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POLITICAL REPORT TO THE 23RD NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

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by Jack Barnes

The draft political resolution that is before this convention is different from many recent political resolutions. The resolution discussed and adopted at our last convention, for example, centered around the immediate conjunctural tasks of the party in light of the 1968 elections. This time the Political Committee's purpose was to step back from the conjuncture and try to take a broader look at the forces involved in this stage of the radicalization and the long-run perspectives of the third American revolution. The convention agenda was planned with this purpose in mind. The other reports and resolutions delineate the conjunctural tasks and campaigns of the party. The antiwar resolution and report summarize our work and discuss the remainder of the campaign for the Nov. 15 mass action. The youth report will present the campaigns undertaken by the youth, including those in which the party will be collaborating. There will be a report and discussion on the Transitional Program for Black Liberation and a national fraction meeting of all comrades actively engaged in black and third world work, to share experiences and discuss practical implementation of the resolution. Finally, the organizational report will lay out the party's campaigns, much of which was presented in the report from the last plenum and the panels on circulation and use of our press and the expansion of our publication program. Several panels will give us the opportunity to discuss our initial evaluation of experiences in the struggles of other oppressed national minorities and the impact of the developing women's liberation movement. These very important panels deal with questions central to our perspectives for the coming American revolution and must be incorporated in the political resolution as we draw together our experiences and evaluations in these areas.

The party has several times before stepped back for a moment to take a broader and longer view. It was done in 1938, 1946, and 1952. In 1938, for instance, we were on the eve of the founding of the 4th International, and much of the discussion prior to the founding convention of our party revolved around the transitional program which was formally adopted for the first time at the founding convention of the Socialist Workers Party.

In 1946, we were in the midst of an upsurge in the class struggle and it was necessary and fruitful to step back again. Not only had the party gone through its

most rapid growth but at the same time there had developed inside the party a challenge to its basic perspectives. So at the 1946 convention, in the report and discussion on the draft Theses on the American Revolution, a basic perspective was affirmed. We challenged the concept of the American century, that is the long term perspective of the international stability of post-World-War-II American capitalism. The central concept we counterposed to the American century was that the post-war expansion of American imperialism as a gigantic world power rooted it in all the powder kegs of the world. Far from the American century, we foresaw a period of explosions, often fomented by and involving American imperialism. We said that the socialist revolution in the United States was not a nebulous perspective far in the future, but the perspective for our epoch. And we reaffirmed our view that the American workers were the force that could and would carry out this revolution. Finally, we stated that one of the keys to our internationalism was stating clearly that the central task of the American revolutionary party was organizing for and leading the American revolution, and that the SWP was the nucleus of this party.

By 1952 the party faced a different conjunctural situation. A decline in objective possibilities had taken place: the rise of McCarthyism, the beginning of the postwar prosperity, and the retreat of the labor movement precipitated another internal challenge to the party's perspectives. This took the form of a search for alternatives to a mass revolutionary socialist party, of which the SWP was the nucleus, to lead the American revolution. So in 1952 the party again stepped back and reaffirmed the four basic points laid down in 1946. It also affirmed two other points.

In the midst of McCarthyism, and in the midst of the beginning of the boom, we rejected the notion that Stalinism could be reformed and become the leadership that could win a socialist world. We said that far from heading towards this kind of reform, Stalinism was headed toward an inevitable disintegration.

Secondly, we rejected the concept that the Reuther wing, or any other wing of the American labor bureaucracy could do this job. We predicted that the Reuther wing of the bureaucracy would always be too late with too little.

Today, almost a quarter of a century since the 1946 discussion, an entirely new radicalization has begun.

So once again it's valuable to step back and take a long view. In one sense we are in a situation similar to 1946. That is, we're in the midst of a growth of social struggles and a growth of the party itself. The 1946 convention was the largest convention in the party's history. This convention will probably be even larger. At the same time, we face a challenge at this convention. But this time the challenge is not internal. There is no division in the party over the basic perspectives we have been developing. But we face a very big external challenge. Thousands upon thousands of young militants are looking for answers to basic political questions. In one way or another the newly radicalizing forces are asking "can it happen here? With what forces, around what program, and with what concepts can a leadership (if it is necessary!) be built to lead the American socialist revolution?" In answer to these questions they are being offered alternatives by all tendencies in the radical movement, by our party and by our various opponents.

The new international and national events have verified the basic perspectives we outlined in 1938, 1946 and 1952 -- not all the conjunctural predictions of the party, but the basic perspectives of revolutionary change, and the exclusion of the possibility of a reform of the labor bureaucracy or Stalinism into revolutionary instruments. In that sense, the discussion at this convention is a continuation of these previous discussions. At the same time the developments which we've observed in the last time period have given new understanding and a clearer and more concrete perspective for the actual course of the coming revolutionary struggles in this country. But even here, we stress the continuity with the past. If we think back to the new phenomena that we analyzed in the resolution and the new perspectives which are drawn from them we see that the main tools we used were a correct analysis of the national question, the concept of the Permanent Revolution, the character and need for a Leninist Party, the concept of uneven and combined development, and the character of the imperialist stage of capitalism. This is part of the basic political capital of the Socialist Workers Party, of the Bolshevik movement, of 50 years of American communism.

It's important to note the way a resolution like this comes into being. It doesn't represent simply an extension of previous resolutions or the result of an evolution from previous resolutions to one which is a little more general. In the last few years the party has been grappling with the new phenomena of this radicalization. We've taken part in new struggles, tested our ideas and presented

them in our publications. In this process we have been approaching a more concrete and comprehensive understanding of the perspectives for the American socialist revolution. Unlike some other resolutions, this one does not flow from several discussions in the Political Committee, but rather from several years of discussion on all aspects of the new radicalization and its perspectives. In that sense it's important to understand the spirit of the report for the Political Committee. We present the general line of the resolution for discussion and approval to guide the work of the incoming National Committee. At the same time the outgoing National Committee proposes that sometime following the convention the party conduct a literary discussion around the points raised in the resolution and the points I outlined earlier -- the national minorities and women's liberation -- which are being discussed at the panels and which will be incorporated by a National Committee plenum into a final amended resolution.

I'd like to outline the three key areas of the resolution. First, it examines the economic and structural roots that on a national and international scale underlie, feed and contribute to this radicalization. It examines how what looked at one time like an ascending world dominance of American imperialism was breeding the forces that would challenge it. Second, the resolution looks at the beginning of the radicalization in this country, its ideological features and its unique characteristics. Finally, in the light of this analysis, it outlines the forces that will be involved in the coming struggle for power in this country, and the kind of instrument necessary to lead these forces to victory. I'll concentrate most of the report on the elements of the resolution which are new, which are codified and put forth in resolution form for the first time.

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The initial job of the resolution was to analyze the international role of American imperialism. Looking back over the last quarter century, we observe that the basic strategic goal of the U.S. ruling class has not changed one iota. That goal has been to rebuff the world revolution, stand up to the colonial revolution, with the ultimate aim of erasing all the conquests of the October revolution. It has been a consistent strategy but it has faced a barrier. In stage after stage the American rulers have been met and rebuffed on an international scale by a rise in the world revolution: by the colonial revolution; by a strengthening of the Soviet Union; by the victory in China; by opposition at home; by a series of events the resolution details. The resolution also notes that when American imperialism meets

a hesitating or vacillating response by its enemies it plunges forward, takes greater chances, and tries to probe further. On the other hand, when it is met by opposition, strength and determination, regardless of how the initial relationship of forces may appear, it is forced to draw back and readjust its timetable. This entire process is capsulized in the history of the Vietnam war.

We have seen a largescale expansion of the American economy, especially in the last decade. War spending and a generalized boom on an international scale have fueled the longest uninterrupted economic boom in American history. But this process itself has begun to breed the contradictions now standing in its way. The growth of inflation lessened the ability of American imperialism to use the dollar's special role as an international currency to "export" some inflationary pressures. As other capitalist countries introduced the most advanced technology into industry on a larger and larger scale, competition became much greater. Under these conditions pressure began mounting to force the American workers to pay for more of the expenses of American imperialism. This has meant an attack on their real income.

As the resolution states,

"The difficulties with the dollar coupled with the consequences of this intensified international competition will exert heavy pressure upon American big business to narrow the considerable wage differential they have been able to maintain over their foreign competitors. This they can do only by increasing pressure on wages, working conditions and the employment and at the cost of heating up the class struggle at home."

This underlies the perspectives for the deepening of the radicalization.

* * *

The current radicalization finds its historic roots in the late 1950's when the new stage in the struggle for black liberation began. It was the rise of the black struggle itself, the rise of mass demonstrations by people who had in the previous period gone through different experiences from the white workers and students, that launched the radicalization. These initiatives by the black masses began the process of sensitizing the political consciousness of a new generation. Blows were dealt to the illusions about the real character of American capitalism. The myth of the progressive, peace-loving character of American capitalism began to be torn away. The myth of American democracy was ques-

tioned. The phony version of history that underlay all the myths about the United States was challenged. This is a very basic point. The mass struggles by Afro-Americans, followed by the success of the Cuban Revolution, laid the groundwork for the change in the psychology and the political sensitivity of young Americans especially, and made possible the kind of response that Vietnam evoked.

Simultaneous with an increasingly inflationary boom, there began to occur some unexpected negative results (from the point of view of the ruling class). Instead of growing confidence in and growing satisfaction from the results of this economic expansion, there was growing dissatisfaction and increasing questioning of it. This mighty technological explosion made clearer, not so much the glory of American capitalism, but the gaps between what could be done and what was actually being done for the great majority. It became clearer that the capitalist rulers were willing to mobilize the power of the economic machine by socializing the costs of all kinds of projects -- going to the moon, massive research, building a gigantic military machine -- but somehow they were incapable of mobilizing the same forces to improve the basic needs of the working people.

The entire environment of the country -- the air, the water, resources, the living conditions -- seemed to deteriorate right in the midst of this boom. In meetings, over television, in the papers, in all kinds of ways, more and more people began to express the idea that the expansion of American capitalism coincided with a tendency for the entire system to fall apart. On the very day they went to the moon, they couldn't get the commuter trains running into Manhattan from Long Island. At the very time that they expend massive resources on destruction in Vietnam, more and more information is revealed about the destruction and perversion of the basic living conditions of the working people.

This general phenomenon is now beginning to sink into mass consciousness in many ways. One of the greatest instruments of the ruling class, the giant communications network, has effects which also turn against them. Their utilization of the media to herald their successes also helps make the contradictions of capitalism more clear, all the more rapidly, to a growing number of people.

There has arisen a questioning of all norms and all accepted values in every realm, not only the obvious ones such as the rise in consciousness in the national minorities and the begin-

ning of the questioning by women of all the accepted norms. In every nook and cranny of society -- religious circles, professional circles, even among Justice Department lawyers -- questions, dis-sension, refusal to accept the traditional paths as valid and the status quo as norms have thrust a challenge to the rule and ideology of the capitalist class.

This, of course, was accompanied by the phenomena that we're very familiar with, the deepening of the mass struggles, the deepening of the antiwar struggle and the ghetto explosions. But by examining these other phenomena we indicate the degree and universality of change that has occurred in the past period in the consciousness, sensitivity and credulity of the American people as a whole. Many radicals were not prepared for it, expecting to see these developments occur only during a major economic crisis.

What we are really beginning to see is an increasing awareness of the concrete manifestations of two of the most general and very abstract laws of Marxism: first is the growing contradiction between the potential of the advanced technology that is available under capitalism and the limitations put on its use by the capitalist system of private property; second is the contradiction between the tremendous internationalization of capital and the continued existence of autonomous nation-states with all that means in terms of the ruling class' prerogative to wage war (with the added implications of nuclear power) and to pursue objectives by methods delineated by the confines of each national ruling class. It is this, the most general type of crisis which capitalism can face, that is becoming more clear.

Even in the one area where the ruling class thought its position was secure -- the standard of living of the American workers -- problems began to develop. The very capacity to raise the living standards of the American workers and bring a whole layer of young workers into the work force, produces not so much a quieting effect, but something that becomes quite different as the radicalization develops. To these workers, the given standard is subsistence. It's very important to remember that subsistence is not a physical standard. It's a relative historical social standard. What the good lord capital giveth, the good lord capital cannot take away without massive resistance. And the more that has been attained the less willing are those who have it to give it up and the more confident they are about fighting to maintain it.

Finally, it is becoming more and more clear to people that they have absolutely no control over the important

decisions that are affecting their lives. Some force outside themselves, a force over which they have no control, makes all the decisions. This feeling is raised in all sorts of circles -- not only the black movement, not only the student movement, but in all types of circles.

This new radical consciousness raises a very important question. Is there reason and evidence to believe that this process of radicalization will continue to spread and deepen, or is it just a brief flurry, a reaction to a momentary crisis within the general context of a big expansion and forward march of imperialism? In other words, are we going to go forward to a more revolutionary decade in the 1970's or is the real truth that after this brief interlude of radicalism, we will head back to the political conservatism of the 50's.

There are two reasons that we think are proof that we are in the beginning of a certain type of radicalization that will not take us back to the 50's -- not without going through several decisive struggles first. One is that the roots of this crisis lie deep in the dilemma resulting from the expansion of American imperialism in the last 25 years. For the expansion of the U.S. as a world imperialist power has meant that it has become more deeply involved in all the powder kegs of the world. And, as the resolution states, "the very measures required to halt the world revolutionary process and defend American capitalism come into increasing conflict with the ability to maintain stability and class peace at home."

Secondly, this radicalization begins in the midst of a boom and in the midst of an imperialist war. In other words, the very means which have been utilized in the past by American capitalism to buy off and stifle revolutionary struggles have already lost much of their effectiveness. The problem before the American ruling class today is not how to stimulate some type of war-induced economic boom to pacify a restless population. On the contrary, they are looking for ways to crack down on the real wages and working conditions of the American workers in order to prevent a disastrous inflationary crisis. Similarly, they do not look toward the outbreak of a new war in order to arouse the American people into a patriotic fervor. Their problem is how to continue the present war without deepening the radicalization stimulated by that very phenomenon.

It's very important that these two points be emphasized, because in the other two major periods of radicalization, the '30's and the '40's, it was a combination of these two factors of economic

boom and war which were utilized successfully by the ruling class to dampen social struggles.

Thus the perspective is not one of a major reversal of the radicalization, but an increasing class polarization. There will be a continuing tendency in the coming period toward a breakdown of the relative equilibrium that has been characteristic of the heyday of American capitalism. This will mean an increasing strain on the two-party system, the main political instrument of capitalist control. We can anticipate the rise of small capitalist political formations to the right and left. Most important, it will mean the need for a split with the capitalists on the part of the masses of black people and working people, and the formation of their own independent parties.

I want to stress an important point. The term we use is class polarization, and not polarization in general -- the resolution is very careful on this point. It is not predicted that there will occur some sort of general, abstract, right-left split in the American population. It will be reflected in a growing incapacity of the American ruling class to hold the oppressed national minorities and the working class within the forms of political control that have been so effective up until now. The polarization will be a polarization around class needs, against the ruling class enemy.

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It is under these conditions and with this kind of awakening response among different sectors of the population that the efficacy and value of the transitional program becomes clear. The key is finding demands that best correspond to the objective needs of the sector to which you're addressing yourself; that can be tied into its level of political understanding and current stage of struggles; which lead to independent organization and mobilization; and which conflict with one or another of the multitude of ruling class prerogatives to control aspects of people's lives. The central axis of the transitional program is around these kinds of demands.

Secondly, the section on the transitional program notes the great unevenness of development in the new radicalization. This is true of all radicalizations, of all struggles, but is especially evident in the current stage, prior to the large-scale intervention of the working class through organizations of its own. Different layers come into the struggle at different times; some will move forward, and then recede while others step ahead. As this occurs, however, the lessons of struggle are not lost. The lessons of organization and the

political tools and demands that are raised in one sector are usually picked up and incorporated into the arsenal of struggle of a new section. We see this process in the 1960's, beginning in the black movement, being carried over into the student movement, then into the antiwar movement, and into other sections of struggle. Transitional demands that are put forward by one sector provide lessons which are valuable in concretizing and deepening the program and demands for other sectors.

Finally, through the concept of the transitional program, one of the key problems of this radicalization can be spoken to, and hopefully overcome: that is, finding a concrete wedge to get from small -- relatively small, historically speaking -- nuclei of radicalized elements, from small organizations in different sectors of the population, to mass instruments of struggle. This is one of the most difficult problems facing black radicals. How to get from the relatively small number of radicalized individuals at present to a mass party? How to connect the day-to-day struggle with the kind of decisive struggle that is looked toward? It is this problem that the Transitional Program for Black Liberation was designed to meet. And it is the key problem that must be met in every sector of this radicalization in order to move forward. To the degree that sections of the transitional program are incorporated and understood -- as in some sections of the antiwar movement -- there is progress. To the degree that they are not, then there is unevenness, for instance, in the Afro-American struggle. The concept of the transitional program is to develop a program of struggle that can tie together disparate forces around common actions, in a period where there's no dominant or single force, and to utilize these approaches to construct the revolutionary communist party.

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The resolution combines two basic points in coming to the conclusions it does on the Afro-American struggle and its place in the coming American revolution. First are the concrete experiences of the struggles of the late '50's and '60's: the rise of Malcolm X; the ghetto explosions; the entirely new change in consciousness of the Afro-American people; the rise of struggles by different sectors for community control over the institutions that affect their lives. Second was an application of our basic ideas on the national question, as developed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and enriched in the contributions of Trotsky. (Incidentally, the degree to which events of the past ten years in the Afro-American struggle have confirmed Trotsky's views on this question is possibly best seen by the fact that

it's only in the light of these events that his views have really become clear.)

To summarize the resolution's central points on the Afro-American struggle:

1) The basic characteristic of the Afro-American struggle is the struggle by an oppressed nationality for self-determination: the struggle to accomplish the historically deferred tasks which the American bourgeoisie proved incapable of accomplishing in their second revolution, and which they turned away from as the U.S. became an imperialist power.

2) The vanguard role of the black struggle for self-determination in the present radicalization and in the mighty struggles to come. It is now clear that this vanguard role will carry over to other sectors of struggle, including the labor movement, and will reinforce and be reinforced by the deepening class struggle in the United States.

In this, we apply one of the basic lessons first learned in the Russian Revolution; that is, the degree to which a revolutionary upsurge brings forth in a torrent the grievances of oppressed groups and nationalities that have been built up over many years. Capitalism, the very system which brought the nation into being, today finds itself not only less able to solve the tasks found in the national revolution, but is faced with the national question in acute new forms: in Ireland, Belgium, Canada, in places where the ruling class assumed this question to be long settled, it has risen again. And the Soviet bureaucrats have also seen it develop in the Ukraine and Czechoslovakia.

We are heading into a period, not of diminution of the national struggle -- in the United States, or anywhere -- but of a deepening of these struggles.

3) The alliance between the struggle by the Afro-Americans and the other oppressed national minorities or nationalities in this country, and the struggle of the workers is the key to the success of the American revolution. This alliance can only be based on the unconditional support by the political leadership of the working class to the struggles for self-determination of the Afro-American people. It's not basically a question of morality, but of necessity. If there is no alliance, the American revolution will be impossible.

The unconditional character of support to self-determination, and the performance as the champion for this, will be proved not only in words, through the clear proclamation of support and education on this issue, but

in deeds. This is the only test that the mass of the Afro-American people will accept and that can justify an alliance.

4) The third American revolution will have a combined character. It will be a workers struggle for power and a struggle by the oppressed national minority for liberation and for self-determination. It will be a struggle which only a workers government established in the United States will be able to bring to a successful conclusion. And through it, not only will all the democratic rights of the oppressed minorities and nationalities finally be brought into being and guaranteed, but the proletarian demands of the workers of all sections of the country will be met. The problem that has bothered, confused and stood somewhat in the way of American radicalism for many, many years (and outside of our movement it still does) is clearly seeing the independent character of the Afro-American struggle for self-determination and the combined character of the coming struggle for power in the United States.

5) This struggle is the clearest manifestation in the United States of the permanent revolution. By this we mean that there will be no stages in this struggle, there will be no middle solution. There will be no solution to the national-democratic demands of the black masses apart from the solution of the exploitation of capitalism by the workers themselves. The revolution will be combined, or it won't take place. There is no black bourgeoisie that is capable of winning national-democratic demands on a capitalist basis and there are no conditions under which American capitalism will grant these demands. It is only the successful struggle for workers power and socialism outlined by the permanent revolution which can do this.

It is from this that the logic of the question of separation comes. Comrades should note that the resolution avoids specifying the degree or form in which the demand for separation will be a part of the struggle or the methods by which the combined revolution will solve the problem of national oppression. The key is in the ability of the vanguard party to convince the oppressed national minorities through struggle that it means to respect their right to self-determination, including separation, and will act accordingly. What is decisive is that the guarantee of the right to separation is the only insurance they have that their demands will be met.

At the same time, the communist movement is well aware of the revolutionary implications of a rise in the desire for separation on the part of the

mass of the black people. This represents the most complete rejection of accepting any possibility of a progressive role for American capitalism.

6) The composition of the Afro-American national minority is a very important factor to take into consideration. The Afro-American masses are overwhelmingly proletarian in composition, generally concentrated in the main industrial centers of the United States. This means: a.) we anticipate that the black workers will play leading roles in the organizations of the black community, including the building and construction of a black political party. This means that there will be a rapid inclusion of proletarian demands along with democratic demands in the program of black political organizations. b.) We anticipate that it will be much easier to win the best militants and much greater numbers to a socialist perspective and membership in the Leninist party.

7) The central crisis facing the Afro-American people in their struggle for self-determination, is the crisis of organization and program. Bits and pieces of a transitional program are raised by various small organizations in the black community. But there is no single organization that puts forth a program that can lead to the construction of a large independent black political party. The most immediate task for us is a propaganda one of projecting the transitional program that can lead toward the formation of a mass black political party.

Our record is one of which we can well be proud. Just contrast our record with the attempts by our opponents to try and figure out the national question, the combined character of the American revolution, and the question of a revolutionary party. There you find a mass of utter confusion. Just read Gus Hall's report to the last Communist Party convention, and note his presentation of the problem. He says that it now looks to him like a tripartite struggle: a class struggle, a national struggle, and a race struggle. And he says, therefore, since it is a tripartite struggle, and since the struggle for self-determination would be valid only if the majority of the blacks favored a separate black nation right now, it follows that the Communist Party is not obligated to defend self-determination of the Afro-American people. Just read the Social Democracy's point of view or Progressive Labor's, all of which have been outlined in our press. This key question of the American revolution is one that is hopeless to solve without the tools of Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism and the experience of the last period as revolutionists.

An important point to note, it seems to me, is not only that at this convention we are codifying these ideas but the degree to which the party's impeccable record in action, in applying its principled class struggle politics to the black struggle, paved the way for the steps forward in understanding that we have now arrived at. This, despite the lack of any concrete evidence to verify the ideas raised by Trotsky in the course of the class struggle, in the late '30's, the '40's, and '50's.

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I won't go into much depth on the youth movement because you all read the resolution presented to the World Congress, entitled The Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International. There are some points to underscore, however. The explosion in American education has caused a qualitative change in the structure and social weight of the American students which affects their importance to the struggle for socialism and the degree to which they will be a factor in all stages of this struggle. The resolution points to the possible role of students as detonators of larger struggles, as we have seen in examples around the world. The student arena has been a proving ground for our ideas and a tested area of recruitment. It is this basic analysis of the change in weight and structure of the American youth movement that establishes our concept of the independent character of the Young Socialist Alliance and the key role of the YSA in contending for leadership among the students in all stages of the radicalization.

We note, in this regard, that the party's orientation, in its most basic sense, is not toward the student movement, and it will not be. The party intervenes, in whatever way possible, in all aspects of the mass movement. But the role of the YSA will become even more important as the class struggle deepens and the party moves forward. This is outlined completely in the World Congress report on the youth movement.

The question has been posed as to whether there will be a contradiction in our orientation as the radicalization deepens. It is clear that the opportunities for recruitment and influence in the student milieu will also expand greatly. As that time, won't the party turn away from the student milieu? Or will we have to pass up other aspects of the struggle in the mass movement? It is here the YSA's particular role is crucial in terms of what it can accomplish among the masses of youth. The party's role, its intervention and

orientation towards the openings that will occur in all areas of the mass movement, remains clear.

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What about American labor? The resolution notes three important points: 1) There is a lack of understanding in the radical movement of the degree to which all these factors in the new radicalization are affecting the American working class. Because of inexperience and lack of knowledge of the mass movement most young radicals don't grasp this at all. Because they don't see an immediate and direct reflection in the union movement of the radicalization, their assumption is that American labor as such, is not being affected. Quite the opposite is the case. The same political sensitivity, receptivity to ideas, questioning of the status quo -- especially among young people -- that we have seen through this entire radicalization has begun to affect, and affect deeply, the workers in this country. In fact, the way in which they have been affected prior to large scale struggles in the unions will be a factor in determining the forms and character of these struggles.

2) Just as the worldwide expansion of American capitalism in the last 25 years has bred the international contradictions that it faces today, American capital has incorporated new and explosive potentials in the American labor movement. The most important, of course, is the growing number of black workers in basic industry. This makes all the more clear the vanguard role that they will play and the possibilities of the black struggle affecting the labor movement directly through the black workers.

Another contradiction has been the incorporation of an entire layer of young workers into today's work force. They are accustomed to the standard of living which they now have; they assume it will continue forever; they assume that if it doesn't continue, then at some stage the government is supposed to do something about it and will respond. Not only have these young workers never known defeat, they've never even known very much struggle to get what they have. But there is a revolutionary potential hidden just below the surface of this conservatism that is often missed. The young workers are not prepared to give up their present standards and will respond in an explosive manner to any such prospect.

Another factor has been the incorporation into the labor movement, and into the unions themselves, of entire layers of young workers in different

industries and fields of work who have been affected directly by the radicalization. Many of them come out of a student milieu; many, in their day-to-day work as unionists, come directly in conflict with the state itself.

It is very, very important to note all this because, as the resolution implies, it is not necessary for a depression to occur to draw sections of American labor into struggle. Quite the contrary, the contradictions short of a depression are potentially the major problems which American capitalism faces.

The major demands put forward and the character of our transitional approach to the struggle focus on these contradictions, as outlined. Comrades should especially note the linking together of the demands for a sliding scale of hours and a sliding scale of wages. In a period where inflationary pressures will continue it will become absolutely necessary for the ruling class to project recessionary measures to put pressure on wages and employment. These demands tie in concretely with some of the major demands in the Transitional Program for Black Liberation. Note that in the same section of that transitional program, where priority for black workers in construction is outlined, so is the sliding scale of hours. And if anyone needs more evidence of why it is important to link these demands, they need only read the papers of the last few days about what's happening in Pittsburgh. This illustrates both the potential and the need for leadership. Linked with all of this, of course, the question of a political instrument of American labor remains central.

Finally, we note that any initial struggles that begin over job conditions, wage scales, etc. in the labor movement will from the beginning reflect and be affected by the general radicalization in the country as a whole, by the level of consciousness, and by the availability of potential allies in the struggles which the workers will face. Already, we have seen a small preview of the dynamic that we can anticipate in the Oil Workers' struggle on the West Coast.

3) The resolution intentionally avoids trying to specify organizational forms of struggle that American labor will go through. It concentrates on the basic political demands that must be raised in confrontation with the bosses and the state, and the crucial role of the revolutionary party in this process. There's no use guessing the exact forms. The Bolsheviks would never have foreseen that their lack of a majority in the unions would not have been decisive;

it was their majority in the Soviets that turned out to be decisive in the Russian Revolution. We project a political program that unifies the class, that confronts the enemy, and that links together the key contradictions which the American workers face. Needless to say, no major left-wing opposition in the labor movement will be able to go very far without clarity on the question of political independence from the capitalist class and without beginning to forge a political instrument of struggle. This question may not be posed at the very beginning of every struggle, but it will very rapidly come to the fore.

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Finally, the section on the party itself.

One of the key aspects to our internationalism is understanding the interdependence of the struggles of the oppressed masses in different countries and their effect upon each other. For that reason, our concept of the revolutionary Marxist party is that it is an international party. At the same time, the specific character of the revolutionary party is determined by the nature of the enemy it must combat and defeat. It is the bourgeoisie that decides the national boundaries of the workers party, not the workers themselves. The centralized bourgeois state, the resolution says, incorporates and reinforces all the divisions among the working masses in order to insure its domination.

Earlier in the resolution, a thumbnail sketch is given of the rise of American imperialism. It says that "after spreading across the North American continent, slaughtering and dispossessing the Indians and overpowering the slave system in the South in the process, it became a world imperialist power at the turn of the century. In the Spanish-American war, U.S. imperialism seized sectors of the decayed Spanish empire outright, dislodged Spain from Cuba, and proceeded to establish its own empire in Latin America and the Pacific." In that thumbnail sketch are described all the components that American capital incorporated in its nation: Afro-Americans, Mexican-Americans, American Indians, Asian-Americans, Puerto Ricans. The drive of American imperialism to incorporate as much labor as possible, from as many different sources as possible, determined the fact that the American revolutionary party will be a multi-national party, will be a party composed of the revolutionists of all these components incorporated by American imperialism.

Secondly, the national divisions and very unevenness that mark American politics express most vividly the need for a single, unified, combat party. Only such a party can forge a combined and unified strategy to overcome these divisions and unevenness and be an instrument capable of defeating American imperialism.

Third is our concept of the vanguard party as the highest expression of the collective consciousness of the working class, and the repository of its historical memory. The party brings to bear the costly lessons of the past on the problems and opportunities of the present. In some ways that sentence captures the essence of the recruitment and assimilation of an entire layer of young people into the Socialist Workers Party. The ability of the party to respond to the opportunities of the previous period enabled us to get to where we are today.

It is important to note that every one of our opponents, to one degree or another, rejects the perspective of forming a multi-national revolutionary workers party which has the perspective of leading a combined struggle for socialism with the national struggle for self-determination.

Finally, the resolution points out the enhanced opportunities for constructing the revolutionary party as a result of the decline of the American Communist Party. It is this -- the single most significant change -- which enables the Trotskyist party to project becoming the party of the revolution in the coming period. For the first time since the degeneration of American communism and the dominance of a strong Stalinist party, it is not an automatic consequence of a new radicalization that the Stalinist party will manage to grow and maintain its dominance over the rest of the left. It is an open field. It is an even struggle. It is a question of which party will be able to intervene in, analyze, and recruit from the current radicalization. On the subjective side, this is the most significant change that's occurred in the last 40 years.

The problem is not so much one of our presently being a small party. A small party with a correct program can accomplish much and can rapidly grow into a large party under revolutionary conditions. The problem occurs when a small party is blocked by a mass reformist or mass Stalinist party. That is the great difficulty which no longer exists.

I would like to conclude with a few examples which throw light on the perspectives for our party. We should think seriously about the full significance of the role of the Socialist Workers Party in the antiwar movement. The intervention of the Socialist Workers Party with its program and perspective was the decisive factor in the rise and development of a mass American antiwar movement. This gives us just a small preview of how a homogeneous party with a correct program and trained cadres can intervene in and affect much broader and deeper struggles. We should look very closely at what happened in France, not just the speed and character of the explosion and the tremendous opportunities that developed, but the role that a small nucleus of Trotskyists were able to play. And thinking it over very carefully, we have an advantage over the French comrades. We have a little time before an explosion of that character. And not only that, we should also consider what a party that had the time and experience to build itself would be able to accomplish without a mass Communist Party to contend with. That's what we should think about.

Our perspective is very realistic. The transitional program for

socialist revolution has been put forward before. Marx and Engels had the rudimentary concepts of a transitional program. But the revolutionary forces were not strong enough in their period to win. Following World War I there was a mighty revolutionary explosion, but only the Bolsheviks built a revolutionary leadership adequate to the task. Then we went through the entire period of the decline in the Communist movement and reaction on a world scale. Coming out of World War II, we saw the beginning of the reversal of this process, the beginning of the expansion of the world revolution, first in the colonial sector and then in others. In the post-World-War-II period we have seen the beginning disintegration of the Stalinist movement. What our perspectives are based upon today, what the whole revolution turns around, is not a utopian perspective of hoping somehow that this radicalization will inherently culminate in the overturn of capitalism, but the clear political understanding that there is such a possibility because of the real social and political forces that exist. And the one concrete thing that we can do to affect the course of events, a task that is an absolute necessity if we are to succeed, is the construction of the American communist party.