stopped after catching me. My bad example is spreading in the international. Comrade Germain, for

instance, has now himself been seized by an all-consuming passion for tracking down and slaying dangerous dragons. The difference is that instead of trying to spot the head, as I have done, he examines the other end of the beast and insists on a distinctive anatomical feature. The animal must have a tail end.

In Canada he has found a hunting ground teeming with game of this kind. He bagged two specimens in short order. One was a leaflet issued under the name of the Young Socialists. The other was an editorial in *Labor Challenge*. The two items appeared during the 1972 general elections in Canada in which the LSA/LSO called for critical support to the New Democratic Party. To believe Comrade Germain, these two items constitute damning evidence that in adopting a stand of critical support for the Canadian version of a labor party and asking the workers to vote for it, the LSA/LSO tail-ended "reformism."

The leaflet and the editorial do contain bad formulations. Comrade Germain quite properly put down two points for his side on his debater's scorecard. One hopes that the Canadian comrades will draw the proper lesson about carefully checking every single item they publish. Careless, or ill-thought-out formulations cannot only distort or misrepresent the position of the LSA/LSO, they can be seized on by factionalists to make out a case that otherwise would have nothing to stand on.

Comrade Germain omits mentioning that the leaflet and the editorial were exceptions; he did not point out that the general line of the LSA/LSO was correct as shown by resolutions and by the general editorial policy of the LSA/LSO press. The cause of his oversight, Comrade Germain will agree, is the strangely blind eye possessed by dragon hunters.

With two dragons in his bag, Comrade Germain stalks another one, an article by Comrade Beiner in an issue of *Liberation*. This contains formulations that, to believe Comrade Germain, would show that Beiner holds a two-stage theory of revolution, putting him in the camp of Menshevism. Comrade Beiner, of course holds no such position.

On this slim basis, Comrade Germain delivers a lengthy lecture on nationalism, the national liberation struggle, and their relation to the theory of permanent revolution. If you abstract the factional bias, you can hardly be against some of this educational material, particularly the excellent quotations from Lenin and Trotsky. Other parts are wrong or self-contradictory.

Inasmuch as the Canadian comrades are preparing a detailed answer to Comrade Germain, I will not pause on these points, but proceed to his attack on Ross Dowson and the majority of the leadership of the Canadian section. Here is the tale as told by Comrade Germain:

"During the summer of 1972, we were confronted with an extraordinary spectacle. Within the space of a month, the Central Committee of the Canadian section, the LSA/LSO, first nearly unanimously adopted the general line of a political resolution expressing support for 'Canadian nationalism' as against 'US domination of Canada,' and then rejected the very same line by an overwhelming majority.

"We don't want to concentrate on the somewhat disturbing formal aspects of this development. How is it possible that without a word of explanation a majority

of Trotskyist leaders can adopt two completely conflicting positions, within a few weeks of each other, one of which is totally alien to the tradition of Leninism? . . .

"How could an experienced Trotskyist leader like Comrade Ross Dowson, trained for decades in the Trotskyist programme, arrive at such a gravely wrong position? Why did the large bulk of the Central Committee of the Canadian section follow him at first on that line?"

Good debater that he is, Comrade Germain has his answers ready: "Because," he says, "the method of approach to the national question in an imperialist country was wrong—and had been wrong too in the approach to the Quebecois question. Because, contrary to Lenin's advice, the Canadian comrades did not start from 'a clear notion of historical and economic circumstances,' i.e. from an *analysis of objective class relations*, but from speculations about the moods of the masses. What inspired Comrade Dowson to move to this wrong position was the fact that growing mass support seemed to manifest itself for concrete demands oriented against U.S. imperialism. At the root of his revisionism is the same deviation of tail-endism." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 35. Emphasis in original.)

The problems facing our Canadian comrades were not as simple—or as mysterious—as Comrade Germain would have us believe. And the solutions they found through their own independent efforts were completely in accordance with the program and principles of Leninism and Trotskyism.

Our movement has been confronted in recent years by the rise of a new current among the Canadian masses and particularly the vanguard. It has been labeled "Canadian nationalism." The term, in my opinion, is rather misleading although the movement has assumed some nationalist aspects. The phenomenon is contradictory. One of its prominent aspects was opposition to U.S. intervention in the Vietnamese civil war. It is antiwar, and antibomb—features that were especially outstanding in the mass protest actions against the nuclear bomb testing at Amchitka. These components, along with others, have given the movement a decidedly anti-American coloration—a phenomenon to be observed in comparable movements in many countries besides Canada.

These features alone compelled our Canadian comrades to pay increasingly close attention to this developing movement in view of its relation to their work in mobilizing mass actions in defense of the Vietnamese revolution around the theme of opposition to the complicity of the Canadian government in the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

The division in the leadership of the LSA/LSO began to occur when the "Canadian nationalist" movement reached such proportions as to require theoretical assessment as something *new* in Canadian politics. The precise details as to how the various comrades came to appreciate this were largely accidental—as in all such turns in our movement anywhere in the world—and hardly affect the substance of the process.

At first sight, Comrade Dowson's position appeared to be an extension of an earlier stand taken by the LSA/LSO. This gave it a great deal of weight. But other members of the leadership were uneasy about some of Comrade Dowson's conclusions. These appeared to contra-

dict other positions long held by the LSA/LSO. At what point had Comrade Dowson gone wrong? They felt that they faced a small crisis in reaching a correct and rounded position and they set out to resolve it. This decision was completely to the credit of the Canadian section, testifying in actuality to the solid foundations laid down by Comrade Dowson in particular in building the section.

A discussion, preparatory to a convention, was opened up. The discussion was thorough and democratic; in fact it was a model discussion well worth study by the entire Fourth International. "In the space of 11 months, some 58 issues of the English-language Internal Discussion Bulletin were published, containing 91 contributions—for a total of 1,665 pages of typewritten material and approximately 675,000 words. Of this, about half consisted of minority views in opposition to the line resolutions submitted by the Political Committee." ("Trotskyists Hold Cross-Canada Convention," *Intercontinental Press*, May 21, 1973, p. 602.)

The convention itself was conducted in exemplary fashion, the majority making a number of organizational concessions not called for in the rules of democratic centralism in order to assure various tendencies or special points of view the maximum opportunity to express their opinions.

The vote on the question of special interest to Germain, the position of Comrade Dowson on "Canadian nationalism," was 5 for, 48 against, 0 abstentions. The resolution presented by the majority of the Political Committee was adopted by a wide margin.

Comrade Dowson and the comrades who agreed with him fought hard for their position in the internal bulletin, in branch discussions, and on the floor of the convention. When the vote was in, they announced that they would abide by the decision of the majority. They dissolved the tendency they had formed to advance their viewpoint, although in the next internal discussion they may submit new material in defense of their position.

Taking the discussion as a whole, it marked an advance for the LSA/LSO in clarifying the problems facing Canadian Trotskyism, educating the membership, and in developing a new layer of cadres and leaders.

To anyone really acquainted with the Canadian section of the Fourth International this outcome was not unexpected. To anyone whose knowledge does not go beyond what appears in Comrade Germain's attack, the outcome may have appeared surprising. It does not fit in with Comrade Germain's description of an organization that no longer uses the Leninist method and is incapable of doing anything better than paddling a canoe in the wake of reformism.

Comrade Germain's description was misleading because he failed to describe the positions taken by the majority of the Political Committee that were presented for discussion by the membership. His one-sided presentation left the impression that the line advanced by the leadership of the Canadian section consisted of a reformist, tail-endist mess. He associated this mess with Comrade Dowson's position on Canadian nationalism. The truth was that Comrade Dowson stood in a minority in the leadership on this particular question. From Comrade Germain's biased presentation you would never guess that the leadership of the Canadian section of the Fourth International is of high level and quite capable of standing on its own

feet and learning from its mistakes.

Comrade Germain's factional attitude—for that is what it is—has an explanation. He is interested, as is his right, in advancing the international tendency he represents. In the Canadian section, a minority grouping that calls itself the Revolutionary Communist Tendency has been in opposition to the "regime" for some time. It got in touch with the leaders of the IEC Majority Tendency, who asked the RCT to send documentation as to its views. In return the RCT received advance copies of "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International."

The document was circulated privately among the members of the RCT during the preconvention discussion. The intensive barrage leveled by Comrade Germain in this document against the leadership of the Canadian section was not without effect among the members of the RCT. To the inexperienced or unwary, its seemingly unanswerable criticisms and charges appeared all the more unanswerable because the author withheld release of the document until ten days before the convention. The Canadian Trotskyist leaders under attack by Comrade Germain had no opportunity to defend themselves during the preconvention discussion.

One of the consequences was that the RCT developed an extremely factional attitude. At the convention they pictured the Québec wing of the Canadian section of the Fourth International as having "degenerated," a process they held to be "irreversible." The real Trotskyists in Québec, according to them, were to be found outside the Canadian section of the Fourth International; that is, in a small group headed by Michel Mill, who had split from the LSA/LSO. According to the RCT, the process of degeneration in the rest of the organization was entering its "final stage" but was not yet complete. Here some of the rank and file could still be "saved." In addition to this, the RCT maintained that the views of two other small groups on the fringe of the Trotskyist movement were genuinely Trotskyist. These groups, called the "Red Circle" and the "Old Mole," have been engaging in unity maneuvers in hope of attracting some members from the LSA/LSO.

Comrade Germain indicated his attitude on this question in the following passage:

"There is no justification for comrade Mill's group's split from the LSA-LSO. In our view, comrades who have serious differences with the majority line of their national sections should fight for their political views inside these sections."

They really should, shouldn't they? The language could hardly be called cutting; lest feelings had been wounded, however, Comrade Germain thoughtfully spread soothing salve on the splitters:

"But this being said, objectivity demands to state unequivocally that Comrade Mill has been proved right against the majority leadership of the Canadian section in both instances where he differed with it on the national question." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 32.)

Let us not forget that Comrade Germain failed to include a presentation of the four majority resolutions that were placed before the membership for discussion and a vote. (Three were available before he finished his contribution; the other became available before it was pub-

lished.) Let us not forget, too, that Comrade Germain's document circulated only among the members of the RCT prior to the convention so that the badge of approval pinned on Mill did not come up for objective examination. In short, Comrade Germain got away with it.

This helps us to understand better why, immediately following the convention, a number of members of the RCT split from the Canadian section of the Fourth International. It would have been a fitting exit had they lined up for a tap on the wrist and a kiss on the cheek as they tail-ended toward the camp of the man whom "objectivity demands to state has been proved right."

## The 'Khvostism' of the SWP

In handling the Socialist Workers Party, Comrade Germain is much more cautious and diplomatic than he is with the Canadian section of the Fourth International and the sympathizing section of the Fourth International in Argentina. However, this commendable tone is not shared by others in his camp. For instance, one of his zealous ultraleft admirers in Venezuela, apparently reflecting some of the things being said in private, accuses the leadership of the SWP of "congenital reformism," of "tail-ending . . . the religious and pacifist organizations" in the antiwar movement, of "religious respect for the laws of the bourgeois state, a dogmatic and routinist mentality, conservatism, total absence of revolutionary audacity, total absence of imagination and creative talent, and finally manifest pusillanimity." In his opinion, the "reformist cancer must be extirpated in the most energetic way. . . ." ("The International Undermined by Reformism," by J. Montero.) (By a curious coincidence—or is it so curious?—the cancer metaphor has been used by Comrade Germain's followers in Canada against the leadership of the LSA/LSO: "Clearly, the cancer of reformism has assumed malignant proportions in the Canadian section." ["Social Democracy and the LSA" by Bret Smiley and Walter Davis, *League for Socialist Action/Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière Discussion Bulletin*, No. 29, February 1973, p. 13.])

No doubt Comrade Germain will plead that he should not be held responsible for the extremist language of some of his followers. To that one must agree that they are not yet polished debaters. On the other hand, the direct correspondence between language and concept in their polemics is of advantage in bringing things into the open where they can be debated and clarified.

However, Comrade Germain is not without responsibility for the line of attack against the SWP voiced by his Venezuelan follower. The line is indicated by the following passage:

"But the SWP leadership has to seriously ponder whether its objections against the armed struggle orientation of the Bolivian and Argentine sections; whether its objections against the European Thesis; whether its tendency to extend exceptional characteristics of the Black and Chicano liberation struggle in the USA to a generalised concept of 'Trotskyism = consistent nationalism' in all kinds of oppressed or semi-colonial nationalities around the world; whether the blind eye it turns on obvious right-wing tail-endist deviations of the Canadian section's ma-

jority, of the Moreno group and of the minority tendency of the IMG, do not fundamentally originate from a wrong one-sided concept of the function of the Transitional Programme under conditions of growing working class upsurge, of imminent or already real pre-revolutionary crisis in society." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 48.)

To this list should be added the SWP's insistence on calling attention to clauses in the cease-fire accord in Vietnam that were injurious to the Vietnamese revolution; opposing the Stalinist line of dropping the demand "U.S. Troops Out Now!" in favor of demanding that Nixon "Sign Now!"; and refusing to place political confidence in either the North Vietnamese government or the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

Rather than take up all these points here—I have already dealt with some, while others requiring extensive treatment are being dealt with by others—I will confine myself to some observations on the items most pertinent to SWP policies in the U. S.

Let us begin with the course followed by the SWP in the antiwar movement. Here is Comrade Germain's argument:

"In the same sense, we wonder whether e.g. in the mass antiwar movement, which the SWP has helped to organize in such an exemplary way, it wouldn't have been necessary to *combine* a general united front approach toward mobilizing the maximum number of people for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam, with a more specific propaganda directed to a more limited vanguard, explaining the need to support the Vietnamese revolution till its final victory (i.e. the need to support the process of permanent revolution unfolding in Vietnam). While the largest possible mass demonstrations for the withdrawal of the US troops were undoubtedly the best contributions which American revolutionists could make to the victory of the Vietnamese revolution—and in that sense we entirely approved and approve the SWP's line in the antiwar movement—withdrawal of troops does not *equal* victory of the Vietnamese revolution, as subsequent events have stressed sufficiently. To continue a more limited solidarity movement with the Vietnamese revolution, once the US troops had been withdrawn, could have been prepared by a more combined approach to agitation and propaganda, which, incidentally, would have helped recruitment among vanguard elements too." (Ibid., p. 46.)

The SWP, of course, welcomes any suggestions on how to facilitate recruitment inside the main bastion of world imperialism. If any new recruiting techniques developed in Belgium, France, or Italy, for instance, can be applied in the U.S., the SWP will adopt them with gratitude. However, this does not seem to be Comrade Germain's main message—stepped-up recruitment would have been only an incidental gain. His main point is an implied criticism. I don't know why he does not state it frankly, since we also welcome criticism, particularly if it is valid.

What is the substance of the criticism? It appears to be that while the SWP did well in *organizing* a broad protest movement against the U. S. imperialist intervention in Vietnam, it should have concomitantly directed



itself to "a more limited vanguard" on the basis of supporting the Vietnamese revolution "till its final victory." In short, the SWP was guilty of tail-endism *politically*.

Unfortunately for Comrade Germain, this is not the first time such a charge has been leveled against the American Trotskyist movement. In the thirties it was one of the first things you heard from the ultralefts. *Khvostism* was the word then—the original Russian word straight out of Lenin's writings of 1901-02. The Marlenites, in particular, for years regularly distributed leaflets at our meetings in New York denouncing James P. Cannon's *khvostism*. They were beautifully mimeographed, too. One had to admire the persistence of the Marlenites, and also the consistency of their viewpoint, for they held that the ultimate source of this *khvostism* was Trotsky himself. Through the "French turn," Trotsky had tied the cart of the International Left Opposition to the bandwagon of the Social Democracy.

But, it can be argued, just because the ultralefts of the thirties proved to be wrong, that doesn't mean that the SWP hasn't succumbed to tail-endism today. Of course. My only point is that I have heard this before.

The underlying assumption of Comrade Germain's argument is that the masses in the United States became angry over the casualties suffered by U. S. troops in a foreign war that made no sense. At the same time there was a "limited vanguard" in the United States that was prepared to support the Vietnamese revolution "till its final victory." What the SWP did, according to this impression, was confine itself to merely organizing the masses in demonstrations on a politically limited basis, that is, on a level the masses could understand, while neglecting—if not rejecting—the more politically conscious "limited vanguard." Thus the SWP tagged along behind the masses, utilizing its organizational know-how to give greater effectiveness to actions the masses themselves were pressing for, while missing the political opportunities to be found among the vanguard currents.

Precisely how the SWP ought to have taken advantage of the alleged opportunities among the "limited vanguard" elements who were prepared to support the Vietnamese revolution "till its final victory" is not spelled out by Comrade Germain. Should we have joined them in scorning mass mobilizations and contenting ourselves with waving the Vietnamese flag and shouting, "Victory to the NLF"? Should we have joined them in leaving the main contingent of marchers and pulling stunts like provoking the cops? Or should we have done something more ambitious like taking a soft approach to the Weathermen as the nearest equivalent in the American "limited vanguard" to the Argentine PRT (Combatiente)?

It would be most useful if Comrade Germain would take the trouble to present his thinking more fully on the question of our possible errors in the antiwar movement and thus help to clarify a very important point of difference.

The truth is that from the very beginning, from the moment that Johnson initiated the large-scale intervention of U. S. imperialism in Vietnam, the SWP calculated the probable consequences, including the political perspectives opened up for American Trotskyism, and outlined a course that was adhered to until the troops were finally withdrawn. It is sufficient to check the discussion and the decisions at the SWP's 1965 convention to verify this.

The record clearly shows the foresight displayed by the leadership of the SWP. This alone destroys the charge of tail-endism.

It could have been argued that the projections decided on at the convention were wrong, or partially wrong. But no one did so. Not anyone in the SWP. And not anyone in the Fourth International.

The SWP did not go directly to the masses. It went first to the vanguard sectors that were interested in doing something to oppose the war. There the SWP stood in a decided *minority*. It had to battle for its projected course of action against opponents of all kind—the Stalinists, the pacifists, liberals, sectarians, and the "limited vanguard" of ultralefts and opportunists that looms so large in the thinking of Comrade Germain. The "limited vanguard" was strongly inclined to violent, guerrilla-type actions by a small minority in isolation from the entire population. In this chaotic conglomeration, the representatives of the SWP directed their arguments to all sectors. And our press did the same.

In the meetings of the antiwar committees, endless hours went into debating the most effective course of action. The cleavages occurred along the following main lines:

1. A tendency headed by the Stalinists that was interested in diverting the antiwar movement into bourgeois electoral channels through support of bourgeois "peace" candidates.

2. A tendency of ultraleft persuasion that ranged from the narrowest and most dogmatic kind of sectarians to would-be guerrillas interested in winning publicity for themselves through "exemplary," provocative, violent confrontations. The Stalinists and liberals were the major problem in the antiwar movement. Sometimes they blocked with the ultralefts.

3. The SWP and its allies who sought to make the movement as broad as possible but above all to mobilize it in the form of *mass demonstrations in the streets*. The logic of this was to accustom the masses to air their grievances through street actions, to accustom them to rely on themselves and not on the bourgeois parties, the Congress, or the White House, and to get the feel of the power of their numbers.

The line of the SWP was not only the best way to defend the Vietnamese revolution, as Comrade Germain wholeheartedly agrees, it was also the best way to advance the American revolution under the concrete circumstances. This was one reason it had such repercussions in the American political scene.

It is not true that the SWP had a *narrow organizational* approach to the antiwar movement, merely serving as stewards and sergeants, or organizers of what is known in France as a "service d'ordre," and that it neglected efforts to enter into a dialogue with the "limited vanguard." The dialogue took place as a clash of ideas and lines in the antiwar committees over several years. The SWP became more and more important in the antiwar movement because its political course—projected at the 1965 convention—won more and more adherents.

The key slogans advanced by the SWP became widely popular. The Stalinists began to feel encircled by Trotskyism. As for the "limited vanguard"—particularly such sectors as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Weathermen—these currents either withered on

the vine, retreated, were shattered by the success of the SWP and the Young Socialist Alliance, or slunk from the battle to trot after McGovern, supplementing this tail-ending with tail-wagging for the "peace" candidate of the Democratic party.

The SWP recruited satisfactorily from the antiwar movement. Moreover the recruitment was on a high level, for those who joined did so on the basis not only of support to the Vietnamese revolution "till its final victory" but on the basis of an understanding of how best to defend that revolution in the United States, and concomitantly of advancing the American socialist revolution.

What about the relationship between mass consciousness and the consciousness of the leadership of the SWP? This is decisive in deciding whether the leadership was guilty of tail-endism. In defining "economism," Lenin said that its "principal feature . . . is its incomprehension, even *defence, of lagging*, i. e., as we have explained, the lagging of the conscious leaders behind the spontaneous awakening of the masses." ("A Talk With Defenders of Economism," *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 317.) Was the leadership of the SWP guilty of incomprehension, of lagging, while the masses spontaneously pushed ahead?

The evidence shows that the leadership of the SWP saw the potentialities *from the moment President Johnson's decision to plunge into Vietnam became known*. The perspective of mass mobilizations, centered around the demand of immediate withdrawal of the troops, was adopted after the first campus-based actions initiated by the Students for a Democratic Society demonstrated the possibilities. The SWP pressed this line, not in the wake of others, but as a *small minority in opposition to all the other sectors of the vanguard*. And by all the means at its disposal—which were nevertheless painfully modest—the SWP *sought to raise the consciousness of the masses with regard to the true nature of the U. S. intervention*.

The degree of success achieved in raising the consciousness of the masses is another question. Some comrades may hold that little or nothing was accomplished—if I am not mistaken Comrade Germain can be counted among their ranks. My own view is that the course followed by the SWP in the antiwar movement did leave a mark in popular consciousness. The mark is observable in the readiness with which the most diverse currents in the United States take to the streets nowadays to air their grievances and to solicit support for their demands. Such actions seem as natural today as they were unnatural in the time of McCarthyism. It is part of the explanation for the swiftness with which the women's liberation movement blossomed in the streets, and the swiftness and widespread nature of the protest actions over sudden spurts in the cost of living. The current thirst for more and more details in the Watergate scandal is another indicator of the alteration in mass consciousness brought about by the antiwar movement and its boldness in carrying its protest into the streets.

I do not claim that the SWP itself has been able to capitalize as yet on these changes in the consciousness of the masses. I claim only that the SWP played a significant role in starting the process and that its assumption of this role was completely conscious.

In the stage now opening in the United States the consequences of the Vietnamese war will come increasingly

to the fore. High among those consequences is the changing attitude of the masses. We can expect new developments, probably involving increasing extension of the radicalizing process to the ranks of the working class. The SWP, too, has advanced as a consequence of its participation in the antiwar movement and in the radicalization of the youth from which it recruited a new generation of cadres. In fact the relationship of forces in the left was greatly altered by these successes.

Far from experiencing any crisis because the "limited vanguard" suffered deep political erosion, the SWP is in better position than at any time in its history to take advantage of the coming openings.

## Little USA's Around the Globe?

Let us consider another charge made by Comrade Germain—that the SWP has a "tendency to extend exceptional characteristics of the Black and Chicano liberation struggle in the USA to a generalized concept of 'Trotskyism = consistent nationalism' in all kinds of oppressed or semi-colonial nationalities around the world."

This is a strange charge. It is all the stranger in view of Comrade Germain's praise of the contributions made by the SWP in the field of nationalist struggles inside the United States. Listen to this:

"One of the greatest political achievements of the SWP in the last 15 years has been the correct understanding of the peculiar way in which the national question—the question of the oppression of the Black and Chicano people—poses itself inside the United States. . . . The analysis and projections made by Comrade George Breiman in that respect were among the most important creative contributions to Marxist thought realised by the world Trotskyist movement since the murder of Leon Trotsky." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 43.)

If the leaders of the SWP stand on a high enough theoretical level to correctly apply the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky on the national question to the particular and very complex development of the Black and Chicano movements in the United States, that would seem to be a rather substantial indication that they have correctly assimilated those teachings with regard to the national question in countries coming much closer to the "norm." Yet Comrade Germain's charge boils down to accusing the SWP leadership of not really understanding Lenin and Trotsky on the national question. For, to believe Comrade Germain, everywhere outside of the United States—and that's a lot of territory—the SWP is simply dead wrong on the national question. He declares: "To extend the same method of approach [the method used to reach a correct position on the Blacks and Chicanos—J. H.] to Quebecois nationalism, Arab nationalism, Bengali nationalism, Ceylonese nationalism, not to speak of 'anti-US imperialism,' Canadian or European nationalism, means to court disaster." (Ibid., p. 43.)

The only substance to this part of his counterattack is that while Comrade Germain has no differences whatsoever with the position of the SWP on the Black and Chicano movements—"among the most important creative contributions to Marxist thought realised by the world Trotskyist movement since the murder of Leon

Trotsky"—he does have some differences with the SWP on the national question elsewhere.

Is the SWP position on the national question outside of the United States a mere extrapolation of its position on the Black and Chicano movements? Or is Comrade Germain exaggerating? The differences he has with the SWP on this issue could just as well stem from different appreciations of how to apply the method developed by Lenin and Trotsky in certain places of particular interest to our movement such as Ireland or Palestine, without the Blacks or Chicanos even entering in.

When Comrade Germain gets around to explaining his precise differences with the SWP on the national question this may be seen much more clearly than now because it will become more concrete. Meanwhile he may count it a certain advantage to have induced some comrades to dismiss in advance the views of the SWP leaders on the national question in Ireland or the Middle East as merely part of a provincial effort to extend their findings on the national question in the United States to the globe as a whole. For more on this, I recommend Gus Horowitz's contribution "Comrade Germain's Errors on the National Question." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 10, July 1973.)

It is not solely on the national question that Comrade Germain advances such a puerile explanation. The main source of the differences currently under debate in the Fourth International, in his opinion, is to be found in one-sided national experiences that have been extrapolated onto the international arena. With regard to Bolivia and Argentina, the masses, he says, began to understand "the need for armed struggle" and began applying it. "*Under these specific circumstances* the approach towards armed struggle by revolutionary Marxists had obviously to be different from what it was in the USA and Canada. To have an identical approach to this problem in North and South America means to generalise nationally limited and determined experiences into universal rules. In our opinion, this is to a large extent the origin of the present discussion between the leadership of the SWP and the majority leadership of the Fourth International." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 44. Emphasis in original.)

In the same vein, he writes: "There is a real danger that cadres recruited, educated and experienced essentially through actions determined by these national peculiarities will tend to generalise them on an international scale; that methods of party building, of tactics and of orientation in the mass movement which may be adequate in the United States will apply to Argentina or Bolivia where they are inappropriate to the needs of the given stage in the class struggle; that Argentine comrades will commit the same mistakes by generalising their own experience to the whole of Asia or Southern Europe; the European comrades will tend to export their own experiences to Chile or to Mexico." (Ibid., p. 43.)

That possibility exists, of course, and we must be alert to the danger. Concretely, however, the opposite danger has proved to be more real. This is the danger of generalizing from the experiences of others, even the bad mistakes of others, and *importing* them. Comrade Germain really ought to study more carefully the instances we have pointed out in earlier contributions where the guerrilla orientation decided on for Latin America found a reflection in other sections.

In any case, we express our appreciation to Comrade Germain for admitting the possibility that European comrades might tend to export their own experiences to Chile or to Mexico. Actually, however, he does not cite any instances of this. It seems that he has been able to find disturbing examples only in the Western Hemisphere.

His estimate of the leadership of the SWP is hardly flattering. The opinion that we tend to extend our position on the Black and Chicano struggles to Québec, the Middle East, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and god knows where else, shows that Comrade Germain considers us to have no grasp whatsoever of the international nature and structure of capitalism. As he sees it, we in the SWP regard all other countries as but small replicas of the United States in which all problems are roughly the same qualitatively and in which our positions, particularly on party building, must perforce fit well, if on a Lilliputian scale.

How Comrade Germain reached such a view is not easy to ascertain. From Europe it may well seem that living on the western shores of the Atlantic is not conducive to studying, assimilating, and applying the basic concepts of Marxism.

As to exporting lessons on party building derived primarily from the American scene, all of the leaders of the SWP understand that the possibilities are quite limited. The main contribution the SWP can offer to the international lies along somewhat different lines.

One of the principal features of the American Trotskyist movement, setting it apart from its very inception from all other currents in the American radical movement, has been its effort to learn from the Russian Leninists and to apply their strategy and the lessons of their experiences to the American scene. It takes little reading in the writings of Comrade Cannon to discover that one of his main concerns has been to drive home by both precept and example the need to learn from the Russians. *In this respect, the SWP is not a typical American organization.* In theory and program the roots of the SWP lie in the Europe of Marx and Engels and the Bolsheviks.

To learn from the Russians is conceived by the SWP as applying not only to revolutionists in the U.S. but to those in other lands. That it could be done at least to a certain degree in the U.S. with all its peculiarities shows that it can be done in other countries; and in all likelihood much better.

In relation to the Fourth International, the American Trotskyists have sought to defend and build on the Bolshevik tradition and to help others do the same.

It is true that we also represent the continuity of the American revolutionary-socialist movement going back to the Haymarket martyrs, and this may be of some interest to comrades in other lands if for no other reason than the fact that we are laboring for the world socialist revolution in the heartland of imperialism, where the decisive battle with capitalism will be fought out. Trotsky, as is well known, was intensely interested in the class struggle in the United States and its potentialities. But we know very well what difficulties face any attempt to export the *American* revolutionary experience. We consider the difficulties to be at least comparable to the effort we in the United States must make to absorb the lessons—positive and negative—of party building in India, Japan, Argentina, or France.

It is sad that Comrade Germain has never understood our attitude. From his viewpoint the SWP, suffering from a messianic delusion, is seeking—without at all being aware of it—to export American *khvostism*. Naturally he will have none of it.

From the viewpoint of the SWP, matters appear in a different light. Our continuity is not only American, it is *Russian*; and this Russian continuity is quite direct. It is the continuity of the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky that we want to maintain in the Fourth International against any challenge to them or departure from them. If there is a certain *khvostism* in this, we do not mind having it thrown up to us.

## Tail-Endism on a Higher Plane

Comrade Germain's discovery that the SWP is a fountainhead of tail-endism in the world Trotskyist movement is rather recent. It came as he was searching for arguments to cover up the adaptation to ultraleftism that the majority of the United Secretariat has been guilty of since the Ninth World Congress. Comrade Germain's approach suggests to us that it might be worthwhile to consider the guerrilla orientation from a somewhat different angle from the one we have used up to now, which was to view its *effects*, or potential effects, on the program and practice of the Fourth International.

Lenin faced the problem in his time of revolutionists who discounted or did not see the importance of long-range political foresight and planning, as concretized in building a combat party, and who confined themselves to issues of immediate concern to the working class, thus finding themselves trailing behind the masses in a period of upsurge. He labeled this fault "tail-endism." However, this does not necessarily exhaust the subject. As dialecticians it is worth asking, "Can tail-endism appear at a higher level?"

Without going into earlier examples, we can say from the recent experience of our own movement that the answer is yes. The majority of the United Secretariat, with Comrades Maitan and Germain in the lead, have tail-ended the guerrilla movement in Latin America.

To show this, let us again review the facts concerning the political positions of the PRT (Combatiente). The leadership of this organization openly proclaims its indebtedness to Che Guevara as the main source of its ideology. It proclaims its indebtedness also to Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi Minh, General Giap, and Kim Il Sung. It acknowledges, rather grudgingly, that Leon Trotsky must likewise be regarded as a revolutionist.

The PRT (Combatiente) regards itself as being in the camp of the Albanian, Chinese, North Korean, and North Vietnamese Communist parties, all of which it considers to be revolutionary parties. It points to the Cuban Communist Party as a model, and it follows its political leadership. As for the Fourth International, the PRT (Combatiente) is willing to say that it is not totally bankrupt, but it maintains that the Fourth International cannot be rehabilitated as a revolutionary force. Perhaps in a Fifth International the salvageable bits of the Fourth International could be included along with the genuinely revolutionary parties maintained by the governments of Albania, China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cuba.

The political direction in which the PRT (Combatiente) has been moving is shown by its following the lead of the Cuban Communist Party in approving the Kremlin's invasion of Czechoslovakia.

It is absolutely clear from its program that the PRT (Combatiente) is not a Trotskyist organization. Yet the Ninth World Congress recognized it as an official section of the Fourth International. How is such an error to be explained?

First of all, the delegates at that congress did not know that the PRT (Combatiente) held such views. This was not the fault of the PRT (Combatiente) inasmuch as they had indicated them in a substantial way in a pamphlet called *El Unico Camino Hasta el Poder Obrero y el Socialismo* ("The Only Road to Workers Power and Socialism." The full text has been translated into English and is available in *International Information Bulletin* No. 4, October 1972.)

A copy of this pamphlet was brought to the world congress by a member of the PRT (La Verdad) and some of the delegates were able to get a look at it between sessions. However, the representatives of the majority of the United Secretariat assured the congress that the document represented only the personal views of the three authors, Carlos Ramírez, Sergio Domecq, and Juan Candela, at a certain stage, and that it did not represent the position of the organization, which stood on the program of the Fourth International.

Consequently, in deciding between the claims of La Verdad and El Combatiente, the two factions in the PRT, the delegates at the Ninth World Congress did not use a political criterion but merely a numerical criterion (as best as it could be determined at the time) in settling on which held a majority in the section.

That was how a non-Trotskyist organization in Latin America became an official section of the Fourth International.

It was not until last December, when a member of the majority of the United Secretariat decided to make a self-criticism, that it became known that at the Ninth World Congress the majority of the United Secretariat was aware of the fact that the PRT (Combatiente) did not stand on the program of the Fourth International and was not a Trotskyist organization.

The majority of the United Secretariat made a secret decision to use a soft approach toward the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) in hope of getting into their good graces and gradually winning them over to Trotskyism. The objective, if not the method, was of course laudable—it was to gain a base for Trotskyism in the guerrilla movement. In this the objective paralleled that of the tail-endists of Lenin's day, who quite legitimately wanted to gain a base for socialism in the mass movement. However, the soft approach proved to be a procrastinating approach and none of the majority of the United Secretariat ever got around to taking up the anti-Trotskyist positions held by the leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) and discussing with them why these positions were wrong in principle and should be given up in favor of the program and practices of Trotskyism.

This was not all. Representatives of the majority of the United Secretariat sat in leadership meetings of the PRT (Combatiente) where key questions were taken up and did not voice any differences, according to the leaders

of the PRT (Combatiente). On the contrary, they voiced approval of the course followed by the PRT (Combatiente).

We still have not come to the end of the story. Members of the majority of the United Secretariat publicly recorded their approval and satisfaction with the PRT (Combatiente). Again and again they pointed to the PRT (Combatiente) as a model section of the Fourth International, perhaps the only one outside of the Bolivian section that was really applying the line of the Ninth World Congress.

The majority of the United Secretariat took this stand in face of the fact that the PRT (Combatiente) continued to develop the line of *El Unico Camino*. In 1970 at the Fifth Congress of the PRT, a number of resolutions to this effect were passed. (See *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 5, April 1973.) Comrade Maitan said a year later in a public article: "The strategic perspective the Argentine comrades are following is the one laid down by the Ninth World Congress of the Fourth International—elaborated and made more precise by the last two national congresses of the PRT—of a prolonged armed struggle, a revolutionary war, which might involve the intervention of the imperialists and thus could not be waged without profound ties to, and increasing participation by, the masses." ("Political Crisis and Revolutionary Struggle in Argentina," *Intercontinental Press*, April 26, 1971, p. 387.)

When *El Unico Camino* was finally published in an English translation in the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* last October, its contents, along with some public declarations of leaders of the PRT (Combatiente), quite naturally shocked the cadres of the Fourth International. The majority of the United Secretariat, in anticipation of this unfavorable reaction, decided to open up a discussion with the "official section of the Fourth International."

This was done in a rather surreptitious way. I say "surreptitious" because the United Secretariat as a whole was not consulted about this move or how best to handle it. The Political Committee of the SWP learned about it only accidentally. It can be questioned that opening up a dialogue with the PRT (Combatiente) was actually of primary concern to the majority of the United Secretariat. The gesture was much too little and much too late. Perhaps the move had something to do with a problem considered to be more acute—how to prepare the rank and file of the Fourth International for the facts about the situation in Argentina and the less than brilliant role of the majority of the United Secretariat in it. This would explain why they maneuvered surreptitiously; their own factional interests were placed above those of the movement as a whole.

They got the answer to be expected. The PRT (Combatiente) accused them of trying to organize a secret faction in the official section behind the back of the leadership. In addition, the PRT (Combatiente) broke off relations with the Ligue Communiste. And the PRT (Combatiente) demanded the expulsion of a leading member of the majority of the United Secretariat who had been entrusted with maintaining relations with them.

The leaders of the PRT (Combatiente) had previously indicated publicly that they did not view themselves as Trotskyists and did not like being called that. Lately they have again stressed this point to reporters of the

capitalist press, telling them in addition that they have taken their distance from the Fourth International.

We now come to what might be called a "classical" case of tail-ending on a higher plane. In face of all that has happened, Comrade Germain still persists in defending the guerrilla strategy of the PRT (Combatiente). His defense of that course (and the similar course of the Bolivian section) constitutes the most substantial part of "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," his weightiest contribution up to now in the internal discussion.

There is a certain grotesqueness to this. The guerrillas have spit in his well, given him the brush-off, and are departing in the company of bitter political enemies of the Fourth International. Yet Comrade Germain continues to run after them, shouting: "Don't leave us! You did wonderful! You carried out the line of the Ninth World Congress!"

And to veteran Trotskyists who disagreed with that guerrilla line, Comrade Germain shakes an admonishing finger: "Tail-endists! You are following in the wake of the masses!"

To cap everything, it requires no theoretical genius to discover the source that has polluted the program of the official Argentine section of the Fourth International. It has been named by the PRT (Combatiente) leaders, who are proud of it. It is Maoism, Guevarism, and a little Brezhnevism via Havana.

*Could anything be plainer than the fact that the main purpose of Comrade Germain's "expose" of the alleged tail-endism of the SWP, the PST, and the LSA/LSO in relation to the masses is to cover up his own very real tail-endism with respect to the Latin American guerrilla movement?*

We are now in position to grasp why Comrade Germain drags in so many subsidiary and irrelevant issues in his polemic. It is to avoid focusing on the pros and cons of the line on Latin America, the central issue in dispute. Defending an erroneous line, he is incapable of following a procedure that would be most conducive to the necessary full clarification required for the work of the next world congress.

Factional motives likewise determined other aspects of his document. Since the Ninth World Congress, the majority leaders have shifted from support of the orientation toward rural guerrilla war to support of urban guerrilla war and then to defense of armed struggle in the abstract. Finally they were confronted with the disastrous results of their policy in Bolivia and Argentina. Comrade Germain set out to camouflage all this.

To muddy up the crucial issue at stake, he grabbed whatever scraps of evidence he could find to give plausibility to his concoction about tail-endism, which he put forward to counter the charge made by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency of adaptation by the IEC Majority Tendency to ultraleftism.

Besides this, he sought to provide a catchall document designed to bridge over the differences among the leaders of his own tendency and to solicit support from those who have recognized the errors of the Latin American orientation but do not yet see that the resolution on Europe submitted by the IEC Majority Tendency points logically to similar results.

### III. THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

#### What We Have in Common

In the final section of his contribution "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," Comrade Germain raises a very important question. In discussing the need to build a leadership team in the Fourth International, he stresses the fact that a common program and common principles exist in our movement today, binding it together. He continues:

"Majority and minority tendencies alike share the same views on the nature of capitalism and socialism, on the necessity of a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, on the theory of permanent revolution, on the necessity of political revolutions in the bureaucratized workers states, on the nature of labour bureaucracies, both in the unions and revisionist mass parties of the capitalist countries and in the bureaucratized workers states, i. e., on reformism and Stalinism, on the Leninist theory of organisation and of the state, on the Transitional Programme, on the need to build revolutionary vanguard parties of the proletariat, on the need to conquer the majority of the toiling masses before power can be wrested from the ruling classes, on the way to build a classless society. Important differences exist on the field of political analysis and evaluation of various orientations of intervention in the class struggle, in some parts of the world. But these differences do not destroy the programmatic unity of the movement." (P. 49.)

To illustrate this point, Comrade Germain cited the following example:

"As a matter of fact, a few months ago, leading representatives of the majority and the minority tried to edit together a full programme for the Fourth International, encompassing, in addition to the transitional programme, an analysis of class society, capitalism, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of a classless society, following indications of Trotsky of 1938. They agreed without too many difficulties on practically the whole draft, except a couple of paragraphs concerning the exact formulations relative to the place of armed struggle in the class struggle and the building of the revolutionary party. These differences in formulation reflect the differences at present discussed in the pre-world-congress discussion. But they likewise reflect the large field of programmatic agreement which ties the world movement together." (P. 49.)

To further clarify the example mentioned by Comrade Germain, a few more details should perhaps be added. The project was begun several years ago in response to a suggestion made by Comrade Pia of Switzerland. The work was divided into three parts. Comrade Ernest Mandel undertook to write a draft on the first section dealing with the origin of capitalism and the course of its development. Comrade Pierre Frank worked on the last part dealing with the programmatic positions of the Fourth International vis-à-vis the degenerated or deformed workers states and the type of society the Fourth International is battling for. I worked up a draft to go in between these sections. This was to be the main programmatic proposals of the Fourth International in the current

international scene. As Comrade Germain indicates, I drew heavily on the Transitional Program written by Trotsky in 1938.

On the sections drawn up by Comrade Mandel and Comrade Frank, no special difficulties were encountered. We found it easy to agree on a summary statement of the main contradictions of capitalism, how they arose, and what they point to, as well as a codification of the position of the Fourth International in the struggle against bureaucratism and for socialism. The difficulties came over the section I brought in. In fact we ran into somewhat of an impasse over it. Comrade Mandel then proposed that he bring in a revised draft. That draft, too, proved to be unacceptable. The same stumbling blocks, reflecting the differences under discussion in the International, remained. To me it was plain that the problems encountered in trying to reach a mutually satisfactory draft could not be resolved for the time being and that it was better to lay the entire project aside until the differences could be clarified and decided on at the next world congress. This procedure was agreed on.

Thus the example used by Comrade Germain may not be the best one, for it still remains to be seen whether the differences that stood in the way of agreement on a final draft will be resolved or whether they will develop into a dispute over programmatic questions.

However, not to disappoint Comrade Germain, I think that an example that does prove his point in the main can be found. No great research is required. All that is needed is a reminder. In the very question that has led to the sharpest differences—the orientation of the Fourth International in Latin America—basic agreement exists not only on program but on the analysis of the broad economic, social, and political situation.

I called special attention to this as an observer at the Ninth World Congress. Already in February 1969, in the discussion preparatory to the congress, I noted that about "one half" of the draft resolution on Latin America consisted of "a summary of the economic, social, and political conditions in Latin America that point to the perspective of socialist revolution," and that "the general conclusions outlined in the resolution are shared by probably all of the revolutionary tendencies and even by the more objective specialists in the imperialist camp. From the viewpoint of the Trotskyist movement there is every reason for the greatest optimism about the perspectives in Latin America." ("Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America," *Discussion on Latin America* (1968-1972) pp. 17-18.)

In a report given at a meeting of the New York branch of the Socialist Workers Party on June 4, 1969, I repeated this point: "There was general agreement on the first part of the resolution which describes the conditions in Latin America as being prerevolutionary, almost revolutionary, or at least of explosive proportions over the entire continent. This situation has existed, in my opinion, in Latin America for about ten years or more so that there was really nothing new in this, beyond recording how difficult it is becoming for the oligarchies in Latin America and their American backers to keep the lid on the situa-

tion." ("Report on the Third World Congress of the Fourth International Since Reunification." Ibid., p. 54.)

In view of these statements, it is perfectly apparent that Comrade Germain's point is well taken that agreement on broad programmatic questions exists today in the Fourth International.

We are confronted with a puzzling paradox. In face of the solid programmatic agreement, how are we to account for the sharp differences that have arisen?

The contention might be made that one of the two sides (make your own choice) is simply playing a cynical game, professing agreement on the programmatic level while acting quite differently. It could be argued, too, that one of the two sides (again make your own choice) is of such low theoretical level that it really does not understand programmatic questions.

Still another hypothesis might be that class forces are bearing down on one of the two sides, and that because of their class origin, class composition, or lack of political consciousness, they have responded to these forces. Such may be the case in the final analysis; however, if it is the case it has to be *proved*. That is, the mechanism by which the class pressure is exerted would have to be pointed out, and it would also have to be shown *why* there has been a response among the leaders to this pressure. Otherwise, reasoning along these lines would remain speculative and impressionistic. Lacking demonstration as to its validity, it could appear as mere factionalism.

## Methodological Source of the Differences

What, then, is the source of the differences? This has been indicated by Comrade George Novack in his excellent contribution to the discussion "Two Lines, Two Methods." He calls attention to the chain of reasoning used by the majority of the United Secretariat in deciding on the guerrilla orientation that was adopted at the last congress. It was correct, he says, to incorporate certain broad factors into their analysis of the situation in Latin America such as the traditional use of the "officer caste to intervene, bridle or crush the unruly masses, and stabilize the system of private ownership through military regimes." ("Two Lines, Two Methods," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 3, March 1973, p. 33.)

The methodological mistake of the majority, Comrade Novack continues, "was to transform long-range tendencies into absolutes and to slight the intermediate factors that dictate the choice of tactics best suited to advance the revolutionary movement at a given conjuncture. They violated the first maxim of Marxist thought: the truth is concrete." (Ibid., p. 33.)

Some of the aspects of the methodological mistake have already been debated. For instance, one of the first criticisms we made of the Latin American resolution was that it projected a *tactical* course for our movement on a *continental scale* and for a prolonged period. The sponsors of this sweeping tactic paid no attention to the criticism, but went ahead, orienting toward, preparing for, and engaging in guerrilla war for a prolonged period on a continental scale. Consequently it could only be con-

cluded that they had elevated a tactic into a *strategy*, which was another methodological error. This raised a number of related questions, particularly the way the guerrilla strategy affected party building.

As adherents of dialectical materialism, the *origin* of the new orientation necessarily loomed large to us. The origin was no mystery inasmuch as the turn undertaken by the Ninth World Congress occurred in the context of the guerrilla line advocated and practiced on a continental scale by hundreds of followers of Che Guevara, including Guevara himself. This was further confirmed by the insistence of Comrades Maitan, Mandel, Frank, and their partisans on the need to respond in a positive way to the practical questions raised by the guerrilla currents in Latin America. It was quite significant that in arguing about this need they disregarded the experience of our Peruvian comrades in leading peasant masses, although that experience stands as a widely recognized historical example of the capacities of Trotskyism on the level of practice. They likewise disregarded our suggestion to draw up a balance sheet on the chief guerrilla experiments in Latin America following the Cuban revolution, although such a balance sheet is a necessity if we are to place the practical questions in this field into proper focus.

The attempt to find at least sanction, if not an origin, for the new orientation in the works of Lenin and Trotsky remained unconvincing. It was too obviously intended as a reply to critical voices inside the Fourth International. In circles outside the Fourth International, particularly among most guerrillas, the authority of Lenin and Trotsky were considered irrelevant. Power grows out of the barrel of a gun, in their opinion; not out of the theories developed by the Bolshevik party.

Let us consider a bit further the method used by the majority of the United Secretariat. In essence it consists of drawing tactical prescriptions directly from broad analytical projections that in themselves may be correct but that do not correspond to the current concrete situation.

A hypothetical example of the error may serve to illustrate the point. It could be predicted that in the United States the class struggle will sharpen in a very acute way within a short time, say four or five years. Strikes, it may be foreseen, will break out all over. These may well lead to a general strike that will pose the question of creating organs of dual power. *Therefore*—and this is where the mistake comes in—the *present* task of the revolutionary party must be to orient toward and begin practical preparations for a general insurrection.

For purposes of illustrating the point, I have purposely utilized an extreme instance. Lest this hypothetical example appear too absurd, it is worth recalling that in the United States one of the currents that emerged from the disintegration of the Students for a Democratic Society decided, on the basis of forecasting a revolutionary situation in the coming period, that the correct tactic for right now was, among other things, to form a "Red Army." The Revolutionary Youth Movement I (not to be confused with the Revolutionary Youth Movement II) trained in karate, in "snake-dancing" in the style of the militant Japanese students, in "primitive weaponry" (molotov cocktails, time bombs, and dynamite where available), and

in "street fighting." This was in 1969. Where the RYM I is today no one knows. Perhaps they will surface from the underground when their general forecasts are borne out.

The methodological error may appear elementary and even self-evident. Why should we discuss it? The hard fact is that it is not understood by the comrades of the IEC Majority Tendency. The cleavage at the Ninth World Congress resulted from their insistence on laying down a general tactical prescription for an entire continent for a prolonged period. The relation between tactics and strategy has remained in dispute since then. It has arisen again in connection with the IEC majority resolution on European tasks and perspectives. Moreover, it is directly involved in such a crucial question as the relationship of the international center to the sections.

It is high time that we recognized the importance of a correct appreciation of tactics and its dialectical relation to fields of broader scope.

What do we require from theory to enable us to block out a correct political line for our movement? First of all, theory coupled with empirical data must provide us with a correct analysis of the objective course of developments in society. Secondly, it must provide us, for purposes of orientation, with correct projections on the most probable course of developments. Thirdly, it must provide us with accurate guidelines to action based on the objective course of developments but also based on past experiences of the revolutionary movement. (It is perilous to leave out the lessons of the past!)

While we demand these things of theory, we must also recognize that theory lags behind the motion of reality. Our analyses therefore carry built-in limitations that make adjustments necessary from time to time.

If we take phenomena in a very broad way and over a long time span, little adjustment is required. For example, we do not need to adjust the analysis showing that capitalism is doomed and that it will eventually be replaced by worldwide socialism through evolution of the class struggle.

The assessment of a shorter time span may well require some adjustment. A good example is the theoretical appreciation of the depression-prosperity cycle. For the period since the eve of World War II, this had to be adjusted to take new developments into account that temporarily lessened the acuteness of the two phases.

In the case of highly concrete phenomena, it becomes dangerous to rely simply on a broad analysis, correct though it may be, in determining an axis of work. To do so opens the way to errors ranging from bad misjudgments to opportunist or ultraleft deviations.

Faced with a complex flow of data, many unknowns, and rapid changes, a revolutionary party must know how to make rapid adjustments. Anything that stands in the way of this is bad. The possibility even exists of a correct general analysis itself standing in the way of making needed adjustments if its limitations are not properly understood. Consequently our methodology must provide ways of making adjustments.

This is where tactics enters in. In dropping from long-range analysis to the question of immediate party tasks, a qualitative change appears; we move from strategy to the level of tactics. While their dialectical relationship must

not be forgotten, mixing them up can prove costly. The very nature of tactical problems demands that they be left open for local, direct, immediate decision and action and not be incorporated into a broad analysis in the form of prescriptions or directives. This theoretical conclusion has been confirmed by the hard experience of generations of revolutionists.

For our movement, it should be part of the ABC's that decisions on a tactical level must be left to the leaderships of parties integrated into the national scene. There is no other way to bring revolutionary practice into proper correspondence with concrete reality. It is obvious that revolutionary experience and continuity of leadership play a key role in this. There is no substitute. Revolutions cannot be guided from afar. Many consequences follow from this, above all the importance of building sections that can stand on their own feet and make correct decisions.

It would be excellent if we could say that the methodological mistake committed at the Ninth World Congress was the first of its kind in the Fourth International. Unfortunately that would not be true. A bad instance occurred in the early fifties.

At that time the leadership of the Fourth International, mainly under the inspiration of Michel Pablo, came to the conclusion that another war between imperialism and the Soviet Union was inevitable. The analysis from which this conclusion was drawn showed further that the Stalinist bureaucracies, or significant sectors of them, above all in Western Europe, could be expected to move in a leftward direction. Out of competition with them, if for no other reason, the Social Democratic bureaucracies could be expected to react similarly.

From this general analysis of what would most likely happen in the event of another war involving the Soviet Union, a direct general tactical conclusion was drawn for immediate application on a worldwide scale—"entryism sui generis."

The objective of the tactic was to bring the cadres of the small Trotskyist movement into close contact with the ranks of the Communist and Social Democratic parties so as to increase the possibilities of winning influence and gaining recruits once the war to come impelled left-centrist wings to form and move in a revolutionary direction.

Sections of the Fourth International embarked upon a tactic that did not correspond with the concrete situation and tasks facing them but with hypothetical situations that might come about sometime in the future—hopefully within three years or so.

When it became clear a half decade later that "war-revolution" was not in the offing, new reasons for following the tactic of entryism sui generis were found. The net effect of that was to convert entryism sui generis into something more than a tactic. It was pursued with iron discipline for about seventeen years; and wearing a left-centrist mask became a way of life for some comrades. In many instances the end result was a disaster; in some simply zero. It is dubious that it accomplished anything in any country that might not have been done more easily and surely by other means. But that is another story.

In arriving at the original decision to make a turn to entryism sui generis, Pablo overlooked or discounted the possibility of countertrends that could postpone the



date of the imperialist war against the Soviet Union.

This historical background offers considerable illumination on the derivation of comparable orientations today. It is clear that one of the problems facing our movement, a problem lying at the heart of the current dispute, is the existence of a dangerous gap between theory and practice. Despite a correct analysis of the main economic, social, and political trends in Latin America, the Ninth World Congress, through incorrect methodology, projected a course of action that led the official sections of the Fourth International in Bolivia and Argentina into catastrophes.

## Tactics Affect Program

The most striking example of what the gap between theory and practice can lead to is provided by the experience with the PRT (Combatiente). The majority of the United Secretariat maintained that the official section of the Fourth International was carrying out in model fashion the line decided on at the Ninth World Congress. The politics of the PRT (Combatiente), however, was not Trotskyist; it was Guevarist. How could an organization hewing to Guevarist positions carry out in practice the program of the Fourth International, which is Trotskyist?

One possibility is that the PRT (Combatiente) had such a gap between its theory and practice that it put a low rating on its political positions. The other possibility is that the majority of the United Secretariat had such a gap between its theory and practice that it disregarded Trotskyist political positions, accepting the practice of the Argentine Guevarists as an expression of its own political orientation.

These flagrant contradictions were resolved by the PRT (Combatiente), which knew that after all it was not a Trotskyist organization and which saw, as its positions finally became known to the rank and file of the Fourth International, that it could not hope to win the majority it had hoped for. To remain in a minority position was intolerable to the leaders of this guerrilla group — politics doesn't count that much with them. They therefore decided to bring their romance with the majority of the United Secretariat to a close. Perhaps the Cubans helped them to reach this decision.

From this telling example, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the majority of the members of the United Secretariat downgraded politics. They put it on the shelf in return for a guerrilla grouping they could boast of as being "Trotskyist."

This lowering of political standards came as a consequence of the gross error in tactical orientation committed at the Ninth World Congress. Persistence in the error began to affect the firmness of the support given by the United Secretariat majority to the program of our movement. They bent to the politics and program of a Guevarist formation. Tactics thus served notice of its dialectical relationship to program.

It is true that the leaders of the IEC Majority Tendency are trying to recover from their backsliding by beginning to offer political criticisms of the PRT (Combatiente). This is a welcome turn, but the motives for it remain clouded inasmuch as no explanation has been offered up to now on how it could happen that the majority

of the United Secretariat found itself in tow to a Guevarist group.

The ramifications of the error extend in multiple directions, as I have noted above. One of the most evident is in party building. This is hardly surprising, for in the revolutionary struggle the unity of theory and practice finds its most palpable expression in the building of a party to guide the way in overcoming capitalism and building socialism. A gap between theory and practice inevitably registers most acutely here. That is one reason why the Leninist theory and practice of party building has been a key issue in every serious internal struggle in the revolutionary-Marxist movement for three quarters of a century.

The central organizational objective of the Fourth International and its leadership is to help build strong sections of the Trotskyist movement, utilizing the approach exemplified by Lenin in constructing the Bolshevik party. In Argentina since 1969 we have been provided with a truly exceptional sample of how the two opposing lines have promoted or obstructed this aim. What have been the gains and losses for the Fourth International there?

The closest that Comrade Germain comes to an itemized balance sheet on this in his lengthy document is as follows: "According to the information available, the contention of the minority document that the PRT is today much weaker than the Verdad group in militants is subject to some doubt too." (P. 17.) This assessment implies that the two groups stand about on a par, so far as the international is concerned. In actuality this is not the case.

The 1969 congress recognized the PRT (Combatiente) as the official section on a numerical basis. The majority banked everything on the PRT (Combatiente), backed it to the hilt, censured anyone who dared doubt the correctness of its course and conduct, and shielded it from all criticism until the end of 1972. The PRT (Combatiente) was held up as a model that showed the way to the rest of the world movement and demonstrated in action what the 1969 turn could achieve. The PRT (La Verdad), on the other hand, was denied help, was publicly attacked, and virtually read out of the Fourth International.

And what was the outcome? After giving birth to four or five or more fragments, the PRT (Combatiente) disavowed Trotskyism, severed connections with its principal sponsor, the Ligue Communiste of France, and took its distance from the Fourth International. The negative experience with the PRT (Combatiente) ought henceforth to be included in a handbook on party building methods under the heading: "How to Ruin a Section From Afar."

The PRT (La Verdad) tendency, on the other hand, came out of semilegality, fused with the Coral wing of the Argentine Socialist party, conducted an extensive, energetic, and principled electoral campaign under adverse circumstances, increased its numbers and influence among the advanced workers and created a youth organization of some size. Today it has assembled the largest group of Trotskyists in the history of our Latin American movement.

Who will contest these facts? They speak louder than sophisticated arguments. The group that carried out the

line of the Ninth World Congress brought nothing but political discredit to the Fourth International. The group that followed the traditional methods of our movement based on a bold and flexible application of the Transitional Program has grown considerably and is loyally committed to the Fourth International.

These contrasting consequences say a great deal about the right and wrong approaches to party building, the worth of the contending lines, and the importance of correct tactics in advancing the Fourth International.

Before leaving this point, let me state once more why we have not responded to Comrade Germain's repeated challenges to outline a concrete alternative of "armed struggle" different from the one adopted at the Ninth World Congress. *We are opposed in principle to projecting tactics for a continent, for an indefinite period, and especially from afar.* Ultimately such projections can undermine programmatic positions.

To have responded with an "alternative" of that kind would have meant falling into the same basic error as that committed by the majority at the last world congress.

The course we have proposed is to continue carrying out one of the primary objectives of the Fourth International—to create national leaderships capable of correctly working out tactics on their own, applying them, and changing them as needed. This is one of the key goals in party building along with multiplying the cadres, extending their roots in the masses, and moving toward the toppling of capitalism and establishment of a workers state.

However, in Latin America we can offer two examples of tactical courses that were correct in the main in contrast to two incorrect courses. The one was the course followed by Hugo Blanco in Peru as against the course followed by Daniel Pereyra. The other was the course followed by the PRT (La Verdad) in Argentina as against the course followed by the PRT (Combatiente).

## On the Historical Background

The Fourth International has held together much longer than its three predecessors. The First International, founded in 1864, came to an end nine years later in 1873. The Second International existed as a revolutionary organization from 1889 until 1914—twenty-five years. The Third International lived from 1919 to 1933—only fourteen years, although it was not formally dissolved by Stalin until 1943. The Fourth International, born in 1938, is not only still alive in 1973—thirty-five years later—it is growing and expanding.

It must be said, however, that it was not the intention of the founders of the Fourth International to create an organization that would be noted for its longevity. The time span that was envisaged before it would achieve success can be judged from Trotsky's prediction in 1938 that within ten years it would have followers to be counted in the millions. The Fourth International was founded on the eve of World War II. In view of the Kremlin's counterrevolutionary policies, we had no expectation whatsoever that the oncoming holocaust could be averted, although we fought tooth and nail against it. We did confidently expect that in the aftermath of the war we

would see revolutionary storms that would finally sweep away capitalism and establish socialism. That is, in 1938 we thought it would be only a few years until powerful revolutions broke out. (Our calculation was that because of its greater destructiveness and ferocity, World War II would generate universal revulsion more quickly than was the case in World War I and therefore would not last as long.)

Instead of a few years, we have seen decades pass, and it is still hazardous to set any specific time bracket for the decisive overturn of capitalism although we know that it is inevitable.

This long delay in the realization of our perspectives has put the Fourth International under considerable strains at times. In relation to the current discussion, a brief review of certain problems we ran into over the years may prove helpful. All of them relate to victories over capitalism that nonetheless served in a contradictory way to postpone the final showdown.

1. *The victory of the Soviet Union in World War II.* For world capitalism as a whole, this was a catastrophe of the first order, for it meant preservation of the basic conquests of the October 1917 revolution despite a colossal attempt to liquidate them. At the same time, the victory temporarily strengthened Stalinism to the disadvantage of Trotskyism.

This contradictory outcome offered no particular theoretical difficulties for our movement. From our analyses we were able to correctly forecast that in the final analysis the triumph of the Soviet Union would undermine the basis of Stalinism.

Nonetheless the new lease given to Stalinism hurt our movement by deferring major victories for us. We were kept on the defensive even in circles that were not unsympathetic to Trotskyism. A fresh impulse, for example, was given to the position that Stalinism had played a progressive role despite its brutal and reprehensible methods. (Deutscher, for instance.)

2. *The overturns in Eastern Europe.* Once again these signified formidable blows to capitalism. Yet they also served to set back the struggle for revolutionary socialism, since they created illusions that capitalism could be ended by bureaucratic-military means.

We encountered some difficulties on the theoretical side in accounting for the overturns and the nature of the resulting states. These were resolved by the fact that if the borders of the Soviet Union had not been extended to encompass Eastern Europe (with the exception of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and part of Poland) at least these countries had become a buffer zone and their economic and political structures had been converted into facsimiles of those in the Stalinized workers states.

3. *The revolutions in Yugoslavia and China.* These constituted major defeats for capitalism. They also had negative sides, for they placed state power in the hands of leaders trained in the school of Stalinism. In both instances, the Soviet victory over German and Japanese imperialism that made possible the temporary strengthening of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, had the further effect of fostering the implantation of structures in Yugoslavia and China modeled on those of the Stalinized Soviet Union.

The highly contradictory nature of the revolutions in

Yugoslavia, and particularly China, led to theoretical difficulties that affected political estimates and tactical orientations. Our movement has not yet fully clarified some of these.

The political effects inside our ranks were more serious than in the cases of the Soviet victory over German imperialism and the succeeding overturns in Eastern Europe undertaken under occupation by the Soviet armies. A few cadres succumbed to Titoism. More felt attracted to Maoism. Even such a seasoned leader as Arne Swabeck of the SWP became ensnared in Mao Tsetung Thought.

There were more subtle changes that affected the Fourth International.

Pablo, for instance, began to doubt that the Fourth International really had a future of its own. He toyed with the idea that perhaps the Fourth International was being bypassed. The logic of this view was that the pattern of the Russian revolution would not be repeated—the revolution in other countries was cutting a different channel. Pablo kept these thoughts pretty much to himself, only giving hints of his preoccupation and not fully expressing himself until after he had left the movement in 1965. There can hardly be any doubt today, however, that his unusual interest in the possibility of part of the Soviet bureaucracy moving away from Stalinism toward Trotskyism was motivated in part by his doubts about the Fourth International. He placed more hope in the lower echelons of the bureaucracy than was justified. Similarly these doubts may have entered into his calculations in pressing for entryism *sui generis*. He placed undue hopes in sectors of the Communist and Social Democratic parties.

This may likewise explain why he placed such confidence in developments among the followers of Ben Bella in Algeria and did not press energetically for recruitment to the Fourth International during the period when we had close links with the fighters for Algeria's freedom from French imperialism.

Of course there was a positive side to Pablo's interest in the possible formation of left-centrist wings in the Social Democratic and Stalinist parties. Intervention in those parties, as in other sectors of the radical movement, is an integral part of the struggle for leadership of the working class. All challenges emanating from those areas must be met with the appropriate tactics. The condition, however, is not to place the slightest political confidence in these sectors, and to intervene with the sole perspective of building the Fourth International, that is, recruiting to our own forces.

The postponement of the socialist revolution in the main bastions of capitalism increased our difficulties and induced some cadres to turn away from the main course followed by the Fourth International. They thought that perhaps shortcuts could be found; perhaps other forces could be impelled to move forward. This mood made it possible for a tactic like entryism *sui generis* to become entrenched and become converted into a virtual dogma in some sections of the Fourth International.

4. *The Cuban revolution.* American imperialism has not yet recovered from the shock of "losing" Cuba. It is noteworthy that Nixon found it easier to go half way around the world to shake hands with Mao than to permit a single Cuban diplomat to take up residence in Washington.

We, of course, considered the Cuban revolution a great triumph, not only for the fresh confirmation it gave to the theory of permanent revolution but for the fact that it was led by a non-Stalinist leadership. This was a harbinger of things to come.

Our analysis showed that we had to recognize the new state as a workers state, and to support it accordingly. However, some of the cadres did not agree with this. In Britain and France it led to a split headed by Gerry Healy and Pierre Lambert, and was a key factor in their opposition to the reunification in 1963.

On the negative side, the Cuban leadership failed to go beyond the limitations of the pattern of their revolution. They thought that it could be duplicated anywhere in Latin America or anywhere in the colonial and semicolonial world. Consequently they fostered and backed guerrilla experiments throughout the continent. Guevarism gained the ascendancy.

The task facing our movement was to maintain contact with the guerrilla movements, to defend them from persecution, to debate with them, even try to involve them in certain types of action—but above all continue the patient spadework required to root our own forces in the masses.

We managed to do this fairly well. However, there was an overhead cost to maintaining contact with the guerrilla forces. Some comrades were recruited by the guerrillas and left the Fourth International. Still worse, various proposals that were brought up from time to time showed that guerrilla war and its possibilities had begun to fascinate various leading cadres.

This mood, or leaning, took a qualitative turn following the death of Che Guevara and the emotional response among the radicalizing youth to his martyrdom. Coinciding with the heavy recruiting achieved by the French section in the May-June 1968 days and their aftermath, the qualitative turn crystallized in the form of the guerrilla orientation presented at the 1969 world congress.

Thus the combination of partial advances of the world revolution and the temporary strengthening of various petty-bourgeois currents (including Stalinism) led to certain oscillations in the course followed by the Fourth International since the close of World War II. In the aftermath of the Soviet victory, the overturns in Eastern Europe, and the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, sectors of the Fourth International were affected by the temporary strengthening of Stalinism.

For our movement as a whole this took the form mainly of tactical orientations that logically implied programmatic concessions and that if persisted in could have led to actual programmatic concessions. The evidence of this is to be seen in a series of individual cases, beginning with Mestre and Haston and ending with Arne Swabeck and Denis Freney (the Australian disciple of Pablo who joined the Communist Party there a couple of years ago).

The drift in this direction was rectified to a large degree by the time of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, making possible the principled reunification of the world Trotskyist movement in 1963 and the dissolution of the factions that had existed for some ten years. A common view of the Cuban revolution greatly assisted in this although it also led to the spin-off of such sectarians as

Healy and his followers.

In 1969, however, another oscillation occurred, this time in the form of adaptation to the guerrilla movements in Latin America. While this began on the tactical level, the elevation of the guerrilla orientation to the level of a strategy was remindful of the previous period of entryism *sui generis*. If anything it was more dangerous.

To what degree the latest oscillation will affect the programmatic positions of the Fourth International remains to be seen. The stubborn refusal by the majority of the United Secretariat to recognize the lessons of events in Bolivia and Argentina is a bad omen. The outcome will be determined by the struggle of tendencies now going on in the Fourth International and the organizations in sympathy with it.

## The Draft Theses on Party Building in Europe

The draft theses "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" was rejected by a minority of the members of the International Executive Committee at its meeting last December. Comrade Germain views this action with "great misgivings." "Obviously," he writes, "this rejection has opened a new stage in the international discussion." ("In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," p. 44.)

He even speaks a bit emotionally: "We said that we viewed with grave misgivings the rejection, by the international minority of the European theses, because this rejection at least implies the danger that its general line is being rejected. By rejecting that general line (without proposing any coherent alternative) the comrades of the SWP would be spitting into the well from which they'll have to draw all their water in the coming years." (Ibid., p. 45.)

As he sees it, those who were critical of the document should have contented themselves with offering some amendments. "Surely it would have been easy for the comrades of the minority to present half a dozen amendments on all kinds of disputed minor matters, while at the same time unequivocally stating their attitude towards the general line of the European Perspectives Document." (Ibid., p. 44.)

Much better than half a dozen amendments, a detailed criticism of the document was made at the IEC meeting. The text of this criticism has been published so that it is easily available. (See "A Criticism of the United Secretariat Majority Draft Resolution on 'The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe'—an Initial Contribution to the Discussion," by Mary-Alice Waters, *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 3, March 1973, pp. 5-31.)

The criticism made in detail by Comrade Waters is longer than the resolution. It deals with concrete questions, not broad generalizations. It should thus be no great problem for Comrade Germain to rewrite the European Perspectives Document in light of the considerations advanced by Comrade Waters. By meeting these criticisms, he would most certainly win the votes of those who found the first draft unsatisfactory.

In my opinion, the criticisms advanced by Comrade

Waters are valid. There is no need to repeat here what she said. I can, however, add a few observations that Comrade Germain might find useful if he should decide to undertake improving the first draft.

The European Perspectives Document includes material that is valid. For instance, I find the general analysis of the economic, social, and political crisis of European (and international) capitalism to be acceptable. I think this material could be converted into an excellent article that would be appreciated both within the Fourth International and in rather broad circles outside of it.

In this respect the document is reminiscent of the structure of the Latin American resolution that was passed at the last world congress. The section of that resolution dealing with the general crisis of capitalism in Latin America was acceptable to all the delegates. The comparable material in the European Perspectives Document even stands at a higher level, for it is more detailed and placed in a broader context.

Much of the analysis of the changing subjective conditions is likewise good and could possibly be made generally acceptable to the cadres of the Fourth International if the ambiguities noted by Comrade Waters were cleared up.

These sections of the European Perspectives Document—in reality they deal with the background—naturally predispose readers to accept what follows. I believe that is one of the reasons why many of the comrades concluded, upon first reading the theses, that the document should be adopted as a whole.

It is precisely when we come to the axis of work for the European sections in the immediate period that the document fails. In this respect, too, it is reminiscent of the Latin American resolution.

The main methodological error it makes, as Comrade Waters has pointed out, is to prescribe uniform tactics on a continental scale for the Trotskyist movement; whereas tactics by their very nature, as we have seen, must correspond to highly concrete national situations. Still worse, the continental situation for which the tactics are prescribed is a projected future situation, not the immediate situation.

The projected time schedule, moreover, is highly optimistic. While it is stated that "It would be futile to attempt to set up a possible timetable in advance," (p. 14) a timetable is nonetheless included: "But the fact that we are only at the beginning of the deepening social crisis, that neither the extent of unemployment nor the political level of the workers' struggles yet confronts the bourgeoisie with an immediate question of life or death, allows us to envisage a period spread out in most cases over four or five years before the decisive battles are fought." ("The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1972, p. 11.)

The "four or five years" thus appears to be the outside limit. The "decisive battles" may come sooner. We read: "The socialist revolution is once again on the agenda in Europe, not just in a broad historical perspective (in this sense, it has been on the agenda since 1914), but even from a conjunctural point of view." (Ibid., p. 9.)

I hope that the authors of the resolution are right. I

will add that it is good to be optimistic. However, it is a mistake to ask our movement to vote for or against predictions specifying a time schedule as specific as the one in the document. It is a much worse mistake to base *present* tactics on a prognosis that may not be confirmed so far as the time bracket is concerned.

So it's four or five years before the decisive battles; and if we haven't won leadership of massive sectors of the working class by then, the pendulum will inevitably swing the other way and fascism will come to the fore. "If a new revolutionary leadership is not built in the time remaining to us, after successive waves of mass struggles (some of which will certainly surpass even May '68 in France), the European proletariat will experience new and terrible defeats of historic scope." (Ibid., p. 14.)

That ominous perspective gives urgency to the prescribed uniform tactic on a continental scale. In face of the life or death alternative, who is inclined to study the question more deeply and perhaps vote against the draft as an inadequate first try?

All this echoes the method used twenty-two years ago to stampede the movement into voting for the tactic of entryism *sui generis* and putting it into effect with the utmost haste. It was an immediate life or death question, you see.

What has entryism *sui generis* got to do with the axis of work for the next few years? Comrades, the European Perspectives Document actually contains a reference to that tactic. In fact it lists entryism *sui generis* as nothing less than one of three possible tactics to be used in party building. One out of three possible tactics! That means that entryism *sui generis* was not only excellent in the past, it can again become excellent in the future. Like the seventeen-year locust it has a cycle of its own.

I for one would vote against any resolution that includes a rider calling for approval of a historical question that is in dispute in our movement. It is a matter of principle. Why was it felt necessary to include this point in the document? Was it just to uphold the prestige of a few older leaders? I am inclined to think not. The authors really believe that there are but three tactics of party building and that entryism *sui generis* is one of them.

Of course, one could ask what happened to the fourth tactic—the tactic of party building through guerrilla war. The answer might well be that according to the method being followed in this document, backward Latin America has only reached the unitary level whereas Europe, a highly developed region, calls for the superior form of the triad.

And what about history? Doesn't that have to be voted on in the case of Latin America? Wasn't entryism *sui generis* once prescribed for Latin America as well as the rest of the world? Well, you see . . .

No, the authors are correct in this. The tactic of entryism *sui generis* does demand a place in the European Perspectives Document. It is required out of logical consistency. The method that gave that tactic to the Fourth International is the same method used today to present our movement with the new tactic called "winning hegemony within the mass vanguard." Besides their version of history, the authors of the document are in reality calling for a vote of approval on the *method* that saddled us with entryism *sui generis* two decades ago. And, of course,

by voting for that you simultaneously vote for continuation of this method, which has now spawned a triplet—"winning hegemony within the mass vanguard." The document has been deeply thought out, n'est-ce-pas?

Please don't get me wrong. I'm all for winning, whether at the race track or in the mass vanguard. But as Comrade Waters has pointed out, winning is not a "tactic," however much we prefer it. It is an objective.

The conclusion is inescapable: on the main task of the document—to provide a clear orientation for work in the immediate future—absolute confusion reigns; the goal has been confounded with the means.

Because of the confusion of means and end, a result of an error in methodology, the European Perspectives Document where it should be clearest is the most obscure. Precisely what is the tactic it proposes? Or, to put it in different terms, what is the *content* of the tactic? In precisely what countries is it to be used and with what variations?

Comrade Germain makes an effort to clear this up on pages 44-45 of "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International." Let us follow his explanation:

1. The economic and social crisis in the imperialist countries of Europe will continue to deepen. Excellent. But that's not a tactic; it's part of the setting.

2. The working-class struggles in these countries will attain heights never before seen. Again excellent. That's a general prognosis everyone can agree with, particularly since the prognosis is scarcely an innovation.

3. The control of the treacherous bureaucratic leaderships over the working class is weakening. That's good; but it ought to be qualified as "relatively weakening." The point still pertains to the general situation.

4. We can expect "generalised mass struggles, massive strikes, general strikes, general strikes with factory occupations," and all this calls for "the preparation of these advanced workers for the appearance of factory committees, of organs of dual power. . . ." This is wonderful. Nevertheless it remains a general prognosis that includes a speculative time bracket.

5. On top of all these favorable elements, "a mass vanguard of young workers and students has appeared ready to act independently from the treacherous traditional working class leaderships." We join in the enthusiasm over this development. It obviously requires detailed treatment country by country if we are to work out effective tactics in relation to it. But this is not provided in the document.

As yet nothing concrete has been indicated on the tactical level. Judging from the time bracket in conjunction with the forecast of the appearance of organs of dual power, it would seem legitimate to conclude that the authors of the draft resolution envisage an immediate struggle for state power, yet, strangely enough, without projecting the corresponding tactics.

Not so, Comrade Germain replies. To conclude that the authors envisage an immediate struggle for power is only an "attempt at diversion." "There is no trace," he continues, "of such a childish illusion in the Thesis on the building of revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe."

So what tactic is proposed?

Comrade Germain tries again: "We speak about something entirely different, something which belongs to the main conquests of the Transitional Programme . . . that

before they have already reached a revolutionary mass party capable of victorious leading a struggle for power, revolutionists should try by all means to transform generalised struggles of the working class into struggles where the question of power starts to become posed before the masses, where they start to build their own power organs as opposed to the organs of the bourgeois state." (Emphasis in original.)

Whatever these generalities may mean, they do not outline any tactic. They still refer to a broad situation of indefinite duration.

"In other words," continues Comrade Germain, sensing that many comrades might have good reason not to understand what he is driving at, "that revolutionary Marxists should prepare themselves and the masses to have soviet-type committees, organs of dual power, arise out of general strikes."

How should we prepare ourselves and the masses? By propaganda, agitation, or action? Or a combination of these? Or should the question be limited to classes in the cadre schools of our movement?

Comrade Germain does not reply to such questions. He tells us instead that what he has said is strictly orthodox: "With Trotskyist groups much weaker than the present sections of the Fourth International, Trotsky projected such a line for countries like France, Belgium, Spain, between 1934 and 1936, because he correctly foresaw similar developments of the class struggle. By projecting a similar line today in Western Europe, we remain in the strictest Leninist-Trotskyist orthodoxy, under conditions of a gradually unfolding pre-revolutionary situation in highly industrialised imperialist countries."

What does this amount to? Taken at face value, it is nothing more than a restatement of the view that Europe will eventually see a repetition on a higher plane of the situation faced in the mid thirties. That plus the proviso that it would be a childish illusion to imagine that a struggle for power faces us in the immediate future.

A set of goals accompanies this. The first goal is to win hegemony over the mass vanguard. The second goal is to place the mass vanguard in a key position with regard to the broad masses. If these goals are achieved, then by revving up the little wheel of our movement, the mass vanguard will begin to turn, and that wheel in succession will set in motion the big wheel of the broad masses, which will reduce the capitalist class and their system to dust. It is a very attractive perspective—if it will work.

Suppose that the main wheel, if only briefly, stalls or goes into reverse? That could cause quite a jam for the smallest wheel. Some, if not all, of its gear teeth might get stripped off.

It would not be accurate to say that the document leaves the problem of tactics completely open for the sections to work out in accordance with their concrete needs. The following lines are worth studying:

"Revolutionary Marxist organizations the size of the present sections of the Fourth International cannot hope to win a general political following in the working class as a whole in one fell swoop. But they can, after reaching a certain threshold, win a political following among a layer of young vanguard workers by means of two tactics that must be used as much as possible in the present stage: (1) organizing national political campaigns on

carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against the current of mass struggles, and offer a chance for demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative, even if still modest, by our sections; (2) our sections' ability to centralize their forces on a regional and national level in order to break the wall of silence and indifference surrounding certain exemplary workers struggles, wildcat actions and to start off solidarity movements." ("The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1972, p. 24.)

What is meant by "issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard"? What is meant by "demonstrating a capacity for effective action, even if still modest"?

What is meant by "certain exemplary workers struggles"? All this is so vague, or perhaps so algebraic, that it is not easy to grasp what is meant, unless you are already in the know.

Perhaps this explains why the British adherents of the IEC Majority Tendency could split four or five ways over the meaning of the European Perspectives Document while declaring themselves to be unanimously in favor of it. What they unanimously favored was the attractive perspective outlined in the general appraisal of the situation. All of them favored "winning hegemony within the mass vanguard." As politicians with a certain sense of the need for allies and a following, they did not want to be recorded in opposition to that. What they could not agree on was how to go about winning. Their varying positions on this came as a consequence of the method used in drawing up the document.

The divisions among the various currents making up the IEC Majority Tendency in Britain testify to the ambiguous nature of the European Perspectives Document. However, it is no longer necessary to attempt to puzzle out whether the resolution includes a tactical orientation for Europe comparable to the one prescribed for Latin America. The June 21 action of the Ligue Communiste has provided us with an example of what is proposed.

## The June 21 Action

The Fourth International is currently engaged in a worldwide solidarity campaign in defense of the French Trotskyists, for the release of Comrades Alain Krivine and Pierre Rousset, who are being held as political prisoners, and for rescinding the ban on the Ligue Communiste. This is a top priority campaign and must remain so, for the dissolution of the Ligue Communiste, the largest section of the Fourth International, is a serious blow against the international Trotskyist movement as a whole. It follows the banning of Ernest Mandel from France, the United States, Switzerland, Germany, and Australia. It is part of a reactionary international campaign in which agencies of both western imperialism and the Kremlin bureaucrats are picturing the Fourth International as a source of terrorism. Against this campaign, let's close ranks!

The first response to our solidarity campaign has been encouraging. Even the big Social Democratic and Communist parties in France felt required to express solidarity in rather emphatic ways. And we have received a sympa-

thetic response in broad circles internationally.

All this, however, does not relieve us of the responsibility of assessing the meaning of the June 21 action in which the Ligue Communiste responded to a scheduled meeting of the fascist and racist *Ordre Nouveau* by calling a counterdemonstration, the announced goal of which was to prevent the meeting from taking place. The Ligue's squad of marshalls became engaged in a battle with the police, who were stationed in the area to provide physical protection for the fascists. Some aspects of the Ligue's action call for critical appraisal which we hope has already been initiated by our French comrades.

To avoid any misunderstanding, let me state at the start that it was completely correct to appeal for a counterdemonstration against the fascist rally. It was also correct, in my opinion, to expect that the fascists or the police might attack some of the protesters. To be prepared to defend themselves against attack was a democratic right of those demonstrating against the fascist rally.

The tactics of the Ligue, however, were not in the pattern to be expected in the circumstances. Something different from the organization of a massive counterdemonstration was involved.

The substance of the June 21 action stands out quite clearly. The Ligue Communiste itself, together with a couple of smaller groups, became involved in a physical struggle with the repressive forces of the state in isolation from the labor movement. Individual police on duty were caught by surprise and suffered a considerable number of casualties. What was the purpose of the Ligue's action?

In a press interview, Alain Krivine, evidently in response to questions from all sides, explained:

"To begin with, let me make one thing clear: We are not for 'urban guerrilla warfare' or rural guerrilla warfare, or anything of the sort. We do not think we can take power by hitting the police one by one with molotov cocktails. . . . We resort to violence on a minority basis when we are forced to and when it can be understood by the masses." ("Press Interview With Alain Krivine," *Intercontinental Press*, July 9, 1973, p. 829.)

"We are not putschists," he continued. "Only mass action can put an end to the fascist gangs. . . . But you cannot avoid your responsibilities. As long as it is not too late, fascism can be crushed in the egg. . . . And since all the traditional workers and democratic organizations have failed to assume their responsibilities, the revolutionists have had to do it.

"We carried out the June 21 action as a test, a warning to the nation. We have shown the way." (*Ibid.*, pp. 829-830.)

From this interview and from other material, it might appear that the Ligue Communiste had come to the conclusion that a fascist bid for power is imminent in France. No such conclusion, however, is to be found in the *European Perspectives Document*. It might be that the Ligue Communiste reached such a view after the document was written. But there is little evidence of that and it is virtually certain that the more responsible leaders would oppose any such conclusion. They do not believe a fascist bid for power is imminent in France.

If fascism were on the march in France, the June 21 action, plus a series like it, could not crush it in the egg. In fact, such actions would in all likelihood set back the

struggle against fascism. The social forces involved when fascism moves forward are of colossal weight, are not easily identifiable by broad sectors of the population as *fascism*, and require mobilizations of comparable weight to crush it. In the beginning, as Trotsky has pointed out, the fascists may hold the upper hand. The actions that can be taken by revolutionists must be carefully gauged from the viewpoint of their effectiveness in mobilizing the necessary counterforces. The first requisite is proof that fascism actually represents an immediate threat. Otherwise the actions come to be taken as merely crying, "Wolf!"

If fascism were a real, imminent danger in France, the Ligue's tactics were questionable in other respects. Fascist or racist meetings are illegal in France. But to call on the bourgeois state to enforce its own laws by banning such meetings or banning organizations of that character is not politically smart. First of all, it sows illusions that the bourgeois state can be trusted to struggle against fascism. The truth is that even if token bans are placed on the fascists, the state actually fosters their growth and is perfectly capable of utilizing the demand to ban the fascists as an excuse to ban the antifascist organizations.

It is a much stronger political position to point out that the state cannot be depended on to fight fascism, that it is a trap to call on the state to abrogate the democratic rights of the fascists, that it is sufficient to insist on the democratic right of the antifascists to stage counterdemonstrations and to conduct the struggle for socialism, the only real answer to the threat of fascism.

These points may be somewhat abstract inasmuch as the Ligue Communiste, so far as we are aware, does not believe that fascism is a concrete danger at the moment in France. But if the struggle against fascism was not actually involved in a serious way, what was involved?

It is possible that the leaders of the Ligue Communiste judged the social tensions in France to have reached such proportions that an action like the one June 21 could serve as the detonator of a revolutionary explosion. If that were the case, some questions are in order. Was the Ligue of sufficient size, was it well enough rooted in the masses to seriously make a bid for power? Was this the thinking behind the action?

Comrade Krivine answered, "No." He told the press, "We are not putschists."

Comrade Germain answered even more emphatically. As we have seen above, he considers it an "attempt at diversion" to suggest that the authors of the *European Perspectives Document* envisage an immediate struggle for power anywhere in Europe. "There is no trace of such a childish illusion in the Thesis on the building of revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe."

What, then, was the objective of the June 21 action?

The reasons for the course taken by the Ligue Communiste appear all the more obscure in view of the widespread opinion in the French far left, left, and even liberal circles, that the decision of the Pompidou government to permit the *Ordre Nouveau* to hold its meeting was a deliberate provocation. In other words, Minister of the Interior Raymond Marcellin set a trap for the Ligue Communiste, his purpose being to inveigle the Ligue into engaging in a physical attack on the police that could then be used as an excuse for banning the Ligue.

If this was the real situation, as it may well have been, two questions arise: (1) Why did Marcellin believe that the Ligue would respond to the provocation? (2) Why did the leadership of the Ligue fail to see the trap?

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Ligue was seeking an occasion for a test (perhaps one in a series) of a tactical line it had adopted. Marcellin was aware of this. He floated a lure. And the trout struck.

Perhaps Marcellin failed to take into account all the possibilities, and thus he may find himself dragged into the stream, or see the intended victim shake loose. On the other hand, it does not seem possible that our comrades in France would have moved as they did if the possible banning of the Ligue Communiste had entered into their calculations.

Thus it would appear reasonable to conclude that the June 21 action was visualized by our comrades as only one of a projected series aimed at "winning hegemony within the mass vanguard" by demonstrating "a capacity for effective initiative" corresponding "to the concerns of the vanguard" without running against "the currents of mass struggles." This may have been what Comrade Krivine was referring to in a synthetic and elliptical way in his press interview when he spoke about the use of *minority violence* and the staging of a test.

In other words, the Ligue Communiste was engaging in a test of a tactical line developed in the past several years as a French variation of the orientation adopted at the last world congress for Latin America. The tactical line is the employment of *minority violence* on what are judged to be suitable occasions. The leaders of the Ligue Communiste saw an opportunity in the fascist meeting to mount an "exemplary action." The exemplary action was not urban guerrilla war as employed by the Tupamaros or the ERP; but it was close enough, I imagine, to win their applause. This tactical line of engaging in minority violence, of staging operations of this type in isolation from other groups and the masses has been given sanction by the European Perspectives Document although in a form that is not easily seen by the uninitiated.

The tactic of minority violence proposed for Europe has not received wide or intensive discussion in the Fourth International despite the fact that it is now obvious that it will be put up for a vote at the next world congress in the form of a motion to approve the general line of the European Perspectives Document.

The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency called the attention of the international to indications that such a line was under consideration in the Ligue Communiste. However, the form in which the proposed line appeared in the written discussion there made it impossible to gain a clear picture of it or of how far the leadership had gone in accepting or developing it. It appeared in a partial, perhaps distorted, way in a document submitted by Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane. Later, under pressure from the majority of the central leadership, they withdrew some of the points they had formulated in a "guerrilla" sense. But they did not withdraw their general line. The discussion was thus unfortunately cut short, giving the impression of a behind-the-scenes understanding that got rid of the more compromising formulations advanced by the four comrades.

Their proposals and views were discussed in "Argentina

and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet" in the final section dealing with the crisis in the Fourth International (see pp. 51-54). Among other things they talked of a "continental revolutionary war" in Europe. They held that "It is not sufficient to mumble in front of the PCF that the peaceful road is in fact a bloody deathtrap; we must ourselves be capable of defining the practical consequences of our critique." They argued that "The perspectives that we are able to point out likewise imply a certain type of organization with regard to utilizing violence." They held that in view of the perspectives, "it is necessary to understand and to systematize the dialectics of mass violence and minority violence." They viewed this "as a permanent, essential axis of our activity. . . ." They urged that the Ligue Communiste must somehow get beyond the "propagandistic level." As they saw it, it is especially difficult to reply to the "questions raised by certain Latin American sections, or the Spanish comrades, if we close our eyes to our own future while holding forth on the whole range of international problems. It would be particularly dangerous to pose questions for other sections that we have not formulated for ourselves. . . ."

Here is a sampling of comments made by the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency on the document submitted by Anthony, Arthur, Jebrac, and Stephane:

"As shown by this document, it is clear that some of the members of the Ligue Communiste—and not the least important sector—have grown impatient over the slow and arduous work of building a party in the Leninist way. They are looking for a shortcut. . . ."

"It is clear, moreover, that the role of military technique has assumed priority over the role of politics in their thinking. Their conviction as to the impenetrability of the Communist Party, the sluggishness of work in the trade unions, the inadequacy of proletarian methods of struggle, the messianism they feel in relation to violence, the justification they advance for 'minority violence,' the discounting of legality, the imagined virtues of working underground, and their organizational proposals all testify eloquently to that. . . ."

" . . . the four comrades draw the conclusion that it is possible to get around the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists by giving up the fight for legality, going underground, and launching something like urban or rural guerrilla war (or a combination) in France. . . ."

"The desire of the authors to copy the Tupamaros and the ERP, that is, to apply to France the orientation adopted by the majority for Latin America, is the most serious aspect of the document. To merely project this orientation in a theoretical way for France is an ominous sign of the way the 'turn' at the Ninth World Congress has led to the miseducation of a key layer of cadres in the Ligue Communiste. . . ."

"To any comrade who has followed the development of the discussion in the world Trotskyist movement since the Ninth World Congress, it should now be absolutely clear what dangers were involved in the 'turn.' A significant grouping in the leadership of the Ligue Communiste has gone so far as to propose applying the guerrilla orientation to France with the modifications they have outlined." ("Argentina and Bolivia—the Balance Sheet," *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 1, January 1973, p. 54.)

Those concerned about semantics will argue that the tac-



tic of minority violence, proposed for Europe and already being practiced in France is not the same as the guerrilla orientation adopted for Latin America and practiced there by the POR (González) and the PRT (Combatiente). We can appreciate the sensitivity of some of the leaders of the IEC Majority Tendency on this question and are willing to assure them that we understand this, and *vive la différence*. However, it is the substance of the line that is at issue. From this angle it is obvious that the orientation of minority violence in Europe and the orientation of guerrilla war in Latin America are but variations of the same general line. The methodological approach is the same and the actions are comparable. What is the point of denying this?

Several observations are in order:

1. The comrades of the IEC Majority Tendency should be cautious about overoptimism in interpreting the meaning of the immediate reaction in the left and far left to the June 21 action and its aftermath. Two questions are involved. One is the battle with the police undertaken by the Ligue Communiste's marshalling squad. The other is Marcellin's order banning the Ligue Communiste and his forays (raid on the headquarters, raids on the homes of comrades, arrests, and imprisonment of Comrades Krivine and Rousset). These must be carefully distinguished in analyzing the consequences.

Under the impact of the solidarity campaign touched off by Marcellin's moves, the tendency has been to lose sight of the June 21 action. This could lead our comrades into mixing up the two and erroneously assuming that the widespread sympathy for the Ligue Communiste was a direct consequence of the June 21 action; and hence that the "success" should be followed up by more "exemplary actions" of the same kind.

2. The setting of the June 21 action was depicted as if fascism were just around the corner. Crush it in the egg! Even if the left and far left were to agree that the picture was accurate, no agreement exists in those circles that the Ligue Communiste initiated a correct course of struggle by engaging in an isolated physical battle with the police. Most, if not all of them, consider that the Ligue made a mistake. This opinion was also shown by the way other groups abstained from participating in the action. A clear warning sign!

As it becomes still more obvious that a fascist take-over is not an immediate threat, it can be expected that doubts as to the Ligue's course and the political acumen of its leaders will increase.

3. The flood of denunciations of Marcellin that came from parties and groups of the left and far left, including the Social Democrats and the Stalinists, must be weighed as expressions of opposition to Marcellin's repressive measures, particularly the banning of the Ligue Communiste, rather than as expressions of solidarity with the action undertaken by the Ligue Communiste on June 21.

All of these forces have a political interest in opposing Marcellin's measures. They might be next on his list.

Because of their bases in the labor movement, the Social Democrats and Stalinists are compelled to put up at least some show of resistance to government threats to the unions, even if the threats are only implied. The case of the Ligue Communiste followed other cases in which reactionary forces singled out immigrant workers

in particular as targets. The big demonstration on June 20 in defense of civil liberties and democratic rights, which was sponsored by the Communist party and in which our comrades participated (without permission from the Stalinists), must be viewed in this light.

More importantly, in protesting the banning of the Ligue Communiste the Stalinists and Social Democrats want to score points over Pompidou's incapacity to allay social unrest, a field in which they have special resources and expertise. Denouncing Marcellin is a way of grooming themselves for posts in a new government should Pompidou drop dead. (It is rumored that he has cancer.)

Expressions of solidarity from these sources do not necessarily equate to an overall political gain for the former Ligue Communiste, although every effort should be made to take advantage of them and to convert them into something more substantial than "get well" cards or funeral condolences. The chief avenue for this is through defense efforts and the at least temporary lowering of barriers to the rank and file members of these organizations.

The real worth of the sympathy for the present plight of members of the former Ligue Communiste would be seen very clearly if they were to attempt to follow up the June 21 action by staging similar "tests" a few times.

4. The now undeniable evidence that the European Perspectives Document includes the orientation of minority violence, as developed by the Ligue Communiste, deepens the crisis in leadership now facing the Fourth International.

Do the comrades of the IEC Majority Tendency really think they can put this across at the next world congress without thoroughly discussing it, without even clearly formulating it, without dropping the evasive language of the European Perspectives Document?

The could not make a worse mistake. The fate of the sections in Europe and of the Fourth International itself is involved. The gravity of the issue means that those who see the implications will fight with all their energy against such an outcome.

## The New Stage in the Discussion

Comrade Germain considers that the rejection of the European Perspectives Document by a minority of the members of the International Executive Committee "opened a new stage in the international discussion." The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency takes a different view. The new stage was opened by the refusal of the majority of the members of the IEC to learn from the lessons of the debacles suffered by the Argentine and Bolivian sections as a consequence of the guerrilla orientation adopted at the Ninth World Congress. This was the point of qualitative change.

From the point of view of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, the European Perspectives Document is not qualitatively different from the Latin American resolution passed at the last world congress. It is merely more of the same—another product of the same method used in arriving at the guerrilla orientation for Latin America.

As Comrade Germain sees it, the projection of perspectives for Europe and Latin America, and along with them the corresponding tactics, are isolated from each other. They belong in separate pigeonholes. Consequently, he concludes that it was a very grave thing for the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency to draw back from the document

on Europe. As the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency sees it, the political and tactical lines projected for Latin America and for Europe are interrelated. Methodology locks them together. The errors in the one instance appear in a symmetrical way in the other.

The correctness of this dialectical view received rather striking confirmation at the convention of the LSA/LSO in Toronto last April. The adherents of the IEC Majority Tendency insisted not only on the correctness of the European Perspectives Document, they proclaimed the applicability of its method to the Canadian scene.

They were simply being consistent. They correctly grasped that out of the well from which came the guerrilla orientation for Latin America and the "winning hegemony within the mass vanguard" for Europe similar brimming buckets can be drawn for other parts of the world.

The American followers of the IEC Majority Tendency are equally consistent. In their counterresolution, presented for consideration at the August 1973 convention of the SWP, they affirm: "This document presents an alternative approach, a counterline. It is based on the method of the 'Theses on the Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe,' with which we have stated our agreement." ("The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America," *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 18, July 1973, p. 4.)

The method referred to is the method that produced the Ninth World Congress orientation that led to disaster for two sections in Latin America.

It can be argued, of course, that just because the minority at the last world congress proved to be right in their forecast of the consequences to be expected from the majority's orientation in Latin America, that does not necessarily make them right with regard to the majority's new orientation for Europe. Trotsky, for instance, was wrong on party building in his polemic with Lenin in the early days of Bolshevism, but that did not make him wrong on the theory of permanent revolution. There Trotsky was completely right.

The argument, one can concede, is a strong one. It is probably the strongest one currently being circulated by the IEC Majority Tendency among the rank and file in Europe. Touch it, however, and it falls apart.

The fact that the majority was *wrong* on Latin America and must be held responsible for an orientation that ruined two sections there does not necessarily make them right on Europe. In fact, the use of the same method in deriving an orientation for Europe gives us every reason to expect comparable results.

As for the analogy with Lenin and Trotsky, consider the following: What was the nature of Trotsky's error? He was correct in his long-range projection of the pattern of the Russian revolution (and its extension); that is, he was correct on a broad theoretical level. But he was wrong on the level of practice; that is, on constructing the instrument required to realize the theoretical projection. In short, a dangerous gap existed between his theory and his practice.

The inadequacy of Lenin's theory was also dangerous. It led to a crisis in the Bolshevik party at a crucial moment. Fortunately, perceiving the necessity to adjust his theory, Lenin was able to overcome the party crisis in time. And Trotsky, making his own self-criticism, recognized the need for the kind of party Lenin had built.

Thus the gap between theory and practice was closed in two exemplary actions.

If the analogy has any relevancy in the present discussion, perhaps it is Trotsky's error and the example he set in correcting it that deserve closest study by the comrades who have dug up this item from the history books.

## The Question of International Leadership

Comrade Germain ends his contribution with an appeal on the need to build an international leadership. He means by this, he explains, "a collective day-to-day international leadership, working as a political team, trying to *integrate* at the highest level of consciousness which our movement is today capable of reaching . . . the constantly changing and varying experiences in intervention in the class struggle and in party building on a world scale." (*Ibid.*, p. 48. Emphasis in original.)

He says further: "What we call for is not the long-term 'uprooting' of nationally leading cadres of the movement. Experience has shown the dangers of such an uprooting. In addition, it would lead to a nucleus of a world leadership much too small to tackle the tremendous job which must be fulfilled today. Rather what we have in mind is a rotation system in which the strongest sections of the movement and the most qualified leading cadres participate 3-4 years in the international leadership, living and working together in the same town, and forming a daily leadership team of the world movement. The movement has today the resources to make this solution possible." (*Ibid.*, p. 49.)

It should be added that on this question, prominent members of the IEC Majority Tendency have been contending that the SWP leadership has a "federalist" concept. It has also been contended that to counter this concept, the statutes of the Fourth International should be modified so as to permit greater centralization and give the proposed international leadership team punitive powers and especially the power to intervene in the internal life of the sections.

Further discussion is required on this very important question, which involves the crisis in leadership the Fourth International is now undergoing. It is directly related to the central issue in the discussion—party building—and through that to the key crisis faced by the proletariat, its crisis of leadership. I will touch on only a few points here.

The general concept of a team of international leaders who could meet on a day-to-day basis has much to commend it. The opinion that such a team could constitute *the* international leadership of the Fourth International is nevertheless unrealistic, as I see it. The actual leadership, as it has existed since the founding of our movement, has been exercised by those engaged in battle on the national fronts; that is, the leadership of the sections, working in collaboration with the few comrades they have been able to maintain at an international center. Resources to achieve much more than that have not existed and still do not exist.

Over the years, the SWP has favored recognizing this reality. This is the source of the unfounded accusation

that it has a "federalist" concept.

The attempts up to now to set up a more powerful center have encountered insuperable difficulties. Lack of finances and repressive measures directed against the Fourth International are only part of the problem. The lack of revolutionary experience of the "team" is much more crucial. The pretension that a small combination of cadres can "run" the Fourth International from a town in which they live together is loaded with dangers. It is sufficient to recall the unfortunate experiences under Pablo and some of his lieutenants (including at least one American).

At the bottom of the differences that exist on this question are two concepts that are related to other differences under discussion at present in the Fourth International. One concept is that of a central group living in one town that not only works on broad analyses, on drawing together the main lessons of experiences in various parts of the world, but on overseeing the sections, particularly the application of tactics laid down for entire continents.

In fact, since there is more often agreement than disagreement on the broad analyses, those placed in charge of this or that continent, or group of countries, become "troubleshooters" on the application of tactical lines. They may be incapable of organizing or holding together so much as a branch or cell in their own countries; but they do not hesitate to get off a plane and throw the weight of the International Center into complex problems that the Comintern itself in the days of Lenin and Trotsky would have handled with the greatest caution and tact. One of the worst effects this can have is on the development of national leaderships.

Against this concept is the view held by the SWP, among others, that as much as possible should be done to strengthen the center but that there should be no illusions about the limitations *under present circumstances*. The central team should concentrate on broad analyses, on assembling and circulating information, on taking up political questions within the framework of congress decisions. In relation to the sections, the efforts of the team—as part of the actual working leadership on an international scale—should be directed toward helping in the development of national leaderships. While no absolutes can be laid down, in general the central team should not try to "run" the international or intervene in the internal life of sections.

Recognition of the current limitations faced by the Fourth International does not alter our adherence to the principle of democratic centralism. It means simply placing the emphasis on upholding the program of the Fourth International and its political decisions and eschewing organizational intervention and crackdowns in the sections. This was the way it was when Trotsky was alive.

In those days the binding cement in our movement was political agreement, loyalty to principles, comradely collaboration, and good will. If these are absent, appeals to "democratic centralism," or warnings about punitive measures, will not hold the movement together; they will only end up proving how inappropriate and flimsy such an approach is, and how damaging it can be to the international.

The discussion over strengthening the center, over setting up a stronger team there, has several other aspects that should not be overlooked. What is its relationship to the current crisis in the leadership? Under guise of strengthening the center is it imagined that this crisis can be resolved by shifts of personnel, by having a small team of leaders living and working in one town? To carry on successful work, the team would have to be quite homogeneous in its views. How is this to be achieved without clarification and resolution of the issues that have led to the present situation? Without that prerequisite, the team would be divided from the beginning. It is clear that construction of an effective team hinges, like everything else involving the leadership question in our movement, on successfully resolving the internal political crisis in the Fourth International. This is the real problem that must be tackled.

Comrade Germain ends his contribution with an eloquent plea for unity. There is no doubt that centrifugal tendencies have appeared, as he points out. This is evidenced by the series of splits in sections or sympathizing groups going as far back as 1968 (in Argentina). The Fourth International as a whole is best served by doing everything possible to restrain those who prefer to walk out, or to push the other side out, rather than to continue the discussion. It must be recognized that it is not always possible to succeed in this, the latest example being the few who split from the Canadian section after a completely democratic discussion and congress.

Both tendencies, however, have a common interest in exerting every effort to maintain the unity of the Fourth International. Aside from seeking to avoid, or to remove, the small irritations that can arise in a warm polemic, both sides should do their utmost to advance projects and actions where collaboration is possible with a minimum of friction. Defense work, solidarity actions, common publication projects, are good examples.

The interest both sides have in avoiding a split should make it easier to conduct a fully democratic discussion, the main requisite for safeguarding the unity of the movement in face of differences as serious as those we now confront.

July 24, 1973