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by Dick Roberts, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

Comrade Ernest Germain attempts to drive a sharp wedge between the national struggle and the class struggles of workers and peasants. In Section 17 of "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International," Germain states: "With the epoch of imperialism, nationalism *as a rule* becomes reactionary, whether it is 'purely' bourgeois or petty-bourgeois in character. The universal idea of *independent* organisation of the working class, of the autonomous class goals followed by the proletariat and the poor peasantry in the class struggle, of *international class solidarity of the workers of all countries* and all nationalities, is opposed to the idea of national solidarity or national community of interests." Later in the same section Germain states, "To defend the notion of 'unconditional support' for Quebecois nationalism, Arab nationalism, Indian nationalism, or Ceylon nationalism, is to disarm the workers and poor peasants of these countries in their class struggle against their own bourgeoisie, is to make the conquest of power by the proletariat in the course of the anti-imperialist struggle—i.e. the whole process of permanent revolution—more difficult if not impossible, and puts a big obstacle on the road to building Leninist parties among these nationalities."

Germain lays part of the theoretical groundwork for these assertions in the previous section of his document, Section 16, entitled "Tail-Ending a New 'Stage-Theory' of the Revolution." Here Germain sets forth in extremely condensed form his interpretation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution in underdeveloped countries. Particularly noteworthy is Germain's apparent attempt to separate the agrarian revolution from national liberation struggles. The argumentation of Section 16 can be paraphrased as follows:

1) The struggle against national oppression is not an anticapitalist struggle because it is a struggle for a bourgeois-democratic demand which can be won under conditions of contemporary imperialism.

2) In fact, since World War II, foreign national oppression has been eliminated in most of the former colonial countries of Asia and Africa. But this has not eliminated foreign economic exploitation.

3) On the contrary, workers and more especially peasants remain bound to the chains of classical underdevelopment. The national bourgeoisie cannot solve the agrarian question since this requires a decisive break with the capitalist world market.

4) Consequently, "it is confusing, to say the least, to present any revolution in a backward country—be it the Algerian revolution, the Cuban revolution, the Vietnamese revolution, the Palestinian or the Arab revolution—as a 'national liberation struggle.' The Trotskyist way of looking at these revolutions is as *processes of permanent revolution* in which the struggle for national liberation, for agrarian revolution, for full democratic freedoms for the masses, and for defence of the class interests of the working class are *inextricably combined and intertwined*. . . ." Germain also states earlier in the

same section, "Revolutionary marxists do not reject [the] Menshevik theory of stages only or mainly because they stress the inability of the national bourgeoisie to actually conquer national independence from imperialism, regardless of the concrete circumstances. They reject it because they refuse to postpone to a later stage the peasant and workers uprisings for their own class interests, which will inevitably rise spontaneously alongside the national struggle as it unfolds, and very quickly combine themselves into a common inseparable programme in the consciousness of the masses."

Unless I misread these last two sentences, they are at striking variance with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky did stress the inability of the national bourgeoisie in backward countries to conquer real independence from imperialism. He opposed the Stalinist "two-stage theory" because the first stage, the supposed "democratic dictatorship" in which the national bourgeoisie has succeeded in freeing itself from imperialism, is objectively unrealizable in the present epoch.

In the course of a national liberation struggle, social forces are released which threaten to go beyond the bounds of capitalism. This happens, of course, regardless of whether revolutionary Marxists refuse or don't refuse to press the class interests of workers. This social eruption forces the national bourgeoisie into counterrevolution. Only workers can carry the national liberation struggle to victory and they can do this only if they and the peasantry form their own organizations independent of and opposed to the bourgeoisie. The victorious revolution *combines* the bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution consequently does not entail an absolute counterposition of the national struggle and the struggles of the oppressed, including the agrarian revolution. On the contrary it views the two in dialectical combination.

In the communist society of the future, the federated unity of the world socialist system will replace nation states. Private property on the land will give way to social ownership and central planning, the only way in which agriculture can be thoroughly industrialized. But today in the course of the struggle for world socialism it is necessary to raise both national demands and the demand of land for the poor peasants in order to mobilize the workers and peasants for revolution.

This is not the Stalinist theory of stages because it nowhere includes a "democratic dictatorship" of the national bourgeoisie. The national liberation struggle and the struggles of workers and peasants are "inextricably combined" precisely because the bourgeoisie is incapable of leading a successful national liberation struggle.

There are at least five departures from Trotsky's methodology in Germain's condensed presentation of the theory of permanent revolution.

1) Germain incorrectly identifies nationalism with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist parties and policies.

2) He equates the granting of formal political independence from imperialism with national liberation.

3) He consequently denies the anticapitalist thrust of the struggle for national liberation.

4) He separates economic exploitation from national oppression.

5) And he attempts to separate the agrarian revolution from the national struggle.

There is also a lack of clarity in Germain's presentation of the relationship between the proletarian and agrarian revolutions. But an analysis of this relationship is a necessary step toward grasping the interconnection between the struggle for national liberation and socialist revolution. A closer look at Trotsky's views on these matters should help to throw light on the questions involved.

#### *Workers and Peasants*

In the "Peasant War in China" (1932), Trotsky contrasts the class "position and training of the workers and peasants." He states, "The worker approaches questions from the socialist standpoint; the peasant's viewpoint is petty bourgeois. The worker strives to socialize the property that is taken away from the exploiters; the peasant seeks to divide it up. The worker desires to put to common use palaces and parks; whereas the peasant, insofar as he cannot divide them, inclines to burning the palaces and cutting down the parks. The worker strives to solve problems on a national scale and in accordance with a plan; the peasant, on the other hand, approaches all problems on a local scale, and takes a hostile attitude to centralized planning, etc.

"It is understood that a peasant also is capable of raising himself to the socialist viewpoint. Under a proletarian regime ever larger masses of peasants become re-educated in the socialist spirit. But this requires time, years, even decades. It should be borne in mind that in the initial stages of revolution, contradictions between proletarian socialism and peasant individualism often take on an extremely acute character."

These distinctions were central in the dispute between Lenin and Trotsky on the character of the Russian revolution and form part of the basis of the theory of permanent revolution. "The weak point in Lenin's conception," Trotsky stated, "was the internally contradictory idea of the 'bourgeois-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.' A political bloc of two classes whose interests only partially coincide excludes a dictatorship." (Introduction to Harold Isaacs' *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, 1938.)

In the chapter on "The Proletariat and the Peasantry" in *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1930), Trotsky writes, "With the weakness of the petty bourgeois democracy, the scatteredness and political blindness of the peasant movement, the revolutionary strike of the workers becomes the battering ram which the awakening nation directs against the walls of absolutism. . . ."

"The soldiers did not forget about the land—whenever at least they were not thinking about death—and in the trenches the muzhik's thoughts about the future were saturated with the smell of powder. But all the same the peasantry, even after learning to handle firearms, could never of its own force have achieved the agrarian democratic revolution—that is, its own revolution. It had to have

leadership. For the first time in world history the peasant was destined to find a leader in the person of the worker. In that lies the fundamental, and you may say the whole, difference between the Russian revolution and all those preceding it. . . .

"If the agrarian problem, as a heritage from the barbarism of the old Russian history, had been solved by the bourgeoisie, if it could have been solved by them, the Russian proletariat could not possibly have come to power in 1917. In order to realize the Soviet state, there was required a drawing together and mutual penetration of two factors belonging to completely different historic species: a peasant war—that is, a movement characteristic of the dawn of bourgeois development—and a proletarian insurrection, the movement signaling its decline. That is the essence of 1917."

But what draws these "completely different historic species" together in struggle? Germain merely states that "It is because the agrarian question was not solved by the February revolution, in spite of the overthrow of the tsar, that the October revolution was objectively possible, i.e., that the proletariat was not isolated from the great majority of the peasantry." This is incomplete. Trotsky writes in *The History of the Russian Revolution*: "The regime which issued from the February revolution not only was not preparing a democratic dictatorship, but was a living and exhaustive proof of the fact that such a dictatorship was impossible. . . . It repressed the workers, peasants and soldiers, and on the 25th of October it fell fighting at its post as ally and defender of the bourgeoisie. Moreover it was clear enough from the beginning, when the democracy, with gigantic tasks before it and the unlimited support of the masses, voluntarily renounced the power, that this was not due to political principles or prejudices, but to the hopelessness of the situation of the petty bourgeoisie in the capitalist society—especially in a period of war and revolution, when the fundamental life-problems of countries, peoples and classes are under decision."

#### *China and the National Question*

In the Chinese revolution it was the struggle for national liberation and unification that fused the mighty peasant uprising with proletarian revolution. The aborted 1926-27 revolution compelled Trotsky in the sharpest manner to defend the theory of permanent revolution against Stalin's program of revolutionary betrayal disguised as the "two-stage theory." Here one of the key questions was the inseparable link between the landlords and imperialism.

Germain states this conception as follows: "The national bourgeoisie is not only tied to imperialism but also to the landlord-moneylender-compradore class. The national question is not the only key question of the bourgeois democratic revolution which remains unfulfilled in backward countries in the 20th century. Apart from the question of democratic political rights of the toiling masses and of initiating a process of cumulative industrialisation, there is the decisive question of the agrarian revolution. But when the peasant masses rise to overthrow the landlords-usurer-merchant alliance, they not only often attack direct property (capital investments) of the 'national bourgeoisie' too, but they also create in the country a revolutionary situation which challenges the rule of proper-

tied classes in general, thereby assisting the challenge of the proletariat against the private property of the national bourgeoisie itself."

Trotsky treats the same question in relation to the second Chinese revolution as follows in *Problems of the Chinese Revolution* (1927): "Large and middle scale land ownership (as it exists in China) is most closely intertwined with urban, including foreign capitalism. There is no landowning caste in China in opposition to the bourgeoisie. The most wide-spread, generally-hated exploiter in the village is the usurious wealthy peasant, the agent of urban banking capital. . . . The agrarian revolution there will be from the very beginning, and also later on, an uprising not only against the few landlords and bureaucrats, but also against the wealthy peasants and usurers. . . .

"The agrarian revolution, however, does not constitute the only basis of the present historical struggle in China. The most radical agrarian revolution, the general division of land (the Communist party will naturally support it to the very end) will not by itself be a way out of the economic blind alley. It is now essential for China to have national unity and economic sovereignty, that is, customs autonomy, or more correctly, a monopoly of foreign trade; this means: *emancipation from world imperialism*, for which China remains the most important source not only of enrichment but also of existence, constituting a safety valve against the internal explosions of capitalism, today in Europe and tomorrow in America." (Emphasis in the original.)

Where Germain blurs the relationship between the agrarian revolution and nationalism, Trotsky elevates it into prominence. Trotsky returns to this theme in *The Permanent Revolution* (1929) where the lessons of the second Chinese revolution play a role second only to the Russian revolution itself in providing Trotsky's ammunition against Stalinism. Trotsky writes, ". . . there is almost no estate of landlords in China, the landowners are much more intimately bound up with the capitalists than in Tsarist Russia, and the specific weight of the agrarian question in China is therefore much lighter than in Tsarist Russia; but on the other hand, the question of national liberation bulks very large. Accordingly, the capacity of the Chinese peasantry for *independent* revolutionary struggle for the democratic renovation of the country certainly cannot be greater than was the Russian peasantry's."

Again in the same work, Trotsky writes: "Radek explains . . . that the central task of the German revolution was *national unification*, while in Russia it was the *agrarian revolution*. If this contrast is not made mechanically, and a sense of proportion is maintained, then it is correct up to a certain point. But then how does the matter stand with China? The specific weight of the national problem in China, a semicolonial country, is immeasurably greater in comparison with the agrarian problem than it was even in Germany in 1848-50; for in China it is simultaneously a question of unification and of liberation. . . . In China there has been no monarchy since 1911, there is no independent landlord class, the national-bourgeoisie Kuomintang is in power, and the relationships of serfdom are, so to speak, chemically fused with bourgeois exploitation."

For Trotsky the agrarian revolution does not have *automatic* links with the national liberation struggle, much less to the socialist revolution. It falls upon the working class to carry the agrarian struggle through to completion. In this process the workers do not abandon the national liberation struggle. They explain to the peasants that it is in their interests to pursue the anti-imperialist revolution alongside the struggle for land. They demonstrate in practice that the national bourgeoisie which refuses to give the peasants land is also incapable of leading the struggle against imperialism. The agrarian struggle melds with the struggle against imperialism, under the leadership of the workers, against the national bourgeoisie.

Trotsky sums up these processes as follows in *The Permanent Revolution*:

"The peculiarities of a country which has not accomplished or completed its democratic revolution are of such great significance that they must be taken as the basis for the programme of the proletarian vanguard. Only upon the basis of such a *national* programme can a Communist party develop its real and successful struggle for the majority of the working class and the toilers in general against the bourgeoisie and its democratic agents.

"The possibility of success in this struggle is of course determined to a large extent by the role of the proletariat in the economy of the country, and consequently by the level of its capitalist development. This, however, is by no means the only criterion. No less important is the question whether a far-reaching and burning problem 'for the people' exists in the country, in the solution of which the majority of the nation is interested, and which demands for its solution the boldest revolutionary measures. Among problems of this kind are the agrarian question and the national question, in their varied combinations. With the acute agrarian problem and the intolerable national oppression in the colonial countries, the young and relatively small proletariat can come to power on the basis of a *national democratic* revolution sooner than the proletariat of an advanced country on a purely *socialist* basis. It might have seemed that since October there should be no necessity to prove this any more." (Emphasis in the original.)

#### *Two Further Quotations from Trotsky*

There is an extremely interesting treatment of this question by Trotsky in his "Letter to South African Revolutionaries" (1935). He is discussing theses presented by the South African section of the Fourth International: "The theses several times underlines that the agrarian and not the national demands must be put in the first place. This is a very important question that deserves serious attention. To push aside or to weaken the national slogans with the object of not antagonizing the white chauvinists in the ranks of the working class would be, of course, criminal opportunism, which is absolutely alien to the authors and supporters of the theses. This flows quite clearly from the text of the theses, which is permeated with the spirit of revolutionary internationalism. . . .

"Thus we must seek for another explanation, which is briefly indicated in the text itself: the backward native peasant masses directly feel the agrarian oppression much

more than they do the national oppression.

"It is quite possible. The majority of the natives are peasants; the bulk of the land is in the hands of a white minority. The Russian peasants during their struggle for land put their faith in the czar for a long time and stubbornly refused to draw political conclusions.

"From the revolutionary intelligentsia's traditional slogan, 'Land and Liberty,' the peasant for a long time only accepted the first part. It required decades of agrarian unrest and the influence and action of the town workers to enable the peasantry to connect both slogans.

"The poor enslaved Bantu hardly entertains more hope in the British King or in MacDonald. But this extreme political backwardness is also expressed in his lack of self-consciousness. At the same time, he feels very sharply the land and fiscal bondage. Given these conditions, propaganda can and must first of all flow from the slogans of the agrarian revolution, in order that, step by step, and on the basis of the experience of the struggle, the peasantry may be brought to the necessary *political and national* conclusions." (Emphasis in the original.)

Germain picks up a sentence from the Transitional Program (1938) which states: "The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat's struggle, their mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and to a considerable extent by the *degree* of its backwardness." As this single statement stands, it is pretty abstract. Here are the two paragraphs directly preceding this sentence in the Transitional Program, codifying and concretizing the ideas of Trotsky's we have been discussing:

"The central task of the colonial and semi-colonial countries is the *agrarian revolution*, i.e., liquidation of feudal heritages, and *national independence*, i.e., the overthrow of the imperialist yoke. Both tasks are closely linked with each other.

"It is impossible merely to reject the democratic program; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it. The slogan for a National (or Constituent) Assembly preserves its full force for such countries as China or India. This slogan must be indissolubly tied up with the problem of national liberation and agrarian reform. As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic program. Only they will be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the basis of the revolutionary democratic program, it is necessary to oppose the workers to the 'national' bourgeoisie. Then, at a certain stage in the mobilization of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets, can and should arise. Their historical rôle in each given period, particularly their relation to the National Assembly, will be determined by the political level of the proletariat, the bond between them and the peasantry, and the character of the proletarian party policies. Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution."

Trotsky's defense of the revolutionary democratic program in backward countries was directed against the positions of the ultralefts and sectarians who denied or disregarded its crucial importance in promoting the revolutionary process there. Support for the democratic demands is the basis for the alliance between the peasants and

workers whose conquest of power will realize them. This is the formula for the permanent revolution.

#### *Postwar Colonial Underdevelopment*

What about the countries that have gained formal political independence from imperialism? "It is because the agrarian question is not solved today in any of the semi-colonial countries which conquered national independence after World War 2 that in spite of the minority situation of the proletariat, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat allied to the poor peasantry remains a realistic perspective," Germain states. Once again the observation is one-sided.

It is true that the agrarian question has not been solved and that this will permanently fuel the fires of revolutionary upheaval. A case in point is Egypt where land reform continued after Nasser's coup in 1952 and probably went further than in any other semicolonial country. Even after a series of land-reform acts, Hassan Riad could still write in *L'Egypte Nasserienne* (1964): "Despite the agrarian reform, great inequalities remain: 80% of the peasants remain without land or almost without any and only about one-third of their labor power is employed. The political power of the aristocracy, which was formerly based on the intermediate layers, has merely been replaced by that of the state bureaucracy which still bases itself on this relatively privileged minority." "The big proprietors," Anouar Abdel-Malek wrote in *Egypt: Military Society* (1968), "understood that there was never any question of permitting any peasant insurrection whatever, or any revolutionary action by the Left. Then, reassured, they came legitimately to suppose that they would be able to pursue their old kind of life in peace and quiet—apartment houses, luxury goods and export of capital—for the golden age of the great estates of yesterday had returned. . . ." In Egypt, the inability of a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement to solve the agrarian problem is graphically demonstrated.

But does this mean that Egypt has achieved national independence? It seems rather to add fresh confirmation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: in underdeveloped countries, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist parties are incapable of carrying out a program of real land reform because this requires the overturning of capitalist property relations, that is, *the achieving of national independence from imperialism*.

This process is what Trotsky is actually referring to in a passage from "War and the Fourth International" (1934) quoted by Germain. Germain says "The materialist basis of this struggle against contemporary nationalism is admirably clarified by Trotsky in the following passage." And the quoted passage states, "It must be clearly understood beforehand that the belated revolutions in Asia and Africa are incapable of opening up a new epoch of renaissance for the national state. The liberation of the colonies will be merely a gigantic episode in the world socialist revolution, just as the belated democratic overturn in Russia, which was also a semicolonial country, was only the introduction to the socialist revolution." Is Trotsky arguing here against national liberation struggles?

No, he is not. This is unfortunately another case of Germain's judiciously selecting quotations in order to blur their real meaning. Germain's quotation is taken from a

section of Trotsky's article entitled "The National Question and Imperialist War." The two sentences before Germain's quotation state: "16. A special and important place is occupied by the question of *colonial and semicolonial countries of the East*, which are even now fighting for the independent national state. Their struggle is doubly progressive: tearing the backward peoples from Asiaticism, sectionalism and foreign bondage, they strike powerful blows at the imperialist states. But it must . . ." etc. (Emphasis in the original.)

The meaning of Trotsky's remarks is that "the independent national state"—that is, the classical objective of the bourgeois-democratic revolution—cannot be established in colonial and semicolonial countries under the conditions of modern imperialism. But the struggle to achieve this goal "is doubly progressive" according to Trotsky.

Most Latin American countries have been formally politically independent from imperialism throughout the twentieth century. This was so while Trotsky was alive and developing his theory of permanent revolution. The theory has been put to the test of experience by one bourgeois nationalist movement after the next—Vargas (Brazil), Peron (Argentina), Cardenas (Mexico), Haya de la Torre (Peru), Aguirre Cerda (Chile), Betancourt (Venezuela), Figueres (Costa Rica), Arevalo-Arbenz (Guatemala), etc. What were the results? A student of political movements in Latin America, Andre Gunder Frank, writes ". . . neo-imperialism and monopoly capitalist development in Latin America are drawing and driving the entire Latin American bourgeois class—including its comprador, bureaucratic, and national segments—into ever-closer economic and political alliance with and dependence on the imperialist metropolis. The road of national or state capitalism to economic development is already foreclosed to them by neo-imperialist development today. The political task of reversing the development of Latin American underdevelopment therefore falls to the people themselves." ("Capitalist Underdevelopment" 1967-68.)

Compare this with the passage in Trotsky's "War and the Fourth International" directly following the quotation selected by Germain:

"17. In *South America*," Trotsky writes, "where belated and already decaying capitalism is supporting the conditions of semifeudal, that is, semislavish existence, world antagonisms create a sharp struggle of compradore cliques, continual overturns within the states and protracted armed conflicts between the states. The American bourgeoisie, which was able during its historic rise to unite into one federation the northern half of the American continent, now uses all its power, which grew out of this, to disunite, weaken and enslave the southern half. South and Central America will be able to tear themselves out of backwardness and enslavement only by uniting all their states into one powerful federation. But it is not the belated South American bourgeoisie, a thoroughly venal agency of foreign imperialism, who will be called upon to solve this task, but the young South American proletariat, the chosen leader of the oppressed masses. The slogan in the struggle against violence and intrigues of world imperialism and against the bloody work of native compradore cliques is therefore: the *Soviet United States of South and Central America*."

"The national problem merges everywhere with the social. Only the conquest of power by the world proletariat can assure a real and lasting freedom of development for all nations of our planet." (Emphasis in the original.)

Trotsky does not separate the political from the economic aspects of imperialist oppression. Every neocolonial regime that has succeeded in retarding the mass movements in order to preserve capitalist property relations has failed to break from the political and economic ties of world imperialism. Gaining formal political independence from imperialism, postwar history has shown over and over again, is insufficient to launch a nation on the path towards creating a classical bourgeois democracy (democratic rights, agrarian reform, industrialization, etc.). This path is ruled out for two-thirds of humanity under the conditions of modern imperialism, as Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution explains.

When the Cubans said "land or death" and meant it, they found they had to carry out a socialist revolution. It did not deprive their slogan of its doubly progressive character.

### *Postcapitalist Societies*

The indissoluble intertwining of the agrarian revolution and the national struggle does not end with the establishment of formal political independence from imperialism. Nor does it end with the victory of the socialist revolution, as history has shown. For in none of the deformed and degenerated workers states has the agrarian revolution been carried through to completion and this is intimately linked to the *national oppression* that exists in the non-capitalist states.

Trotsky treated this question in one of his most inspiring speeches, the 1923 speech to the Twelfth Conference of the Communist Party of the Ukraine. Here is a lengthy quotation:

"I think it was in the same news report, or perhaps it was in another (in *Kommunist* or *Proletary*) that I found the statement that many comrades do not understand why the national question is being brought up again. They think this question is 'settled' as far as they are concerned. . . . The Ukraine is independent, Georgia, Azerbaidjan, Armenia are independent republics, and so on. What more is there to be done?"

"Of course, comrades, the national question is not our fundamental aim—our aim is communism. The social question, not the national question, is the basis on which we stand. But then, the peasant economy is not our aim either, but centralized socialist production, high technique and so on. However, the peasant economy is a fact—and not a program or an aim, but a fact, and a fact in many, many millions, tens and hundreds of millions of acres, of farms and of people, and a careless attitude to this basic fact would turn our whole program head over heels. It is the same with national question. These two questions, the peasant and the national, are very close to each other. They are expressions by and large of the same epoch. . . ."

"In Comrade Rakovsky's letter to the Donets provincial conference I found an idea which seems to me exceptionally significant: He combines the peasant question with the national question. If there were to be a split between the proletariat and the peasantry; if the bourgeoisie were



to manage, in the person of its political agents . . . to take the leadership of the peasantry, that would mean, Comrade Lenin wrote not long ago, civil war, civil war all along this line until the victory of the proletariat in the West, and we can add that the outcome of this civil war would be doubtful for us.

"But, comrades, if a misunderstanding between the proletariat and the peasantry is dangerous it is a hundredfold more dangerous when the peasantry does not belong to the nationality which in old, monarchist Russia was the ruling nationality, that is, when the peasantry, whether Ukrainian, Georgian, Azerbaidjanian or Armenian, is a peasantry which has always seen in the ruling apparatus not only the power of another class over it but also the power of national oppression, so that defensive nationalism led this peasantry to side with its own bourgeoisie. . . .

"National ideology is a factor of enormous importance. National psychology is an explosive force which is in some cases revolutionary and in others counterrevolutionary, but in both cases it is an enormous explosive force. Remember how this dynamite was used by the bourgeoisie during wars when it mobilized the proletariat to defend so-called 'national' interests. It was a diabolical experiment and it succeeded, against us. The bourgeoisie showed itself able to utilize the explosive force of nationalism for imperialist aims.

"But in the East, in India, in China, hundreds of millions have risen in a national movement directed against imperialism. The national struggle of the East is an enormous explosive force, revolutionary dynamite with a co-

lossal coefficient. The task of the European proletariat is to show itself able to use this force. In our country, comrades, in our constructive work, the national factor is a potential force, it can turn out to be directed this way or that way."

In this period Trotsky and Lenin had formed a bloc to attack Stalin's bureaucratic treatment of the national question. This speech concludes with a tribute to Lenin who had once again fallen ill before the attack on Stalin could be launched.

\* \* \*

It should be evident from the quotations in this discussion article that the interrelationship of the agrarian question and the national question is a central aspect of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Comrade Germain appears to be bent on a course of divergence from this element of the theory. A further clarification of his views would be most welcome.

\* \* \*

For "War and the Fourth International" see: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34, pp. 299-329.*

"On the South African Theses" is in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1934-35, pp. 248-255.*

"Tasks of the Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party" is in *Leon Trotsky Speaks, pp. 134-173.*

July 3, 1973

## REPORT ON PUERTO RICO

by Doug Jenness

[This report was given to a Political Committee meeting on April 7, 1973.]

1. From 1508 when the first Spanish settlement was established until 1898 when American troops landed, Boriquen (Puerto Rico) was a Spanish colony. During the 400-year period a new nation emerged on the island. It was formed out of the racial blending of the native Indian population, Black slaves brought from Africa, and the Spanish settlers. A common language—Spanish—and a common culture emerged. The Puerto Rican nation was forged out of a common oppression at the hands of the Spanish rulers.

2. The forcible annexation of Puerto Rico by the United

States during the Spanish-American war did not end the island's colonial status. It merely changed the oppressed nation's master. And today Puerto Rico still remains a colony of U. S. imperialism. It is politically, economically, and culturally dominated by the U. S. rulers.

3. The official view of the U. S. rulers is that Puerto Rico is a self-governing Commonwealth freely and voluntarily associated with the United States. This is totally false. The present Commonwealth status does not give Puerto Ricans a say over their own affairs.

On one hand they are supposedly U. S. citizens but they don't have the same rights as other citizens. They are not permitted to elect voting representatives to either

house of U.S. Congress or to vote for the president of the United States.

On the other hand they don't have the rights of a self-governing country. Laws passed by the Puerto Rican legislature must first be submitted to the U. S. Congress which can amend, suspend or revoke them. The U.S. president has final veto power over the Puerto Rican legislature and he appoints judges for the Puerto Rican Supreme Court.

4. Nearly all of Puerto Rico's economic enterprises are controlled by U.S. corporations. Special tax exemptions are offered to U. S. businesses that invest on the island and the U. S. minimum wage law does not apply there. Distortions in the Puerto Rican economy created by imperialist exploitation forces Puerto Ricans to import consumer goods that could be produced on the island.

The bitter fruits of imperialist exploitation is high unemployment (estimates range from 15 to 30 percent) and high prices. Puerto Rico serves the imperialist profitmakers well as a pool of cheap labor both for the industries that establish plants on the island as well as those that use migrant labor on the continent.

"Operation Bootstrap," set up in the late 1940s by Governor Muñoz Marin with the collaboration of the imperialists, was to have made Puerto Rico the "showcase of democracy" in Latin America. This project helped to industrialize the island's economy without altering U. S. imperialist control.

5. For the last 75 years Puerto Ricans have suffered attempts by the imperialist oppressors to "Americanize" them. This has included attempts to make English the principal language for instruction in the schools. Although Spanish is now the main language of instruction, English still receives preferential treatment over other subjects.

6. The political conclusion to be drawn from this description of U. S. rule over Puerto Rico is that Puerto Rico is an oppressed nation that has the right to self-determination. However, to recognize this right leaves open the road the Puerto Rican people will follow in determining their own affairs. Three solutions have been proposed and debated over the past few decades. They are statehood, commonwealth, and independence.

7. Statehood has traditionally been supported by the more conservative forces in the U. S. ruling class and their flunkys in Puerto Rico. For example, this is the position of the New Progressive Party which has ties with the Republican Party in the U. S.

8. Commonwealth status was established in 1952 during the administration of Muñoz Marin, the liberal leader of the Popular Democratic Party. At the present time this appears to be the status favored by most of the U. S. imperialist ruling class as well as their agents in Puerto Rico. Twenty years of experience with commonwealth status—the "liberal" solution—has shown that it is merely another form for continued U. S. domination and exploitation.

9. Independence is currently the position held by the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), and the Puerto Rican Communist Party.

Independence was also supported by the Fourth International and by U. S. and Puerto Rican Trotskyists in the 1930s and 1940s when there was a massive inde-

pendence movement. One indication of the widespread sentiment for independence at that time was that when the bourgeois liberal Popular Democratic Party was formed in 1938 and won a majority in the Puerto Rican legislature in 1940, it felt it was necessary to include a plank supporting independence. It later abandoned this position which led to a split and the formation of the pro-independence PIP in 1948. In 1952 PIP received the second highest number of votes in the elections.

With the McCarthyite witchhunt in the 1950s the expression of independence sentiment subsided and the SWP, without dropping its support for independence, did not promote it during this period.

The Cuban revolution played a significant role in inspiring and ideologically influencing the resurgence of the independence movement in the 1960s. The Puerto Rican Independence Movement (MPI) which has since become the PSP was formed in 1959. Meanwhile, the PIP was grown and has recently declared that it is for socialism.

If one were to look at various electoral indicators it would appear that there was no significant support for independence. For example, a plebiscite on Puerto Rico's status held in July 1967 showed 60.5 percent of the votes for commonwealth, 38.9 percent for statehood and .6 percent for independence. It should be noted here, however, that the pro-independence forces organized a boycott against the plebiscite and held mass demonstrations (10-15,000 in San Juan in April and 30,000 in July) to protest it.

Other electoral results to be noted was that the conservative pro-statehood PNP won the governorship in 1968 interrupting 28 years of PPD rule.

In 1972 the PPD was put back in power. The PIP won 50,000 votes in the elections, less than they had expected. The PSP did not participate in the elections.

However, there have been several large pro-independence demonstrations in the last few years including one of 20,000 in Lares in 1968 and 80,000 in San Juan in 1971. This was the largest pro-independence demonstration ever held in Puerto Rico. This is in a country with 2.7 million people.

Also major struggles in opposition to being drafted to fight in U. S. imperialist wars and to U. S. target practice on Culebra have had a pro-nationalist and pro-independence character to them. The struggle against the draft was so successful that it virtually became impossible to arrest the thousands who evaded conscription.

10. Is there enough evidence for the SWP to reaffirm its support for independence?

The answer is yes.

First, the resurgence of the independence movement and its continued growth indicates that it was not a phenomenon peculiar to the 1930s and 1940s or ephemeral in character. Rather it is testimony to its authenticity as a significant and potentially powerful force in Puerto Rican politics.

Secondly, despite the movement's ups and downs it has demonstrated its capacity to win mass support even if it isn't expressed in elections.

Thirdly, independence is fiercely opposed by both bourgeois parties in Puerto Rico and by U. S. imperialism—the enemies of Puerto Rico's working class. As the struggle of the Puerto Rican workers develops as it did in the



1930s, it will directly confront these enemies. The struggle for independence from Yankee imperialism and the U. S. labor officialdom will become a natural and necessary part of the fight for class emancipation in Puerto Rico. Neither commonwealth or statehood offer this independence from Yankee imperialism. They only offer continued subordination. The fact that there is virtually no Puerto Rican capitalist class and the overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans are workers gives the independence struggle

added power.

11. The struggle for full economic, political and social liberation can only be won through a socialist revolution in Puerto Rico.

12. By reaffirming our support for Puerto Rican independence, our press should give more coverage to the Puerto Rican independence movement and our candidates and other speakers should speak in favor of it.

### WHY FAPO WASN'T "A CLEAR POLITICAL TENDENCY"

by Jim Rousey, San Francisco Branch

In his "Open Letter of Protest" (SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 10) Bill Massey charges that "the Proletarian Orientation Minority which constituted over 10 percent of the party at the last convention was denied any place on the National Committee, because the Majority of the SWP did not consider it a 'serious' minority" (p. 3). This raises three questions. First, was the Proletarian Orientation Tendency (more commonly referred to as FAPO from the initials of their first document, "For A Proletarian Orientation") represented on the National Committee? Second, on what basis was FAPO considered "an unclear tendency"? Third, has this analysis been proven or disproven since the last convention? At this point it is useful to consider what the Nominating Commission had to say. All quotations are taken from the "Report of the Nominating Commission" given at the 1971 SWP National Convention by Peter Seidman which is in Internal Information Bulletin No. 6 in 1971 on pages 19-20.

#### *The Commission Report*

The report starts by noting that FAPO "unlike the other minorities, did make nominations for the National Committee." These were "Comrades Lewis and Gregorich, in that order of ranking, for the regular members of the National Committee of the party, and Comrade Turner as an advisory member." This was because they were regarded, in the words of Comrade McCann, "as the most capable comrades in the Tendency regardless of their politics." This was in spite of the fact that Comrade McCann, who made the nominations, had knowledge neither of their current assignments nor their recent activities in the party. There was also the point with regard to their individual stature as leaders of the party that "neither of them [Lewis and Gregorich] are members of the current National Committee, either regular or alternate." Then there was the complication introduced by the unclear nature

of FAPO.

"The feeling of the Nominating Commission was that the Proletarian Orientation Tendency is not constituted on a clear political basis." They pointed out that while FAPO received 75 votes (based on the memories of the comrades on the Commission), "we found that these 75 votes were obtained on at least two different bases." In Oakland-Berkeley "the Tendency was constituted around support for five documents"; these were the three involved in the "Declaration of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency" and the "two documents submitted by the Berkeley Minority on the Chicano struggle and women's liberation." Elsewhere, however, the Tendency was defined only by the "Declaration of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency" and around "support to the party's position on women's liberation and the Chicano struggle." (Their emphasis.) There were other combinations including "comrades . . . who voted for the three Proletarian Orientation documents and voted in support of one or another of the two Oakland-Berkeley minority documents, or in support of one or another of the Political Committee resolutions . . . or who abstained on these documents." It was on this basis that the Commission felt "that the Proletarian Orientation Minority in the party is not constituted around a clear political line or that the vote of a member of this grouping who was on the National Committee would in fact represent a clear political tendency within the party." In spite of this fact the Commission nominated Comrade Turner both in an attempt to represent the Tendency and because of his individual stature as a leader of the party.

The action by the Commission in nominating Comrade Turner answers one of Comrade Massey's charges—that of nonrepresentation. The quotations also lay the basis for the Commission's analysis that FAPO was an unclear tendency. But how has this analysis withstood the test of time? The answer to this lies in the evolution

by Andrea Brod, Philadelphia Branch

This article is based on a presentation given in the Philadelphia branch preconvention discussion.

Comrades, if for some reason a turtle won a race against a jack rabbit, we wouldn't think that this was a general strategy for winning races (though some people could get an empirical impression after witnessing such an exceptional race), and I think that that's a very good analogy for how some people in the Maitan tendency are viewing guerrilla warfare. Why this empiricism?

After the Russian revolution the history of socialist revolutions took a turn away from the lessons learned in the Russian revolution. There was a period of defeats which propelled the bureaucratization of the Soviet state and the accompanying acute crisis of leadership that resulted from this, which left the only inheritors of the lessons of October to the followers of Trotsky who were small, miniscule forces, some only individuals in various countries, while the Communist parties around the world became followers of the bureaucratic caste. The experiences of the successful socialist revolutions which followed have all proven to be exceptions to the Russian model, as well as to the conclusions of Marx himself (which was even true of the Russian revolution). In other words, the world history of revolutions from 1917 to the present has been contrary to some of the very fundamental principles of the Trotskyist movement; those of the Bolsheviks. In general, the debate within the International is a reflection of this historical divergence, which surfaced first within this discussion with the desire of Maitan to make a quick breakthrough in Bolivia to base the International on.

The Chinese revolution proved to us again the truth of the dynamic toward the permanent revolution; it also, however, consisted of the peasant class under the leadership of a Stalinist party carrying through a successful revolution against the working class in the cities. This disproved, for *China*, the necessity of a party on the Bolshevik pattern, as well as the social nature of the peasantry. We drew no general conclusions from this, as we had from the Russian experience, and viewed China as an exception to the general pattern on the role of the peasantry in a socialist revolution and of the role of the party. Eastern Europe was another exception to the need for a revolutionary vanguard party and the participation of the masses themselves in the revolutionary process. Again, we held to the lessons of the Bolsheviks and viewed Eastern Europe as a unique experience. Cuba also came to the status of a workers state, not with a vanguard party but with a band of guerrillas leading a peasant movement into the cities. The debate within the International is an impressionistic attempt to draw lessons from exceptions which have proven to be the rule for the last 60 years of experience in socialist revolutions. This is indicated by the Maitan tendency's reevaluation of the role of the peasantry and middle classes in Bolivia, its rejection of the working masses and its reliance on guerrilla warfare as opposed to the building of a revolutionary combat

party. In other words, the Maitan tendency is beginning to question the very basis for the existence of our movement — the need for the party in Bolivia.

Pablo did this upon the Eastern European experiences, exhibiting the same type of impressionism by predicting centuries of deformed workers states and also in attempting to mimic the Cuban revolution while ignoring the need to develop a revolutionary Trotskyist leadership within the Algerian revolution. This relinquishment of Bolshevism led Pablo to liquidationism; to not seeing the necessity of the Trotskyist movement.

The Maitan tendency reflects this type of questioning on the questions of Maoism, the role of the peasantry and the working class, the need for a combat party — in Cuba a blunted instrument, in Europe an adequate instrument and in Bolivia a quick breakthrough with guerrilla bands.

But comrades, if revolutions have been successful under exceptional circumstances, with enormous odds against them and with weak tools, we do not then advocate exceptional circumstances, enormous odds and weak tools. We do not think that running turtles against rabbits is our best possibility; in fact that type of carbon-copy mentality can lead to bloody defeats. It has led to bloody defeats.

Now, history on an empirical basis would prove the Russian example to be the exception for the last 60 years, but Marxists go deeper than empirical impressions. We examine the causes behind the results. This is why method is a highly valued legacy of Marxism. See *empirically* SDS was correct in rejecting the revolutionary potential of the working class. The quiescence of the working classes in the imperialist centers had stretched out for decades. Revolutions were left to the colonized peasantry in China, Cuba, North Korea and North Vietnam, while the workers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe seemed to accept the rule of the bureaucracy without question.

This situation came out of World War II and Bretton Woods, which led to a temporary stabilization of the capitalist system on a world scale and to a boom within the United States. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency contends that the revolutions of the period following the Russian revolution to the present are exceptions and that the tendency has shifted back to the classical model of the Russian revolution, back to the urban centers, back to the industrialized centers of the world; from the centers of the colonial revolution to the centers of the workers states and the imperialist capitalist states as well. The Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency also contends that even if this primary shift in revolutionary centers on a world scale had not yet occurred, the method of the Cuban experience was still an exception within its own time when the colonial revolution was the main axis of revolutionary situations. Where Cuba had succeeded, no one else had. Now, more than ever, the necessity for a combat party in Latin America is imperative.

With the Stalinization of the Third International the leaderships of the class struggle turned into its opposite,

creating a crisis of leadership. The stranglehold of Stalinist leaderships defined a natural selection process that made revolutions possible only in exceptional conditions, while many revolutionary situations were led to defeat and betrayed. The exceptional conditions therefore seemed to be the rule. But when attempted, Guevara's followers were decimated in their attempts to apply their schema in Teoponte, where these guerrillas were slaughtered while

the state was backing down *simultaneously* under the pressure of mass actions in the urban centers.

It is only the Trotskyist movement which can solve the crisis of leadership, a crisis filled with betrayals, defeats and failures, and it's that perspective that the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency is defending. We are defending Trotskyism.

June 28, 1973

### THE SWP'S PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD CONGRESS— AN ONEROUS FORMALITY

by Irene Gorgosz, Detroit Branch

In *What Now*, a polemic against the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern, Comrade Trotsky wrote:

"According to the letter and spirit of democratic centralism, the congress should occupy a decisive place in the life of the party. This life has found its supreme expression in the congresses, *their preparation*, and their work. At the present time, the congresses have become a dead weight and an onerous formality." (Emphasis mine.)

A similar attitude towards congresses seems to be growing in our movement. Many comrades see the world congress and its preparation during the preconvention discussion as a mere formality. For example, in the Detroit branch roughly seven days have been scheduled for discussion on the international questions. The excuse given for such a brief discussion period was that we have been discussing these international questions for the last few years. Further, it was explained that the major documents were out.

The latter explanation is entirely false. Many of the documents have not come at the present time. Although the discussion on the Latin American question has been well-rounded, other areas of discussion have been lacking. To illustrate the lack of discussion, one would only have to examine the limited contributions concerning Europe. At the present time, only two documents have come out on Europe; the Draft Thesis by the United Secretariat entitled, "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" and Comrade Mary-Alice Waters' criticisms of the Draft Thesis. Obviously, two documents do not represent a full and thorough discussion. Even Comrade Waters' contribution was intended to be an *initial* contribution. Furthermore, Comrade Waters calls for more contributions and balance sheets in order to clarify the issues. Waters writes: "The aim of our discussion must first be to define and clarify the issues. To begin this process, contributions

from leaders of European sections are needed, drawing balance sheets of the period since the last world congress" (p. 5).

Obviously, Waters sees the need for more discussion and further contributions on this question.

The recent documents published in the Internal Information Bulletins show the potential that other positions may be formed in the context of the discussion period which will last until December. For example, several leaders of the German section have written that the debate could be fatal if only presented by the International Majority and the International Minority. The German comrades write:

"It would be fatal if the current international debate were to be presented to the GIM as though the only choice was between the International Majority and its positions and blocks and the International Minority and its positions—and even more crudely, the SWP and Ligue Communiste or Ernest Mandel." (IIB No. 3 p. 12.)

It is very well possible and indeed quite probable that further contributions will attempt to clarify the issues as well as support a possible third political line in the context of the European debate.

Another aspect of the European debate which needs further attention concerns the rise of the women's liberation movement. Comrade Waters correctly criticizes the Draft Thesis for its neglect to cover this issue. However, the International Majority Tendency of the SWP has stated that a separate document will be coming out by the U.S. majority on women's liberation later this summer.

Besides the European question, other areas will also have to be considered in the international discussion. These areas include the Middle East and the Irish question. As of yet, no specific documents have come out on either of these issues. Therefore, the excuse that all the major

documents are out is utterly false.

The other excuse for a *brief* discussion period (seven days in Detroit) indicates a lack of seriousness towards the preparation of the world congress. In fact, to say that the discussion has been going on for years and most comrades are clear on it and this being the main reason for a brief discussion implies that discussion has been reduced to a formality. It would have been more honest to come out and admit that the discussion was intended for the ranks of the SWP to approve the national leadership's positions in as short a time as possible. Whereas Trotsky saw the congresses and their preparation as occupying a decisive life in the party, our party sees it as the opposite — a formality.

Unlike many of the other sections and sympathizing groups of the Fourth International, the Socialist Workers Party has not scheduled a special convention to discuss and decide on the International questions. In fact, our international discussion coincides in the same three month period that we normally set aside for regular pre-convention discussion of our party's internal affairs. The effect of having these two major discussions in such a short time does not allow for the fullest and most thorough discussion in either case.

As was reported in the plenum reports, the SWP leadership stated that this year's international congress will be as important since the Reunification Congress of 1963.

This congress will determine the political line followed by most of the Trotskyist cadre in the world. In fact, our leadership has stated that the future of the Fourth International hinges on the decision made at this congress. Needless to say that the differences are severe enough to warrant thorough discussion.

Our national leadership has continually argued for and impressed for the thoroughest possible discussion among the ranks of the Fourth International and has requested that the congress be postponed for several times to facilitate this.

I totally agree that the ranks should discuss these questions to the fullest and I believe that it is necessary for us to have an international convention preceding the world congress so as to discuss and decide on the international questions in the most serious manner, not a formality confined to a brief discussion period.

For this reason, I support the International Majority Tendency's proposal that an additional convention to deal strictly with the international questions and decisions be held in November of this year. Also, that written and oral discussion remain open until the time of this convention.

Furthermore, if two conventions (the August convention and the international convention) proves to be infeasible in such a short space of time, then I would propose that the August convention be cancelled and held conjuncturally with the international convention in late November.

July 1, 1973

**NATIONAL OPPRESSION, NATIONAL LIBERATION AND THE SOCIALIST  
REVOLUTION: A DEFENSE OF LENINISM AND A REPLY TO COMRADE  
ERNEST GERMAIN**

by Tony Thomas, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

In his document *In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International* which is being presented as a political basis for joining the Mandel, Maitan and Frank tendency in the Fourth International and the Internationalist Tendency in the SWP, Comrade Ernest Germain makes a number of serious errors. Among the most serious and unacceptable are the positions he advances on the national question in sections 16 and 17 of his document.

His first major error is to claim that it is possible for the capitalist class to eliminate national oppression and gain national liberation in oppressed nations.

Comrade Germain writes: "Is it true that because the national bourgeoisie is dependent on imperialism, it is unable to *break all ties with imperialism* and therefore

cannot lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression. This is completely wrong. The struggle against national oppression is not an anticapitalist struggle. It is a struggle for bourgeois-democratic demands. The existence of the world capitalist system is not an absolute obstacle to the overthrow of national oppression, under conditions of imperialism. Indeed, in the very debate with Rosa Luxemburg in favor of the support for the right of self-determination of oppressed nationalities, Lenin pointed out that it was *not* impossible for this right to be gained in the struggle before the overthrow of world imperialism."

Thus Comrade Germain identifies the ending of national oppression with the attainment of the right to national self-determination through the establishment of political

independence by formerly oppressed colonies. He attempts to make a distinction between "foreign national oppression" in colonies where self-determination has not been achieved and "foreign economic exploitation." He charges that in semi-colonies like India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil and Argentina, national liberation has been achieved based on the fact that these nations have achieved independence.

This concept is totally opposed to the traditions of Marxism on this question. Lenin wrote in his culminating article in his debate on the national question with Rosa Luxemburg:

"It is *impossible* to abolish national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism, since this *requires* the abolition of classes, i.e., the introduction of socialism. But while being based on economics, socialism cannot be reduced to economics alone. A foundation—socialist production—is essential for the abolition of national oppression, but this foundation must *also* carry a democratically organized state, a democratic army, etc. By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the *possibility* of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes *reality* 'only'—'only'!—with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of state frontiers in accordance with the 'sympathies' of the population including complete freedom to secede. And this, in turn, will serve as a basis for developing the *practical* elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust." (*Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up*, page 325, Volume 22, Lenin's *Collected Works*, Moscow 1964, emphasis and dashes in original.)

Lenin returns to this theme in the fourth of his *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* which were adopted at the second congress of the Comintern:

"40. From these fundamental problems it flows that the Communist International's entire policy on the national and the colonial questions should rest primarily on a closer union of the proletarians and the working classes of all nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow the landowners and the bourgeoisie. *This union alone will guarantee victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.*" (Page 146, Volume 31 of Lenin's *Collected Works*, emphasis added.)

Trotsky expressed the same point of view in his book *Permanent Revolution*. In the chapter entitled, "What is the Permanent Revolution?—Basic Postulates," he writes:

"2. With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses." (Page 152, Pioneer Publishers 1965 edition of *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, emphasis in the original.)

Comrade Germain's conclusion that "The existence of the world capitalist system is not an absolute obstacle to the overthrow of national oppression, under conditions of imperialism," is likewise contradicted by the writings of Lenin. In his article *The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Lenin wrote:

"That is why the focal point in the Social-Democratic

programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed *which forms the essence of imperialism*, and is deceitfully evaded by the social chauvinists and Kautsky." (Page 409, Volume 21 of Lenin's *Collected Works*, emphasis added.)

In his report on the aforementioned *Theses on the National and Colonial Questions*, Lenin said: "The characteristic feature of imperialism consists in the whole world, as we now see, being divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces." (p. 240 of Volume 31 of Lenin's *Collected Works*.)

Comrade Germain errs from the traditional Marxist viewpoint on this question because he attempts to make a formal separation between the political and economic aspects of national oppression. He gives the impression that the struggle for national liberation in this epoch is a struggle that culminates with the attainment of a political reform within capitalism—national self-determination—rather than a struggle which cannot be obtained through the struggle for self-determination alone, but through the completion of the socialist revolution.

In doing this, Comrade Germain removes the national question from its overall historical context. This is especially clear in regard to his lack of differentiation between the nationalism of the oppressed peoples and that of oppressor nations.

Comrade Germain makes a more adequate approach toward the problem of the struggle against national oppression on page 31 of his resolution. He writes, "The Trotskyist way of looking at these revolutions is as *processes of permanent revolution* in which the struggle for national liberation, for agrarian revolution, for full democratic freedoms for the masses, and for defence of the class interests of the working class are *inextricably combined and intertwined*, whatever may be the aspect of that struggle which appears in the forefront. . . ."

However, his statements in regard to national oppression, self-determination and national liberation can only tend to conclusions of a sectarian or opportunist variant:

1) That national liberation in oppressed nations is a reform struggle at best and at worst a reflection of the false consciousness of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers (the charge Germain levels at nationalism among these peoples);

2) That since national liberation is achievable by the capitalist class of underdeveloped and oppressed nations or as a result of the policies of certain segments of the imperialists it a correct policy for revolutionary socialists to give political support to national capitalist movements as the leadership that can objectively obtain a certain required level of historical development.

#### *National Liberation and Bourgeois Revolution*

For us, national liberation has not only meant the attainment of a single political reform, but the attainment of a whole historical stage of development, the unleashing of national prerequisites for the obtainment of tasks that have been achieved by the bourgeois-democratic revolutions in several countries in previous centuries.

The national struggle originates in a specific historical

context, the rise and decline of capitalism. The capitalist class developed the national outlook as a result of its needs to acquire control over an internal market, and other political and economic preconditions for industrialization. Nationalism develops in the context of a progressive national-democratic struggle against precapitalist social, economic and political institutions and the social classes based on them, not simply as a struggle against "foreign national oppression."

For example, in the French national struggle which reached its peak in the eighteenth century, the main obstacle to the attainment of the formal political demands of national unification was not foreign domination but elements within the French nationality that opposed the national-democratic revolution, and those who opposed its resolution through the most resolute class struggle.

In the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the period of the rise of capitalism, the attainment of national liberation was the result of a prolonged revolutionary process, a process involving not only different stages of political struggles and political revolutions but a process that as a whole can be characterized as a process of social revolution.

This social revolution represented the class interests of the bulk of society—the concept of "the people" which arises out of these revolutions arises out of the concept of the mobilized bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and working class counterposed to the aristocracy. The national liberation struggle for the working class usually meant the expansion of its political rights and in terms of our historical objective interests the expansion of capitalism and thus the expansion of the class itself and thus the prerequisites for socialist revolution. For the peasantry, the struggle for control over the internal market meant the basis for the abolition of serfdom, and other precapitalist domination over the markets and the laying a basis of the expansion of agrarian productivity. Economic advance was facilitated by the expansion of the internal market, and protected internationally by the national state.

In the more indirect sense, the concept of nationalism arose not just around the necessity to develop a national state but also on the bourgeoisie's necessity (especially where it was strong) to make concessions of a democratic character to the other classes. To mobilize the masses, the bourgeoisie had to instill in them the comprehension that the common national destiny of national liberation applied to all the classes. This concept—that all oppressed classes of an oppressed nation objectively face a common problem in eliminating the backward heritage of the feudal past and should wage a struggle against the old order played an historically progressive role.

This viewpoint corresponds with our Marxist view that the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution is in the historic interest of world civilization in general and the proletariat in particular. The expansion of productive forces and thus the proletariat, the solving of the agrarian question, the bringing of broader segments of "the people" into political, cultural and economic life which accompanies this revolution, and (in the period of rising capitalism) its preparation for the socialist revolution, is viewed by Marxism as positive.

Comrade Germain implies that there has been an essential change in the social character of the national libera-

tion struggle in the advanced capitalist countries and the colonial world from the character they had in the epoch of the rise of capitalism. Within this context, he holds that the achievement of the purely political reforms of self-determination are sufficient to gain an end to foreign national oppression and thus to the existence of a national struggle.

In this context, the conclusion can be reached that nationalist consciousness among oppressed people in this epoch is a false consciousness. This distinction between "foreign national oppression" and "foreign economic oppression" reduces the national question to being nonexistent in places such as India, Nigeria and Ceylon and to being strictly minimal in places like Canada-Quebec, the U. S., and Belgium.

Thus, in these places, the national question in Comrade Germain's eyes leads to counterposing the nationalism of oppressed peoples to socialist consciousness. Other comrades have taken up this point more extensively. However, I wish to show how the schema Germain puts forward in regard to "foreign national oppression" versus "foreign economic exploitation" is false.

Comrade Germain does not recognize what the real changes in regard to national oppression and national liberation have been in the two epochs of capitalism. Contrary to Comrade Germain, the national liberation struggle is not reduced to a question of political reform by the advent of imperialism. National liberation remains a process of *social* revolution. What has changed in regard to the question of national liberation in oppressed nations is the relationship of class forces involved, and the character of the chief, though not the only, obstacle to national liberation.

In actuality, the national revolution retains its *social* character under the epoch of imperialism in oppressed nations, with the exception of a few nations that were able to develop their social and economic development on capitalist lines to a very high level before the epoch of imperialism (Canada, Norway).

But for the great number of the oppressed nations, especially the colonial and semicolonial nations, national oppression has been directly linked to the maintenance of the social backwardness.

Comrade Mandel, writing in the second volume of his *Introduction to Marxist Economics*, wrote that the conditions that exist in the colonial world which lead to the extraction of the superprofits that are essential to imperialism are "in brief, the continued existence, in colonial and semi-colonial economy, of the features of *super-exploitation* which were found in the European economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (page 455, emphasis in original). That is to say that the oppression of these nations is based precisely on the denial of the achievement of the bourgeois revolution which was consummated in Europe and North America during this period.

While it is true that the capitalist mode of production has been introduced in these countries, it was introduced "in a very special way," Comrade Mandel wrote. He continued, "It developed there without any connection with the country in question's needs for economic or industrial development, but, instead in accordance with the exclusive interests of the imperialist bourgeoisie and of the metropolitan country itself."

German and Mandel note that the chief result of this



type of development in the economy of these nations in the current epoch is "essentially a production of agricultural and mineral raw materials." Investment where it takes place is oriented for this type of production, oriented toward the world market and not toward any type of industrial development.

Comrade Mandel continues on page 470: "It is industrial underdevelopment that is the basic flaw in the economy of the underdeveloped countries. This underdevelopment itself has two roots: first, the fact that foreign capital invests nothing, or almost nothing, in the development of manufacturing industry; and, second, the fact that the indigenous ruling classes themselves prefer to invest in land, trade or usury rather than in building up modern industry."

A characteristic feature of imperialism, thus, is the extraction of superprofits from the colonial world (and also from oppressed nationalities in advanced countries, though in a different form as we shall see below) based on the denial of their completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in regard to its social, political and economic tasks.

The gulf that separates the advanced capitalist nations and the oppressed colonial nations is not a gulf that can be spanned by superstructural reform, but a gulf of *historical* development. On one hand the countries such as the U.S., Belgium, France, Japan, Canada, etc., have completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution at least in regard to the dominant nationalities. On the other hand, while capitalist production has been introduced, the countries such as Algeria, India, Martinique, Iran, Nigeria and Bolivia have not carried this revolution out to completion.

Marxists have never separated the social and economic reflection of the imperialists' blocking of the national-democratic revolution from the political consequences as Comrade Germain does. Neither have we identified one political demand, the right of self-determination of nations, with the ending of national liberation. This is based on a concrete observation of how the lack of the economic prerequisites of the national liberation struggle under imperialist exploitation blocks national development.

For example, in Africa, one of the most pressing blocks to any conception of achievement of national liberation, unification on a political, cultural or linguistic level is the lack of internal economic development caused by imperialist oppression of African countries. Economic and industrial development centralized around a strong internal market is not possible because of the retardation of the entire nation outlined by Mandel.

In regard to the national question this is reflected in the lack of achievement of the most basic conditions for national liberation in almost every single Sub-Sahara African country, that is to say the achievement of cultural, linguistic unity. Without a strong internal market based on industrial development, without a victorious social struggle to unite the nation, without the resources for education, alphabetization, etc., without the accomplishment of these essential factors in bourgeois development these states remain divided into numerous different nationalities, or nationalities-in-formation with different cultures, different languages, different national territories. Usually the concept of being Ghanian, Senegalese, Congo-

lese, etc., is limited to sections of the urbanized minority or perhaps dominant nationalities.

This question, induced directly by imperialism in the form of the division of the borders of the "former" colonies and its continued economic exploitation and oppression, is a common problem facing countries not only in Black Africa but also in Asia where the continued national conflicts in the Indian subcontinent for example have been a central part of political life.

Comrade Roberts has already noted the interrelationship between the national and agrarian questions in his article in response to Germain.

Still another national task remaining in the bulk of oppressed nations is the question of control over the state. One of the fundamental tasks of the national liberation struggle is the achievement of control over the state of a social class with the power (together with its allies) and the will to carry the bourgeois-democratic revolution to completion, breaking the control over social segments which are tied to blocking national liberation. It is a very well known fact that hardly needs to be explained that this has not been achieved in any of the countries that were oppressed by imperialism but which have gained independence, except where the process has been accompanied by the establishment of a workers state as in Cuba, China, Korea and Vietnam.

In the great bulk of the capitalist "independent" states, power is in the hands of a "national-capitalist" class, often allied with or fused with the landholding and other classes. In every case these classes remain tied to imperialism and the ingrown setup which is based on blocking industrialization. In a few of the colonial countries, "industrial" sections of the national capitalists have attempted to carry out actions aimed at industrialization and attempted to make a break from their subordination to the imperialist monopolies.

However, because of the economic weakness of these classes compared with their imperialist competitors and their refusal to rely on the most revolutionary mobilization of the masses in no case has this been achieved. Finally, because these regimes cannot rely on the mobilization of the workers and peasants in a struggle against imperialism because of the danger this would go over into a socialist revolution, these regimes are quite unstable and capable of being quickly overthrown when it serves imperialism's interests or the interests of classes within the country more subservient to imperialism.

The national bourgeoisie in the epoch of rising capitalism faced similar obstacles in its struggle for national liberation and bourgeois revolution: it faced a social, economic and political system of institutions that was opposed to the control over its internal market and a revolution in the role of the social classes.

In the epoch of rising capitalism the essential difference was that the national bourgeoisie was able to act as a true "national" class in attempting to lead the rest of the "people" in mobilization against opponents of national liberation, and use political and social struggle to break down the economic relations that stood as an obstacle to it. It was able to involve in its mobilizations the peasantry, the nascent working class and the urban petty bourgeoisie; it was often these classes even more resolutely than the bourgeoisie who were the most extreme pro-

ponents of the bourgeois revolution.

The dynamic change, which was already beginning to appear in the epoch of rising capitalism, is that the national bourgeoisie can no longer lead the masses in a social revolution against the central obstacle to national liberation, foreign imperialism. The introduction of capitalist relations on the basis of imperialism makes the proletariat a much stronger force relative to the national bourgeoisie in most of these countries than it was in the Western European and North American countries in the epoch of rising capitalism.

Moreover, the economic deformation and restriction of the national capitalists makes the social antagonisms between themselves and the rest of the people even more sharp. Because, as Comrade Mandel notes in his *Marxist Economics*, the national bourgeoisie is usually restricted to the most backward parts of the economy because of its inability to compete with the imperialists, it is often forced to exploit colonial workers at an even sharper and cruder level than imperialist firms which may be able to pay better wages and give better working conditions.

This restriction often limits these national capitalists to levels of the economy connected with the agrarian problem—Comrade Mandel cites land and usury—making them more direct opponents of the agrarian revolution than the bourgeoisie in the epoch of rising capitalism which was able to champion that struggle.

Because of the social antagonisms within the nation, the national bourgeoisie is incapable of rousing the nation to the type of social revolution, even on capitalist terms, that completed the national-democratic and bourgeois revolution in the advanced capitalist countries.

It is only the proletariat that can lead this revolution to victory by confronting the social relations that flow from the incompleteness of the bourgeois revolution as well as from the social relations of capitalism, and it is only socialist economic measures that can lead to industrialization and national development.

Comrade Germain replaces this objective criterion that necessitates a proletarian leadership and revolution to gain national liberation with a subjective view. He writes, "Revolutionary marxists do not reject this Menshevik theory of stages only or mainly because they stress the inability of the national bourgeoisie to actually conquer national independence from imperialism, regardless of concrete circumstances. They reject it because they refuse to postpone to a later stage the peasant and workers uprisings for their own class interests. . . ."

Here again, Germain attempts to make a false connection between national liberation and "national independence." We agree with him that it is possible for the national capitalists to gain this demand if only in a limited and distorted form. However, we believe that the basis for the fact that only a process of permanent revolution can gain national liberation is the incapacity of the national bourgeoisie to gain liberation and to break the nation off from the control of imperialism.

It is the objective question of the capacity of the different social classes, not the subjective factor of the "undesirability" or "postponement" of a class struggle that is separate from the process of national liberation, that

is the main criterion for revolutionary Marxists. If this were not so, then it would lay a basis for a solution to the struggle for national liberation—which we see as a necessary task for oppressed nations—separated from class struggle—in other words it would lay a basis for support to a theory of stages in the nationally oppressed nations since it would give confidence in the capacity of the national capitalists to solve this problem.

It has been our view that only through the process of permanent revolution do we see the solution of the problem of national liberation in regard to completing the social tasks of the bourgeois revolution through the coming to power of the proletariat, allied with the peasantry, and the carrying out of a combined program of democratic and socialist measures which can alone lead to national and social liberation.

Naturally, we agree with Comrade Germain's point that national self-determination which is a political reform within capitalism, is often achievable under capitalism and under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. However from our point of view we retain the Leninist position expressed in his article, *Imperialist Economism A Caricature of Marxism*, ". . . the question is: how to eliminate national oppression? It cannot be eliminated without an economic revolution" (page 75, Lenin's *Collected Works*, Volume 23, Moscow, 1964, emphasis in original).

Since we know the national capitalist class is no longer a revolutionary class for reasons shown above and that only the proletariat can lead the national liberation struggle to victory we must reject the concept advanced by Comrade Germain that national oppression can be eliminated by this class. We must also reject Comrade Germain's implication that recognition of the existence of a definite task of national liberation is equivalent to support to a two-stage position as advanced by Stalin and Bukharin in the 1920s. Rather we stand with Trotsky and Lenin that national liberation remains a central task of the struggle in oppressed nations, a task that cannot be achieved by the national bourgeoisie, a task which can only be achieved by relentless class struggle against the national bourgeoisie.

Trotsky makes this point abundantly clear in his chapter on the national question in the *History of the Russian Revolution*:

"For him [Lenin] a war of national liberation, in contrast to wars of imperialistic oppression is merely another form of the national revolution which in its turn enters as a necessary link in the liberating struggle of the international working class.

"This appraisal of national wars and revolutions does not by any means imply, however, that the bourgeoisie of the colonial and semi-colonial nations have a revolutionary mission. On the contrary, this bourgeoisie of backward countries from the days of its milk teeth grows up as an agency of foreign capital, and notwithstanding its envious hatred of foreign capital, always does and always will in every decisive situation turn up in the same camp with it. . . . The upper circles of the petty bourgeoisie, including the intelligentsia, may take an active and occasionally very noisy part in the national struggles, but they are totally incapable of playing an independent role. *Only the working class standing at the head*

of the nation can carry either a national or an agrarian revolution clear through." (Page 56, Volume II, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Univ. of Mich., Ann Arbor, 1960.)

Again, I wish to remind the comrades of this party that the document submitted by Comrade Germain, *In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International*, states that it is "completely wrong" to say that the national capitalists "cannot lead a victorious struggle against foreign oppression." This resolution states that national liberation has been achieved in "India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil and Argentina," under the bourgeoisie and not under the proletariat. This conception clearly cuts across both Lenin and Trotsky's appreciation of the interrelation of the national and class struggles and should be rejected.

Despite Comrade Germain's allegations, the oppressed nationalities in the advanced countries face a combined task of solving national-democratic problems and the solution of socialist tasks to win their liberation. This is a different and separate question from questions of individual democratic rights not granted or taken back in these countries in regard to the whole population. This is a result of the denial of completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

While industrialization takes place among these oppressed nationalities, the bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be said to be completed in their regard since this industrialization is based on the power over them of the capitalists of the oppressor nation.

To the extent that small capitalist classes of the oppressed nations develop, they are restricted to a limited role because of imperialist domination. They also rest on the oppression of the nation since equalization of living conditions and ending of national oppression would cut down their own profits. Often as in the colonial world, the class tensions are sharper in their regard, because of the marginal character of their resources.

It would be wrong to think that in places such as Quebec, or in regard to Afro-Americans, Chicanos, Irish or other nationalities, that their oppression could be solved except through socialist revolution, even though formal political independence, formal equality, or measures of autonomy may be gained previous to the socialist revolution. To say this ignores the importance of the superprofits that the imperialists of the dominant nation receive due to the national oppression. The billions that the U. S. imperialists make out of the national oppression of Blacks, Chicanos, Indians, and Puerto Ricans is essential to the capability of U. S. imperialism to maintain itself as an important imperialist power. Likewise, the national oppression of Quebec is a major factor in the strength of Canadian imperialism.

Comrade Germain denies that the logic of permanent revolution applies in these countries: "The whole notion of applying the formula of permanent revolution to imperialist countries is extremely dubious in the best of cases. It can only be done in the utmost circumspection, and in the form of an analogy." This, in regard to the question of nationalities within imperialist countries, treats the imperialist countries as an undifferentiated whole whereas it rejects a specific concrete application and thus differentiation between the imperialist and dominant nationalities

who have solved the bulk of their national-democratic tasks and the oppressed nationalities who have been denied the solution of these problems as a people.

Trotsky advanced this position in regard to the Afro-American nationality in 1933 at a time when the bulk of Afro-Americans were farmers of different kinds and not proletarianized and urbanized as they are today: "Weisbord is correct in a certain sense that the 'self-determination' of the Negroes belongs to the question of the permanent revolution in America. The Negroes will through their awakening, through their demand for autonomy, and through the democratic mobilization of their forces, be pushed on toward the class basis. The petty bourgeoisie will take up the demand for 'social, political and economic equality' and for 'self-determination' but prove absolutely incapable in the struggle; the Negro proletariat will march over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution. That is perhaps for them the most important road. I can therefore see no reason why we should not advance the demand for 'self-determination.'" (*Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, Merit, 1969, page 14.)

Comrade Germain provides no serious argument as to why oppressed nationalities in their struggle for liberation in advanced countries do not have a permanent revolution process. Does Comrade Germain think that in Quebec or among Afro-Americans, the ending of economic and social discrimination of these oppressed groups — basic to the imperialist economies of the U. S. and Canada — can be accomplished without a direct struggle with the trusts and imperialist monopolies of these countries? Does Comrade Germain believe that this liberation can be achieved by a simple political reform, in passing? Does Comrade Germain believe that modern capitalism has the potential to solve such problems? Does Comrade Germain believe that the tiny national capitalist elements in Quebec, or the national capitalists in his own Flanders, or the Catalan and Basque capitalists are capable of winning full liberation for particular economic and national oppression through a revolutionary struggle?

If Comrade Germain believes all of these things, then he has a fundamentally different view of the character of the present historical epoch. He implies that the capitalist classes of the imperialist nations still have the great expansive capacities that they possessed during the epoch of rising capitalism, to throw out great superprofits accumulated from national oppression within their own heartlands, to tolerate the attacks on their dominant ideology that would result from the ending of national chauvinist feelings toward oppressed nationalities, etc. If this were so we would have to apply this change in the character of the period not only to the oppressed nationalities in the advanced capitalist countries but to the working classes in these countries also.

The essential fact is that the oppressed nationalities in these nations have been denied the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Instead of having their own revolutions completed or being incorporated as a whole with equal rights into the dominant nationalities these peoples have been denied these basic rights in regard to economic, linguistic, political and other opportunities which are intimately related to the oppression of the proletarians and peasants among them. The socialist revolution in their

regard will be a combined revolution in that it will open up not only the vistas of the socialist revolution but also those of the bourgeois revolution which they had been denied.

In the advanced capitalist countries, in fact, the national liberation struggle acquires a more intensely "permanent character" (is more directly pushed to go over from democratic struggle to socialist revolution) because of the more proletarian character of the oppressed nationalities, take on in the advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, this fact also means that their struggle is more directly linked to the class struggle of the proletariat as a whole of these advanced countries than is the struggle of the oppressed nationalities in the colonial world:

\* \* \*

The underlying analysis of the relationship of national liberation, national oppression, capitalism and socialism

made in Comrade Ernest Germain's document is a fundamental revision of the clearly stated views of Lenin and Trotsky on this question, as is his attack on our support to the nationalism of oppressed nations which other comrades have dealt with in the bulletin.

The fact that the tendency led by Maitan, Mandel and Frank as well as their supporters in the Internationalist Tendency of this party, could base themselves on such a document is a reaffirmation of the position of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency that the discussion that began around the question of Latin America has revealed fundamental differences on the basic methodology of Marxism and of strategy and tactics for the imperialist epoch.

In that light I hope comrades will support the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, and will reject the position advanced by the Internationalist Tendency and Maitan, Mandel and Frank, including Comrade Germain's *In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International*.

July 5, 1973

## A CRITICISM OF EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

by Dennis Brasky, Chicago Branch

Having several points in mind concerning what the document of the IEC majority said and didn't say concerning the building of Leninist parties in Europe, I think it best to start off by discussing the methodological differences between the two tendencies concerning the *strategy* of party building.

### I. *Entryism Sui Generis*

In 1953 the international Trotskyist movement split over differences on what would be the instrument that leads the proletariat in making a socialist revolution. The SWP, the Socialist Labor League, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste and others felt that Leninism was still relevant and that a vanguard party on the model of the Bolsheviks was the necessary subjective ingredient. The other side, mostly European and led by Michel Pablo, Mandel, Maitan and Frank, felt differently. It takes a long time to build Bolshevik parties, and since they felt that there was going to be World War III any day, there was *no time*. The European sections were physically destroyed by a united front of Hitler's Gestapo and Stalin's GPU. The bureaucratic revolutions in East Europe seriously confused the comrades in Europe over the nature of Stalinism—maybe it could be *pushed* into making a revolution? These three factors gave rise to the practice of "entryism *sui generis*"—the Trotskyists would enter the mass CPs and SPs for basically two reasons:

1) protection from the war-time repression that was coming as sure as the sun was going to rise; and

2) to be closer to the "left-centrist" elements in these parties. The view was that not the vanguard party (not enough time to build it) but a combination of Trotskyists and "left-centrists" would form an "adequate instrument" for making revolution. The left-centrists were the "vanguard" and the European sections went to the vanguard—literally. In doing this however, the sections watered down their principles.

In the European Perspectives Document, page 4, paragraph 2, "but in certain cases far from being limited in their activities, the militants immersed in this work and not burdened with open work on the outside *adapted to the milieu, its tempo, its customs, and its routine*. The necessity to remain under cover, and to confine their political intervention to small doses ended with their *giving up the program bit by bit*. Some of these comrades were lost in this way, being drawn in this way by the Stalinist or Social-Democratic structures."

On the bottom of page 3-top of page 4, "it clearly follows that entryism *nowhere* led in reality to the formation of a left centrist current of appreciable size."

I bring up the question of entryism *sui generis* only because I feel it to be crucial to the understanding of the mistakes that Mandel-Maitan-Frank (MMF) make twenty years later. The roots of "going to the vanguard"

both in 1953 and 1973 lie in the failure to fully assimilate the essence of party building which is known as Leninism.

Here's an example of "going to the vanguard" 1973; at the recent YSA plenum, Comrade Smiley of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency within the LSA-LSO said that since the Bolsheviks referred to vanguard elements of their day such as Monatte, Rosmer and Haywood as "comrades" we should refer likewise to the "vanguard elements" of today, e.g., Maoists. Picture that scene back in 1968-69 when PL physically attacked us as scabs of the Chinese revolution because we didn't back the Cultural Revolution; "why are you stepping on my face, Comrade Maoist?"

There's a difference between "going to the vanguard" and *pulling the vanguard over to you*. The former is when you give up your principles to join with someone else. (As was admitted in the previously cited quote by the IEC majority concerning the European sections.) The latter is when you convince the vanguard that *it* is wrong and they come over to your principles. After the Russian revolution the vanguard was thrown way up in the air and when they came down they landed on their *feet* and not on their *heads* which was their old position. The Marxists whom they had opposed all these years had *made a revolution*; they must've been right after all. Monatte, Rosmer and Haywood were comrades because they were heading towards Bolshevism. The only way for us to call PLers comrades would've been for us to go to them—to abandon Bolshevism.

"Going to the vanguard" is *tailism* which leads to *liquidationism*. The PRT-Combatiente went to the Maoists and stayed there (along with the Castroists, Kim Il-sungists and Anver Hoxaists). The same thing happened with the entire youth group in sympathy with the Italian section; lost to Maoism (perhaps this is why Livio Maitan doesn't want a youth group in Italy; "once burned, twice shy").

To get at the roots of these errors, entryism *sui generis* must be analyzed, understood and condemned. The IEC majority admits that it was ended *empirically*.

In describing how much we lost by this policy, the document says on page 4, "such was the price of a correct tactic." The question thus arises; if this was the result of a *correct* tactic, how much more would we have lost with an *incorrect* tactic?

The document then goes on to say something interesting: they paint the subsequent sectarian degeneration of the SLL and OCI as the inevitable result of maintaining the existence of an independent party. One must then ask, is the SWP also sectarian? If so, why was there reunification? If not, why are we different than the SLL-OCI? They'll probably answer with their favorite cop-out—the situation in the US was different. This is American exceptionalism in reverse.

The method of the MMF is shortcutism which can lead to adventurism. ("We have to start now to teach the ruling class that we'll use arms.") What happened last week in Paris with the attack on the fascist New Order? We're not opposed to using extreme violence in cleansing the world of fascists but it's different when it all occurs *behind the back* of the proletariat. The proletariat itself must realize the necessity of defending itself. The party helps this process by putting forward defensively formu-

lated slogans (and there's nothing reformist about defense; see "The First 5 Years of the C. I." and Trotsky's polemic against the theory of the permanent offensive). The proletariat just doesn't get up and swing into a full-scale offensive. For centuries it's been hypnotized by class domination and the habit of submission. It's necessary to first conduct a successful *defense*—to stay on one's feet after the enemy attacks. This will cause the enemy to take a step back, to *retreat*. Then we pass on to the offensive. The Ligue won't be able to stop fascism by itself. As Trotsky once said, the struggle against fascism begins in the *factory*—the workers must be made to understand the necessity of defense and the best way to conduct it. Hence, the role of the party isn't military (minority violence) but *political*—*moving masses*. It would be very helpful if the Ligue read and studied about the experiences of the Teamsters in Minneapolis in 1934 and how they fought off goon squads and educated masses of workers simultaneously.

## II. *The Youth Radicalization*

By the late 1960s the youth radicalization was off and running and had passed most of the European sections except for France where it was done empirically. Page 5 from the Perspectives document, "the response of the F. I. to this mass movement was empirical. The F. I.'s understanding of this historic phenomenon dragged far behind the rapid development of the youth radicalization." It *still* drags far behind. The IEC majority not too long ago discovered that the student struggle had taken an "irreversible turn"—everywhere, since May 1968. Refusing to follow this abstract schema, the student movement in France (of all places, how embarrassing) recently surged upwards to an unprecedented height. True, the Ligue was able to assume a fairly major role in this upsurge which is all to their credit. But this was all *empirical*; it sprang up on the Ligue. The "dead" student movement shook France so powerfully that it was able to wake up the Ligue. Think how much more success we could've had if the Ligue *from the start* correctly understood the dynamic of the youth radicalization. Will the Ligue learn from this or will they once again fall into a deep schematic sleep?

On independent youth groups: Without an independent youth organization we can't intervene in the struggles of high school and college students. Especially in the case of high school students, very few will join a revolutionary group that requires a high degree of seriousness, commitment, devotion and political sophistication. They first want a chance to educate themselves at not too quick a pace before they join a combat party, which should be a major decision in a person's life. But they're ready and willing to join a revolutionary youth group which doesn't demand as much.

The MMF says that it's opposed to maintaining revolutionary youth groups which are just substitutes for parties. So instead, they're making *parties that'll be substitutes for youth organizations*, and will accumulate all the weaknesses of the inexperience and immaturity of youth. The membership requirements for the Leninist party will have to be seriously *diluted* for us to recruit sizeable amounts of youth (a new Lenin Levy?) or we just won't recruit youth! You can't be a Leninist party *and* a rev-

olutionary youth organization at the same time.

As sort of a justification for abstention from this arena of struggle and to put down youth, the MMF criticizes the young generation for not having a "historical memory." *No* generation has ever had a historical memory; the *party* is the historical memory! The *party* is the reservoir of the experiences and lessons of the proletarian class struggle for the last 100-150 years. Only the party can imbue the young generation with a historical memory, but to do that means intervention into the youth arena and the mass movements it's involved in.

### III. *The Nature of the Social Democracy*

The impending death of the Social Democracy is another schema in the mold of the "death of reformism" in South America picture painted in 1969 with the brushes of MMF, and just as the reformists refused to comply, so does the European Social Democracy still hang in there! How does the MMF explain the growth of the Social Democrats in France and Germany?

The class nature of the Social Democracy is being debated in the European sections. Some comrades maintain that the Social Democracy is *still* a current within the workers movement. Others say that it's a bourgeois party. If it is bourgeois, then in supporting the Union of the Left the Ligue *crossed class lines!* If it's still a working-class tendency, then why didn't the German section give the SPD critical support in the last federal elections, instead of sectarian abstention? Let's have an answer.

### IV. *Antiwar work*

Until the last couple of years the European sections have *abstained* from building *mass* demonstrations. That's because they don't really want the masses; it's the "new mass vanguard" that they're after, and to attract its attention one must be militant—window smashing! Their basic view is that revolutionaries outside the US aren't really noticed. As if the 100,000 in London on October 27, 1968, and the dockers of Italy and Australia weren't noticed in 1972!!

If we'd have followed this policy of abstentionism: (1) the McCarthy era would've lasted longer; (2) the education of the masses in the school of *independent mass action* wouldn't be as deep as it is and thus other mass movements which came out of the antiwar movement would've developed much more slowly; (3) the US imperialist army wouldn't be in the state of disarray and near collapse that it finds itself in now (A top army official some years ago stated that except for the tsarist army in 1917 the US army is perhaps in the greatest shambles than any other Western army in the 20th century!); (4) the antiwar movement developed a consciousness on the part of the masses of Americans which makes it very hard for US imperialism to use troops to crush future revolutions; (5) we couldn't have recruited nearly as many people as we did without a *mass* antiwar movement.

The IMG could do all this in the context of the *Irish*

movement, but to be more militant, it calls for "Victory to the IRA!" instead of something that *masses* of people could understand and support—Immediate Withdrawal of All British Troops! The English proletariat has long been under the crippling illusion that it benefits from the oppression of the native Irish. A major task of the coming English revolution is to destroy these illusions in an all-out fight and to educate the English proletariat into giving *active* support *in deed* as well as in word to the Irish revolution and for self-determination for all of Ireland. This means revolutionary defeatism. The first step in this long and absolutely necessary process is to get all English troops out. But maybe the vanguard is still infected by anti-Irish chauvinism and the IMG doesn't want to be too pushy and too harsh!!

### V. *Why Is Mass Organic Growth Ruled Out in the Near Future?*

Why indeed when admittedly the class struggle will heat up? Nothing proceeds in a smooth, straight line including the growth of a Bolshevik party. In times of ebb, the party grows slowly, consolidates itself and prepares for the future. When things get hot this preparatory period allows the party to grow by leaps. At the first All-Russian Congress of Soviets in April 1917, the Bolsheviks got 13 percent of the votes. Six months later at the second congress, they got 60 percent! The two go together—if the situation's going to get hotter, the party's potential for growth will *increase* just as much, and if the party won't be able to grow sizeably, the objective situation can only be one of social calm. The two are directly proportional.

### VI. *Initiatives In Action—Minority Violence*

As was the case in Latin America so in Europe (and probably everywhere else) the arguments of MMF are basically, "we must prepare for insurrection *now* and not fall into the attitude that the insurrection will prepare itself. We must be ready to use violence to get arms for the proletariat!"

Who *produces* arms, *transports* them, *builds buildings* where they're stored, *defends* these buildings *against itself*, serves in the army? It's not thick walls or tricky combination locks that separates the proletariat from weapons, but the *habit of submission*, the *hypnosis of class domination*, and *patriotic poison*. It's sufficient to knock down these *psychological* walls and no concrete wall will stand in the way. It's enough that the proletariat will seriously want weapons and it'll find a way to get them. The task of the revolutionary party is to *awaken* this desire and *facilitate* its realization.

As I type this article the repercussions of the Ligue's recent attack on the New Order group are just starting to be felt. The thread of the MMF tendency seems to be impatience mixed with a dash of fatalism. This must be burned out if we are to lead the coming European revolutions (and who else could lead it?). If this germ spreads we'll miss the coming opportunities and will thus give capitalism one more chance to destroy humanity.

July 1, 1973



QUESTION NUMBER FOURTEEN

by Geb, San Francisco Branch

By now the comrades should have seen "The Plenum Report on Gay Liberation: Thirteen Basic Questions," by Comrade Sudie and myself. When we wrote that, we had seen the "Memorandum" or plenum report, but not yet the draft political resolution.

On June 28 we received our first copy of the "Draft Political Resolution" recently adopted by the Political Committee. We looked closely at what seems to be a contradiction between the draft political resolution and the plenum report. The more we looked, the more we realized we had to ask question number fourteen.

The draft political resolution is supposed to include the plenum report, not contradict it. But doesn't this seem contradictory?

PLENUM REPORT: ". . . the gay liberation movement is *much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle*, than either the women's movement, or the movements of the oppressed nationalities." This was to tell us where gay liberation fit in with "our long-term strategic priorities," which center around "the big questions of the class struggle." The plenum report concluded that party work "must reflect the relative weight and importance of the gay liberation movement, compared to other movements and issues of more central importance." (These quotes are all from the 1973 plenum report, "Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement," DB No. 3 in '73, page 9—italics added.)

DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION: "By 'workerism,' we mean the rejection of the various social movements

that have developed in the course of the radicalization, *discounting them as peripheral* or as obstacles to the proletarian revolution or workers struggles." ("Draft Political Resolution," Discussion Bulletin No. 13, June 1973, p. 15—italics added.) The Political Committee here is mentioning workerism as an example of what we should avoid.

Doesn't it sound as if the draft political resolution is calling the plenum report "workerist"? After all, the plenum report discounted gay liberation as "much more peripheral" to the class struggle, in order to justify abstention, or near abstention.

Is the Political Committee saying that gay liberation is one subject where workerism is a valid approach? Is the Political Committee saying that gay liberation is one social movement which really *is* "peripheral" to the class struggle?

Is it just a question of degree? Is the Political Committee saying that it's okay to call gay liberation "peripheral" in order to justify deemphasizing it and abstaining from the actual movement—but if we went further, and called it "peripheral" in order to justify complete rejection of the movement, then *that* would be going too far, *that* would be workerism?

Would the total abstention position put forward last year by the National Committee comrade, Nat Weinstein, count as "workerism" under this definition? If so, what is the difference between Nat's position, and the plenum report?

June 30, 1973