



# Discussion Bulletin

14 Charles Lane, New York, N. Y. 10014

Vol. 31 No. 24  
July 1973

Published by

**SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

## CONTENTS

Page

<b>A SECTARIAN APPROACH TO THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT,</b> by Evelyn Reed, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	3
<b>THE "INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY" IS REVISING TROTSKYISM ON THE CLASS NATURE OF THE STATE AND ON THE NATURE OF STALINISM,</b> by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local	7
<b>VIETNAM, CHINA, LATIN AMERICA, EUROPE: THE SAME ERROR,</b> by Steve Clark, Chicago Branch	11
<b>STATEMENT OF SUPPORT TO THE POLITICAL RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY,</b> by Ralph Levitt and Celia Stodola, Oakland-Berkeley Branch; Judi Shayne and Ron Warren, Los Angeles Branch; Jeff Beneke and Garth Chojnowski, San Francisco Branch	13
<b>THE ROLE OF THE VANGUARD AND THE CURRENT DISCUSSION,</b> by Mike Taber, Chicago Branch	14
<b>LETTER TO NATIONAL OFFICE CONCERNING CHANGES IN "THE BUILDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN CAPITALIST AMERICA"</b> by John B. (Internationalist Tendency), Chicago Branch	15
<b>LETTER IN RESPONSE TO JOHN B.,</b> by Rich Feigenberg <b>IN SUPPORT OF "THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE STRATEGY OF PARTY BUILDING,"</b> by Helen S. Hollander and Pamela J. Mills, San Diego Branch	16
<b>ONCE MORE ON "UNIVERSAL PRECLASS MATRIARCHY,"</b> by Jan Garrett, Twin Cities Branch	16
<b>POLITICAL COMMITTEE "THEORY" OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS,</b> by Mark Lause (Internationalist Tendency), Houston Branch	18
<b>TWO, THREE, MANY INDOCHINAS! AN ACTION PROPOSAL FOR THE SWP, Draft Thesis — Presented to the SWP Convention for Approval,</b> by Bill Yaffe, At-Large	28

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## A SECTARIAN APPROACH TO THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

by Evelyn Reed, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

The section dealing with the feminist movement in the counterresolution of the Internationalist Tendency to the SWP Political Resolution is entitled, "Women's Liberation versus Petty-Bourgeois Feminism." (Discussion, Bulletin Vol. 31, No. 18, pp. 19-21.) This title suggests that there is some significant distinction between the two terms; in actuality there is none.

Webster's dictionary defines "feminism" as "the theory or practice of those who advocate such legal and social changes as will establish political, economic and social equality for the sexes." In other words, a woman's liberationist is a feminist, and a feminist is a woman's liberationist. The authors of the document resort to this arbitrary counterposition of the two terms so that IT members can pose as possessors of the true gospel on "woman's liberation" as against the overwhelming majority of SWP members defined as "petty-bourgeois feminists." They hope by this means to press their narrow, sectarian, largely do-nothing line as against active participation in the movement at every stage of its development.

The IT document states that the SWP was correct in its "observation that the nuclear family was the instrument of female oppression," but this does not warrant jumping "to the 'revolutionary' potential of sisterhood and the need for a feminist movement" (p. 19). The "first women's groups arose among the already-radicalized petty-bourgeois and student movements" and thus in the initial phase "tended to view male chauvinism as the central cause of women's oppression." Hence, the groups "stressed consciousness-raising rather than mass mobilization or, in fact, any outward-oriented political focus" (p. 20). By means of this devious blending of facts and falsehoods, the document calls for a total rejection of party policy and orientation in the women's movement.

It is true that the party threw itself into the resurgent struggle of women for liberation which came on the heels of the Black revolt and the student and antiwar movements. We are proud of that quick response. We plunged into it as responsible and serious Marxists who fight on the side of all progressive social struggles against the capitalist oppressors. We are never abstentionists toward any aspect of rebelliousness against the status quo and, when it surfaced some five years ago, the big majority of the party opposed the few abstentionists who wanted us to stay out of the movement.

Unlike the authors of the IT document, we did not appraise the second wave of the feminist movement as backward. On the contrary, in our view it was far more advanced than its predecessor even at its beginning. In the nineteenth century women were obliged to confine their demands largely to legal reforms within the framework of the capitalist system. The new movement started out with widespread and deepgoing questioning of the most basic institutions and ideology of the capitalist system, which placed it on a higher level. It also emerged at a point in history when monopoly capitalism was displaying its thoroughly reactionary features and the world revolution was on the rise.

Again, while it is true that some ultraradical tendencies and individuals within the movement regarded male chauvinism as the source of woman's oppression, much broader tendencies recognized the social roots of this oppression from the first. One book most frequently quoted from was Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Some of these women were critical of capitalism without going so far as to embrace the socialist solution. Others were listening to those socialists who were in the movement to explain our program and perspectives to them.

Far from "adapting" ourselves to the incorrect currents within the movement, we felt that it was our job to be there to help make the necessary corrections in theory, action and organization and steer the movement onto the right course. It is deceptive to characterize our policy of *working with* the women drawn into the liberation movement at their existing level of development as "adaptation" to "man-hating."

It is equally wrong to brand all consciousness-raising groups as "psychological soul-searching" and "man-hating." This may have been the case with women who saw it as a panacea. But in most instances those groups provided the first, most elementary means for dispersed and isolated women to gather together to discuss their common problems, to discover they were not alone in their troubles and were not personally at fault for suffering from and resenting their problems. These became preponderantly *social* consciousness-raising groups whereby many women found out how much even their emotional and psychological disturbances stemmed from the oppressive institutions of this society. This was a necessary first step toward their emancipation.

This progressive feature of consciousness raising, which elevated the *social* awareness of women, is completely overlooked by the authors of the IT document. Yet it paved the way for the members of many small groups to get together later in larger formations, calling for city, state and national conferences and then initiating and organizing actions of various types. Most memorable was the street demonstration of 40,000 women who marched down Fifth Avenue in New York on August 26, 1970.

The contemptuous references to the women on campus overlooks the drastic change these women have effected in the universities. Women's study courses were once non-existent and unheard of. Today they have become the norm. The *N. Y. Times* recently reported 900 study courses in 100 separate institutions with the courses growing at the rate of 300 a year. This education can have incalculable consequences. It also enables new women, just entering the liberation movement, to pass over the earlier consciousness-raising stage of development and take off from these courses.

The heightened social consciousness of women also played an important part on the abortion victory won this year. The growth of women's organizations, conferences, actions, and publications made the movement a

power to be reckoned with. This brought about first the legalization of abortion in the key New York State, and then influenced the Supreme Court to hand down its ruling granting the right to abortion to the women in all fifty states. These advances appear of no consequence to the authors of the IT document. They do not consider abortion a major demand and sneer at the part played by WONAAC in helping to win the victory.

Their derogation of the feminist movement as preoccupied with "soul-searching" and "man-hating" is designed to prove that the SWP really had no business participating in so backward and petty-bourgeois a movement. At the same time, they make a revealing admission. According to the IT document, there were "more advanced elements of the women's movement who were calling into question the family and capitalist society itself" (p. 21). Their complaint is that the SWP "isolated itself" from these advanced elements.

They do not explain in what way we "isolated" ourselves from these advanced women when, armed with our program, we were in the movement from the start. Have there been *two* movements—one a "women's liberation" movement that they understood and the other a "petty-bourgeois feminist" movement that the SWP participated in? Is that how we "isolated ourselves" from the vanguard women? Wouldn't it be more accurate to say that we, who refused to adapt ourselves to the more backward currents, worked along with and influenced the more advanced women, recruiting many of them to the YSA and SWP?

However, the authors of this factional document are not given to objective judgment. They have a sectarian aim in view that cuts across our policy of both building a mass feminist movement and at the same time recruiting the most advanced women in it to our ranks. They intend to narrow down the feminist movement to a small circle of SWP women and those who are ready *now* to become revolutionary socialists. To rationalize their withdrawal from communication with the masses of the feminist movement, they engage in verbal gymnastics about addressing ourselves only to "proletarian" women. The question is, what is their definition of "working women"?

In the past, both the abstentionists and the sectarians referred to them as women "at the point of production," that is, in manufacturing plants and basic industries. Since few such women were going out on strikes for their feminist demands, the only thing to do was to wait until this occurred, meanwhile standing aloof from the "petty-bourgeois" feminist movement. In other words, women's work was measured in male terms through the criterion of the "blue-collar" workers in basic industries. But how many women wage workers are there in such industries compared to the millions who are in what are often mislabeled as "petty-bourgeois" jobs?

Today this snobbish approach to working women and working-class women has been modified. In the IT document, in addition to women in "clerical" and "service" industries they list, in parentheses, "public employees, teachers, health and communication workers" (p. 21). Again, and also in parentheses, in addition to women "workers" they list "proletarian housewives" and "welfare recipients" (p. 21). In other words, many categories of jobs often scornfully referred to as "white-collar" or "petty-bourgeois"

are now included in wage-working categories and the women recognized as "workers" even if they are not in blue-collar occupations. And millions of other women such as housewives and unemployed welfare recipients are also recognized as "working-class" women.

Since the feminist movement appeals to and is composed of women from all these categories, as well as campus women who will enter these categories, how can it be characterized as a "petty-bourgeois feminist" movement? If it is not petty-bourgeois in composition, how can our participation in it with our program and methods be characterized as supporting "petty-bourgeois feminism"? The IT document enjoins us to address ourselves to "working-class women . . . while at the same time continuing the work among women students" (p. 21). Where do these authors think we have been all this time?

And what makes them think the feminist movement cannot influence the trade-union movement? A recent report from Detroit informs us that at a Midwest Conference of Trade-Union Women Leaders, attended by 209 women from 28 unions in 18 states, they paid the highest tribute to the feminist movement for propelling them into organized action. They said in effect that the women's liberation movement has made a powerful impact on the consciousness of women trade unionists. A number of the women stressed the importance of the women's movement in their own development. "The growth of the women's liberation has highlighted the need of women to unite as women, fighting around women's issues. We owe a debt of gratitude to the women's liberation movement for getting us up off our butts and active." Other women brought up the importance of the fight around such issues as the ERA, abortion, contraception, and childcare.

This is only the beginning. Just as the university courses on women and their history have grown from a handful to hundreds, so it will be with the women in the labor movement. The example in Detroit today will be multiplied all over the country tomorrow.

It is not difficult however to see the real source of the IT's displeasure. Even though we have been working with women in all the variegated categories that comprise the feminist movement today, this does not satisfy sectarians who do not understand and recoil from mass movements. Looking for shortcuts to the revolution, they insulate themselves from the living reality of the struggle.

This can be seen in their complaint that the SWP puts forward a "dangerous formula" when it calls for "mass action in the streets." Such calls, they say, are "not uncommon for mass reformist parties" who "use actions as safety valves for the discontent of the masses, and as a means of pressuring the bourgeoisie" (p. 44). This shows their profound ignorance of the dynamics of pressing for democratic and transitional demands in mass actions as a means of moving closer to the socialist solution.

Their sectarianism also comes out clearly in their attitude toward the demands to be raised by the movement. They want all these demands, from the minimal to the most radical, to be satisfied without ever focusing on any specific issue which may under certain circumstances be the key to mobilizing the largest number of women in action and winning a victory. They are quite unhappy about the victory on the abortion issue which was won by a movement whose composition they regard as so

unsatisfactory, and even before the movement had a chance to show its full strength. This outcome contradicts their whole outlook and orientation.

To solace themselves, they claim that the party on the one hand pursued the issue with a "mechanical fanaticism" and on the other hand merely "tail-ended" a popular movement which wasn't all that important (p. 21). To the SWP, however, a woman's right to control her own reproductive processes, as exemplified in the slogans, "her right to choose," and "her right to control her own body" was a fundamental demand that concerned *all* women. And they cannot convince us that, when women win even a small victory, we revolutionists lose.

As against the abortion victory they counterpose various other issues before the women's liberation movement, such as free abortion, free 24-hour childcare centers, adequate maternity and health care, equal pay and equal opportunity for working women. The sectarian attitude is: "Everything now or nothing!" They argue as though a victory gained for one demand would harm rather than advance the effort to win victories on more issues. They would not get very far in a union struggle by telling the workers to forego more wages and benefits now because they will get everything when the socialist revolution conquers.

What is most disturbing to the IT authors is our policy of fighting for the demands of women as *women*—and not simply as women workers. This is the source of their drumfire that we have a petty-bourgeois reformist policy in the feminist movement, since we are concerned with women as an oppressed sex. They not only have no interest in building a mass movement, they have no interest in raising demands that affect all women.

To these sectarians there are only two categories of women—the rich bourgeois woman and her maid. "We believe, unequivocally," they say, "that in the final analysis the woman and the maid will stand on opposite sides of the line—the class line" (p. 20). To buttress this simplistic dichotomy, the writers of the IT document call attention to my polemic in the preconvention discussion of 1954, written almost twenty years ago. The argument I used then, which they ardently approve, is that working women have more in common with working men in the class struggle for socialism than they have with rich bourgeois women as a sex.

This, of course, is true, since ultimately it will take the combined forces of both sexes of the working class to bring about the socialist revolution. But it is not true, as they imply, that I hold their one-sided view of the problem. Unlike the sectarians, I do not consider the oppression of *all* women as a sex unimportant compared to their oppression in the class structure. On the contrary, women fighting against their subordination as a sex is part and parcel of the class struggle.

I explained two years ago in the 1971 preconvention discussion, when (FAPO) For a Proletarian Orientation) also tried to claim me for their sectarian outlook, that my 1954 bulletin was written in a different period when a different dispute surfaced. It was during the McCarthyite witchhunt, an extremely reactionary period when radicalism was at its lowest ebb, the labor movement was not stirring and the party was beleaguered. Those "dog-days" led not only to bitter political disputes and defec-

tions from the SWP but also to carping disagreements by a few women comrades over the "woman question." It was a strictly internal dispute.

At that time, when there was no feminist movement even on the horizon, the discussion in the SWP circles was on a low and extremely subjective level. Women in general were retreating back into home and family life under the clamor that this was where they belonged. The stifling atmosphere of the times affected even some women comrades who began looking for shortcuts out of their frustrations. My article pointed out that party women, like other women around them, were under constant bombardment from the massive bourgeois propaganda machine to drown their discontents through the purchase of cosmetics, clothes, and other things. (This theme was more fully developed some ten years later by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.)

Because rich bourgeois women were held up as models to spur this consumer purchasing on the part of working women, I said there was a closer identity between working women and men fighting against their common oppression as a *class* than there was between oppressed women and bourgeois women as a *sex* in this sucker-bait game of the profiteers. This was a reminder of the social roots of the frustration, acrimony and alienation prevalent at that time which could not be alleviated through the purchase of more consumer goods.

The gist of that whole dialogue of twenty years ago is far removed from our situation today when we are confronted by a large and growing feminist movement. We are now fighting on an altogether different front; in a mass movement and against other tendencies in that movement. Our present problem is how to relate to this movement, participate in it, influence and lead it. When members of FAPO two years ago, and now the IT, extract quotations from my 1954 bulletin, they try to suggest that either I have revised my position or that I agree with their views. Neither is true. I have not revised my position and I am completely opposed to their sterile sectarian line on how to orient toward the feminist movement today.

The struggle for women's liberation has two aspects which are closely interconnected but not identical. Women are short-changed as workers because they are subordinated as women to men in a male-supremacist capitalist society. Certain aspects of this sex oppression even cut across class lines, affecting middle-class and even wealthy women to some extent, whether or not they are aware of it. The authors of the IT document do not have to go back to 1954 for my views on this matter. They can find them expressed in my book, *Problems of Women's Liberation*, published in 1969 when the feminist movement surfaced.

In one article, "Women: Caste, Class or Oppressed Sex," which was published after my debate with Roxanne Dunbar at the Socialist Scholars Conference, I argued that even middle-class housewives, despite their economic advantages, are victimized by capitalism. They lead isolated, monotonous, trivialized lives, centered in home and family, and their discontents are "played upon and preyed upon by the profiteers in the consumer goods fields" (p. 70).

There are other areas in which all women are victim-

ized, such as the right to have an abortion. The abortion victory we won removes the dangerous back-alley practices that formerly maimed many women, even those who had money. Thus on concrete issues that affect all women, we say that we can join together in struggles that can bring about the desired changes. This does not alter the fact that in the showdown fight for socialism, class alignments will be decisive and the full liberation of women won through the anticapitalist alliance of working men with women.

But we are only in the preparatory stages of that struggle which is going to be quite complex and full of twists and turns. At every stage we will have to oppose opportunists, ultralefts, and sectarians who can drag the movement off course. Two such polemics appear in my book. In one article I argued against the opportunistic Betty Friedan who, despite the merits of her book, believes that women can achieve their full liberation through purely reformist means without abolishing capitalism. In another article I argued against the ultraleft Roxanne Dunbar who believed that women by themselves, through their own forces, could win their liberation in a struggle against male chauvinism. I explained the reasons why both were wrong. In this pre-convention discussion I am arguing against the sectarian tendency within our own ranks.

The authors of the IT document maintain that it is wrong for women in the feminist movement to organize their own councils and decide on their own actions. One of their most bitter complaints is that "the party accepted, and, in fact, actively defended the concept of 'all-women's' organizations, 'all-women's' conferences, and finally, 'all-women's' actions" (p. 20).

The last point is not quite correct. Neither the bulk of the women's liberation movement nor we have advocated excluding men from big street demonstrations or public meetings and lectures. In the scores of universities I have spoken at over the past few years, whole workshops and teach-ins were reserved for women, the public lectures were open to men. In working councils and decision-making, however, men are excluded.

There are good reasons why it is necessary and proper for women, especially in the early stages of the feminist struggle, to adopt this measure. We are living not only in a capitalist society but in a male-dominated society. Male supremacy—or male chauvinism as it is more often called—is a form of oppression. For centuries women

have been held back and put down by men whenever they tried to stand on their own feet or band together in their own councils. Millions of women are still intimidated in many respects, not only on the job but at home. By instituting their own organizations and councils women are gaining a salutary experience in self-reliance and self-assurance.

Just as the Blacks must conduct their own struggle against white supremacy, so must women conduct theirs against male supremacy. All this is part and parcel of the complexities of the class struggle. This is what the simplistic sectarians do not recognize. They see women as an oppressed part of the working class but not as an oppressed sex—although we often enough describe them as the "doubly oppressed." And we must fight against both forms of oppression.

There is yet another reason why women should form their own organizations and councils, as I explained in *Problems*. "Why do women have to lead their own struggles for liberation, even though in the end the combined anticapitalist offensive of the whole working class will be required for the victory of the socialist revolution? The reason is that no segment of society which has been subjected to oppression, whether it consists of Third World people or of women, can delegate the leadership and promotion of their fight for freedom to other forces—even though other forces can act as their allies. We reject the attitude of some political tendencies that say they are Marxists but refuse to acknowledge that women have to lead and organize their own independent struggle for emancipation, just as they cannot understand why Blacks must do the same" (p. 75).

The opposition resolution proposes a total reversal of the line we have worked out in theory and experience, and which has shown itself to be correct and viable for the women's liberation struggle. The IT document goes counter to the method of the Transitional Program which starts from the objective conditions and existing level of consciousness of the oppressed to lead them, step by step, to an understanding of the socialist solution and the action required to realize it. It wants to leap over the intervening stages in the mass struggle by imposing arbitrary demands upon it instead of being attentive to its actual needs and stage of development.

For all these reasons this sectarian approach should be rejected.

July 17, 1973

THE "INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY" IS  
REVISING TROTSKYISM ON THE CLASS NATURE  
OF THE STATE AND ON THE NATURE  
OF STALINISM

by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

The political counterresolution of the "Internationalist Tendency" states on page 17: "Withdrawal of U.S. support would most likely mean the smashing of the Saigon regime, leaving *state power in the hands of the proletariat.*" (Italics mine.) In other words, the "Internationalist Tendency" holds that the seizure of power by the NLF-PRG would automatically constitute the dictatorship of the proletariat, a workers' state, in South Vietnam, despite "the claims of the NLF to stand for a neutralist capitalist state."

The attempt to demonstrate this by a reference to the "continuity of the NLF with the Viet Minh, as it emerged out of the August 1945 revolution" is particularly feeble. In fact, the Viet Minh played a classical Menshevik (i.e., procapitalist) role in the August 1945 revolution, fighting to preserve capitalist property relations and to keep Stalin's promises to the imperialists. It is true that the program of the NLF-PRG is in essential continuity with the program of the Viet Minh at that time. This, however, argues strongly against the concept that an NLF regime would automatically create a dictatorship of the proletariat if it came to power. On the contrary, it points to the possibility that the NLF-PRG leaders will prove wholly sincere in their promises to preserve the bourgeois state in Vietnam, *a task they succeeded in carrying out in 1945.* Of course, it is also quite possible that the NLF-PRG, if it should come to power, will follow the example of China and North Vietnam where petty-bourgeois leaderships with reformist programs decided under pressure to consolidate their power by expropriating the bourgeoisie and creating a workers' state in those countries. It is important to recognize that this is far from being a foregone conclusion, however, as the August 1945 revolution in Vietnam demonstrated.

Underlying this single sentence in the counterresolution, there lies a developing revision of the Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist theory of the state. This theoretical shift was adumbrated in the Sterne-Walter resolution on Vietnam which states: "The decisive thing is the nature of the state, that is, the class character of those who control the armed forces."

According to leading members of the "Internationalist Tendency" who share this view, China became a workers' state in October 1949 when Mao's peasant army completed the conquest of the mainland. The East European states became workers' states when Soviet troops set foot in those countries. Cuba became a workers' state in January 1959 when Castro's army of peasants and petty-bourgeois intellectuals marched triumphantly into Havana. And the Soviet Union became a workers' state in October 1917.

In short, the power of the ruling class flows not from the ownership of the means of production, but from the barrel of a gun, as Chairman Mao has long sought to teach us. If the bourgeois repressive apparatus is smashed, this theory contends, a workers' state exists regardless

of which nonbourgeois class the political leadership of the new regime represents or whether it seeks to preserve capitalist property relations. The proponents of this view hold that, sooner or later, such a regime will *inevitably* carry out the economic expropriation of the capitalists. As we shall see, leading figures in the "Internationalist Tendency" hold this view.

This theory is in sharp contrast to Trotsky's position that the smashing of the capitalist repressive apparatus and the removal of the procapitalist government are only the first step, which *must* be followed by the establishment of *state ownership* and planning of the means of production if the military-political victory is to result in the creation of a workers' state. "The class nature of the state," Trotsky held, "is, consequently, determined not by its political forms but by its social content, i.e., the character of the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends." ("Not a Workers and Not a Bourgeois State?" *Writings*, 1937-38, p. 90.)

This is especially true for the workers' state since working-class property relations do not grow within the pores of the old society, as did the property relations of previous ruling classes. The working class must have its own repressive forces and an anticapitalist government *in order* to establish *state ownership* and planning of the means of production, the dominant form of property relations in a workers' state. Until state ownership of the decisive sectors of the economy has been established, the working class has not fully established its own state power, even though it may have broken the *military* power of the bourgeoisie. As long as the repressive apparatus, whatever the class character of those who control it, defends predominantly capitalist property relations rather than nationalized state property, the bourgeoisie remains the ruling class.

Further, while the bourgeois revolutions found capitalist property relations already on their way to dominance (although still heavily fettered by feudalism), working class property relations must be established by the *conscious* act of the political leadership of the new government. This overturn does not flow automatically from a successful military confrontation with the capitalist army and police, although this is a prerequisite for the successful expropriation of the capitalists. The opportunity to overturn capitalist property relations and create a workers' state can be *missed* by an inadequate leadership even after a military victory, and such a default can lead to disaster for the revolution. The Sterne-Walter concept eliminates this decisive role of the conscious factor from the process of transformation.

The Russian revolution of 1917 demonstrated graphically the central role that leadership and consciousness play in the creation of a proletarian dictatorship. The military might controlled by the capitalists was largely

broken in February. (In the civil war following October the White Guards failed to take over the czarist army intact.) The army was organized into soviets, the officers were bypassed, and the soldiers would accept instructions only from the workers', peasants' and soldiers' soviets.

Nonetheless, a capitalist government headed by Kerensky ruled, although without the support of capitalist repressive forces. This occurred because the conscious revolutionary party was not yet strong enough (or clear enough about its tasks) to replace Kerensky. This bourgeois government was supported by the petty-bourgeois leaders of the soviets who succeeded for a time in convincing the soviet-dominated army to act as a repressive force against the workers and even to continue carrying out an imperialist war. This despite the fact that direct bourgeois control of the army had been largely broken in an armed confrontation. The capitalist government, of course, used the time gained in this way to try to rebuild a viable capitalist army and police, weaken the soviets, and crush the revolutionists.

A supplementary revolution was needed to replace this capitalist government with a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government, openly dedicated to abolishing, rather than preserving, capitalism. But this government, headed by revolutionary Marxists, was still not considered the dictatorship of the proletariat by Trotsky. He wrote:

"Not only up to the Brest-Litovsk peace but even up to autumn of 1918, the social content of the revolution was restricted to a petty-bourgeois agrarian overturn and workers' control over production. This means that the revolution in its actions had not yet passed the bounds of bourgeois society. During this first period, soldiers' soviets ruled side by side with workers' soviets, and often elbowed them aside. Only toward the autumn of 1918 did the petty-bourgeois soldier-agrarian elemental wave recede a little to its shores, and the workers went forward with the nationalization of the means of production. Only from this time can one speak of the inception of a real dictatorship of the proletariat." (*Writings*, 1933-34, p. 106.)

If Trotsky did not regard the October regime as a dictatorship of the proletariat, despite the fact that it was led by a revolutionary workers' party and backed up by soviets and workers' control of capitalist factories, how much more unjustified it is to label regimes such as that established by Mao in 1949 as "workers' states." The Mao regime was headed by a Stalinist party, based itself on a peasant army and on a strategy of coalitions with the bourgeoisie. This regime suppressed all independent workers' activity, and adamantly opposed the expropriation of the bourgeoisie for several years. Is it not better to follow Trotsky's example and to wait for a qualitative change in property relations before tagging this formation a workers' state? Why impute to them from 1949 proletarian qualities which were completely absent in material reality?

The criterion posed by the "Internationalist Tendency" counterresolution and the Sterne-Walter resolution is deadly in its implications. It would have made it almost impossible for the Bolsheviks to find their way in the difficult and complicated period that followed February 1917. The old czarist army had been broken and the soviets exercised dominance in it. However, the soviets subordinated the army to a government which was capitalist. The Bolsheviks, as part of their transitional program

in that period, demanded that this capitalist government fire the bourgeois ministers and set up a government based entirely on the reformist working-class and left peasant parties, all of which claimed to be socialist.

If this had taken place, on what basis would supporters of the Sterne-Walter criterion be able to conclude that Russia was not yet a workers' state? There is nonethat I can see, since the armed forces, already riddled with soviets and deeply attached to the authority of the soviets, would now be wholly under the control of reformist "working-class" forces. The working-class credentials of these elements were certainly comparable to those of Mao or Ho.

But the Bolsheviks never intended to call such a regime a proletarian dictatorship because they knew that it would be opposed to the overthrow of capitalism. They had no illusions, fortunately, that Russia would become a workers' state if the demand, "Down With the Ten Capitalist Ministers" was met. The demand was part of a strategy aimed at overthrowing the reformist-led government and installing a revolutionary government that would carry through the destruction of the capitalist state.

The confusions instilled by the implications of the Sterne-Walter criteria are real and deep. Some advocates of this criterion have concluded that the Ho Chi Minh-Bao Dai regime of August 1945 in Vietnam, which played the same role as Kerensky did, *was* the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to the same criterion, one would have to conclude that Bolivia became a workers' state in 1952 under the left-nationalist regime of Paz Estenssoro when the arms were in the hands of the workers' and peasants' militias and the bourgeois army had been smashed.

This concept leads very directly and very logically to replacing a political strategy aimed at the overthrow of the capitalist state (including the property relations that it guards and defends) with a military strategy aimed at smashing the repressive forces of that state. It assumes that the rest of the revolutionary overturn will follow automatically regardless of the program of the party, the consciousness of the masses, or the class character of the government. The masses merely have to be ready (and, above all, technically prepared) to take on the army and the cops. The struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties that mislead the workers and peasants, and the programmatic struggle against bourgeois ideology takes a back seat to the armed struggle which, in and of itself, is viewed as capable of creating the proletarian dictatorship.

Inevitably, such a theory gnaws away at the concept of a proletarian orientation. Instead, it encourages a primary orientation toward the peasantry or declassed urban layers that may appear to be more volatile from a military point of view. The conclusion is rapidly reached that what is needed is not a revolutionary *party* (although this concept can be tacked onto the schema, if only for auld lang syne), but a revolutionary *army*. The rest will follow.

Carried through to its logical conclusion, this theoretical concept has another conclusion which is no less disastrous than the preceding ones. *It throws into question the class character of the existing workers' states.* If this is determined by the "class character of those who control the armed forces" rather than by "the character of



the forms of property and productive relations which the given state guards and defends," there is no basis for concluding that the Soviet Union, China, North Vietnam, North Korea, and the East European regimes are workers' states. For the workers in these countries have been completely politically expropriated by the petty-bourgeois bureaucracies. These bureaucracies have totally revamped the government and the repressive forces into instruments for preserving their own privileges *against* the workers. The secret police and the army of the Soviet Union today have nothing in common with the repressive forces of Dzerzhinsky and Trotsky except for the property foundations that they rest on.

The advocates of the theory that the class nature of the state is determined by the "class character of those who control the armed forces" included the "Leninist Faction" headed by Barbara Gregorich, Phil Passen, and John McCann. They apparently held this view for some time without revealing it to the party, preferring to build single-issue coalitions against the leadership instead. True to the logic of this theory of the state, the "Leninist Faction" has already produced a number of neo-Shachtmanite splitoffs including a Chicago-based grouplet that considers the Vietnam war an "interimperialist conflict" and calls on "both sides" to "turn the guns around."

The Sterne-Walter concept, with all its dangers, represents an honest attempt to explain the creation of workers' states by Stalinist parties in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Korea, and Eastern Europe, and by a petty-bourgeois grouping around Castro in Cuba. These developments require detailed study and explanation. Discussion of them will probably be a feature of our internal discussions for some time to come.

Instead of adopting the military automatism of Sterne-Walter and the political counterresolution, I think we will make a better start if we assume that the smashing of the bourgeois repressive apparatus creates a decisive revolutionary *opening* for the creation of a proletarian dictatorship. The outcome can take different forms, depending on the presence or absence of a revolutionary leadership.

1) It can result in the formation of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government, under the leadership of a proletarian party, which moves consistently, on the basis of a thought-out Marxist program, to consolidate a dictatorship of the proletariat through the economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie. There is one example of this kind of regime—the Bolshevik regime set up in October 1917. In my opinion, despite the long detour which has occurred in the world revolution since, the creation of such a regime provides the only *assurance* that the transformation to a dictatorship of the proletariat will take place. Such a regime should remain a goal of our movement.

2) Because of inadequate leadership, a successful confrontation with the bourgeois repressive forces can result in the creation of a left-capitalist government, which seeks to take advantage of the gap in leadership to reconstruct the capitalist repressive machine, while lulling the armed masses with a few reforms. Such regimes came to power in Russia in February 1917, in Vietnam in August 1945, and in Bolivia in 1952. It is characteristic of such a regime that it is confronted with incipient organs of workers' and peasants' power produced by the victorious uprising.

In Russia, there were the soviets; in Vietnam, the People's Committees; and in Bolivia, the militias. Such regimes demonstrate the inadequacy of a military strategy as a substitute for a political strategy on the part of revolutionists. The central need for a proletarian victory in these circumstances is the political hegemony in the mass movement of a revolutionary party.

3) In the wake of the defeat of the bourgeois police and army a radical petty-bourgeois regime can come to power. Such regimes can carry out certain anticapitalist reforms that undermine the capitalist state, although these governments lack a clear, conscious anticapitalist program. The Fourth Congress of the Comintern predicted that such governments could come to power where the revolutionary Marxist parties had not yet won hegemony over the revolutionary masses. Trotsky predicted that, under conditions of war, financial crash, or other disasters, even Stalinist or Social-Democratic parties could form such governments which he called "workers' and farmers' governments."

Such radical petty-bourgeois regimes soon are compelled to realize that there is no utopian middle road between capitalism and socialism. They eventually face a choice between becoming fully reintegrated as defenders of the capitalist state or going forward to create a workers' state. In the past, such regimes usually ended by collapsing or becoming agents of the bourgeoisie. Since World War II, under the impact of the example of the Soviet Union, the weakening of world imperialism, and the cold war belligerency of the imperialists, some of these petty-bourgeois radical regimes have led to the creation of workers' states. Dictatorships of the proletariat were created in this manner in Yugoslavia in 1946, in China in 1953, in North Vietnam between 1954 and 1958, and in Cuba in 1960. In every case (except Cuba, which was not burdened with a Stalinist leadership) these workers' states have been saddled from birth with antidemocratic regimes modeled on the petty-bourgeois bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union. Counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracies took shape, basing themselves on the material privileges they allocated to themselves in the first days of coming to power.

The left turn carried out from 1947 to 1953 by the Stalinist parties, on Moscow's instructions, played a role in several of these transformations. This turn was a pressure tactic aimed at persuading the U.S. imperialists to give up the cold war offensive and return to peaceful coexistence.

The transformation of these radical petty-bourgeois regimes into workers' states is far from automatic. In other cases, especially where the imperialists were more supple in their tactics (as in Algeria), the radical regime remained within capitalist bounds, stagnated, and gradually became reintegrated into the capitalist state. All that was then needed to complete this process was a minor operation to lop off the left wing. In addition to such defeats, many revolutions saddled with petty-bourgeois leaderships never reached the point of establishing such a regime.

Trotskyists should not join such regimes as they do not yet represent a clear break from capitalism and bourgeois rule, although we certainly support and defend their progressive measures. It would have been a disastrous mistake for revolutionists to have confused these petty-bourgeois regimes with the dictatorship of the pro-

letariat while they were still based on capitalist property relations (a mistake made by Pablo in Algeria). On the contrary, we should counterpose our proletarian program to their petty-bourgeois programs, and the dictatorship of the proletariat to the still-existing capitalist state.

In all the countries of Eastern Europe occupied by Soviet troops (except Austria) the Soviet bureaucrats ordered a social transformation after several years of upholding coalition governments which tried their best to protect capitalist property relations. Some believe the transformation of these countries was inevitable because of the class nature of the bureaucrat-dominated Soviet army.

However, the case of Austria disproves this view. For nine years, under the protection of Soviet troops, capitalist property relations were preserved and even strengthened. In 1954, they withdrew peacefully from the occupied zone. The bourgeoisie had remained the ruling class throughout this period, and their property had been protected by the repressive forces of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The key to the transformations in Eastern Europe was not the formula, "occupation by the Soviet army equals dictatorship of the proletariat," but the defensive reaction of the bureaucracy to the cold war.

### *The Views of Comrade Don Smith*

Although this theory has given birth, as I noted, to some tiny Shachtmanite grouplets, the main immediate danger it presents is that of adaptation to Stalinism. This was graphically demonstrated to me when I gave two classes on "Vietnam and Permanent Revolution" to the Chicago branch on July 8. Comrade Don Smith, who functions as "Chicago Coordinator" of the "Internationalist Tendency" made a number of remarks in the discussion period that revealed the depth of the differences that have developed around the question of Stalinism. He stated:

"I have a great disagreement with the thrust of this presentation. It seems to me that it's approaching a Shachtman-like view of Stalinism. That is, that they are counterrevolutionary through and through. . . .

"Now Stalinists have a dual nature. A section of *The Revolution Betrayed* is titled that. A Stalinist party, in my view, also has this nature and when they take power, arms in hand, there is a transition of power from one class to another represented by that. That's why even though they have a Stalinist program in which they are not for nationalizing the means of production and they may maintain this program and not nationalize for a matter of years in some cases, eventually the contradiction between them being an instrument of the workers in the last analysis and these bourgeois property forms produce a contradiction which they resolve by nationalizing the means of production. They only do this because they are a workers' state at the time they do that. . . .

"So what lies at the root of this is a conception of the state. The practical politics of it [the SWP view-F.F.] is that there isn't a full support to the victory of the NLF and this is reflected and it has a lot of consequences. It starts turning us into a Shachtmanite-like organization with a view that they are so bad, so counterrevolutionary, that we don't see the dual nature, and that when they do take power, the workers' state is established."

Reviewing these comments, I was rather flabbergasted by them. They represent the purest form of the view that Stalinism in power equals a workers' state that I have ever heard. Although Stalinism is described as having a dual (presumably partly counterrevolutionary) character, we are told that any time they are in power, arms in hand, they in-and-of-themselves constitute a workers' state. This is so, according to Smith, regardless of the property relations they use their arms to defend.

Further the counterrevolutionary "side" of Stalinism that Smith presumably recognizes is completely canceled out by his statement that the Stalinist parties are "in the last analysis, an instrument of the workers." An instrument of the workers!

Not an agency of imperialism within the working-class movement! Not the last line of defense of capitalism within the workers' movement! Not "the syphilis of the labor movement" as Trotsky aptly called Stalinism! But, "in the last analysis, an instrument of the workers"!

The view that Stalinism is a counterrevolutionary force in the world movement for socialism, the gravedigger of revolutions, is thrown out the window as "Shachtmanite-like." The view that an alternative leadership is needed, that Stalinism must be driven out of all its positions of power by revolutionary Marxism, is here tagged as "Shachtmanite-like." The revolutionary Marxist loathing of Stalinism is equated to Shachtmanism.

This is a very dangerous amalgam, a very miseducating amalgam for Comrade Smith to play with. Shachtmanism holds that Stalinism represents a new imperialist ruling class seeking world domination. Therefore, when Stalinist-led workers' states or movements come under attack from imperialism, Shachtmanites adopt a neutral pose. They favor a social revolution in the workers' states that would uproot the historically progressive property relations as well as the rotten bureaucracies. Is that the position of the SWP? Comrade Smith knows very well that it is not.

In our view, the "dual" character of counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracies flows, not from any progressive content that resides within the Stalinist program or methods—these are completely counterrevolutionary—but because it is a cancerous growth on a progressive social formation, just as we view the trade-union bureaucracy as having a "dual role" as a cancerous growth on a progressive social formation. Because these parasites cannot survive without their hosts, the bureaucrats of the workers' states (like the bureaucrats of the trade unions) are forced periodically into conflict with the ruling class, which seeks to demobilize the working class (just as it seeks to undermine the trade unions).

We defend the workers' states unconditionally. But it is not the position of the SWP to soften our unremitting opposition to Stalinism in order to recognize a "revolutionary" aspect of Stalinism. It is not our policy to assure the masses that when Stalinists take power, a transformation in property relations is bound to occur sooner or later and they shouldn't worry about it. We have no political confidence in Stalinism. Smith does, to a degree. That's a big difference of opinion.

Smith's remarks are also very revealing with regard to what the "Internationalist Tendency" means *politically* by the slogan, "Victory to the NLF." *They view it as an expression of political confidence in the Stalinist leader-*

ship. They want the party to state that it believes that the NLF is an instrument that is fully adequate to smashing the bourgeois state in Vietnam and that the need for the creation of a revolutionary party has been superseded there. They want the party to instill the "new mass vanguard" with *confidence* that the NLF will carry out the permanent revolution in Vietnam.

The logic goes much further. For if the NLF is entitled to our *confidence* that it will solve the objective contradiction between the Vietnamese revolution and capitalist property relations, then why shouldn't we also express *confidence* that it will solve the equally objective contradiction between the Vietnamese revolution and bureaucratic methods of rule by instituting workers' democracy? Shouldn't we have *confidence* that it will also find the correct solution to the objective contradiction between the Vietnamese revolution and world imperialism by putting forward an adequate program for the world revolution? Each of these objective contradictions is every bit as glaring as the contradiction which Comrade Smith has expressed full confidence that the Vietnamese Stalinists will solve.

Similar political confidence is implied by this conception for any Stalinist party that takes up arms. Whatever slogans we use in our antiwar work, we are not going to buy Smith's political conception. We believe that program is fundamental and we will not give an ounce of confidence to the program of the Vietnamese Stalinist leaders or to their practice that has more than once dealt grave setbacks to the revolution. We give 100 percent support to the Vietnamese people, including their current leaders, against U.S. imperialism. But we also continue to give 100 percent support to the Trotskyist program as an alternative to the counterrevolutionary program of Stalinism. We continue to hold to the programmatic objective of replacing the Vietnamese Stalinist leadership, and all other Stalinist leaderships, with a revolutionary Marxist leadership.

Comrade Smith is a prominent representative of the "Internationalist Tendency." Other leaders of the tendency in Chicago appeared to support his views. If that is the case, the "Internationalist Tendency" should pause for a moment and think where it is headed.

July 16, 1973

## VIETNAM, CHINA, LATIN AMERICA, EUROPE: THE SAME ERROR

by Steve Clark, Chicago Branch

One of the dangers involved in the orientation proposed by the I. E. C. European perspectives document is its failure to distinguish between winning the best elements of the radicalized youth to Trotskyism, on the one hand, and, on the other, adapting to the non-Trotskyist currents and programs which abound in this milieu. We being to have the illusion that we are *winning* others to our program while in fact we are being *won* by them. One concrete example of such an adaptation is the political position which many European comrades have developed on the nature of the Vietnam accords and the Vietnamese Communist Party—a position adopted at the December 1972 plenum of the I. E. C., and recently expanded upon (presumably?) by Comrade Sterne in his contribution "The Debate on Indochina" (I. I. D. Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 7).

In his article, Comrade Sterne criticizes the position supported by leaders of the S.W.P. as an alternative to the above-mentioned resolution adopted at the December plenum. (See I. I. D. Bulletin, Vol. X, No. 6, page 24.) He makes the following three indictments of that position:

1) It expresses an incorrect understanding of the relationship of military and class forces *within* Vietnam and overemphasizes the importance of the *detente*, thereby painting an incorrect and pessimistic portrait of the situation in Indochina;

2) It incorrectly underestimates the depth of the revolution in Vietnam and the strategic impasse facing the United States on a world scale; and

3) It misjudges the revolutionary will and tenacious

character of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Comrade Sterne argues that the January Accords (and now, I suppose, the June Accords to implement the January Accords) have altered the situation in Indochina to the favor of the N. L. F., and that in spite of programmatic ambiguities and an often dubious history, the VCP shapes up to the tasks which lie ahead in establishing workers power in South Vietnam.

These criticisms bring to mind immediately many of the errors made by the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency in the Latin American discussion: the elevation of guns above politics, the resulting dismissal of many important questions of class principle in the evaluation of programs and leaderships, etc.

Comrade Sterne's criticisms don't stand up too well in the light of the *real positions* of the Socialist Workers Party. Anyone who has read our 1971 political resolution, Joe Hansen's international report to the last convention, or any of our many *Militant* and *ISR* articles on Indochina and U. S. imperialism is well aware that the Socialist Workers Party is not "in the dark" about the failure of Vietnamization, the weakness of the Saigon regime, the depth of the revolution amongst the Indochinese masses or the tremendous political and economic impasse facing Washington.

Indeed, we believe that it was the search for a way around this impasse which opened the road to the *detente*, making it a central factor in world politics. Brezhnev and Mao had been itching for such a deal a long time. It

took Vietnam and the closely related political and economic woes of the U.S. ruling class to propel Nixon on the course of cementing his "friendship" with Moscow and reversing a twenty-year policy of "blacklisting" China.

The primary military considerations in the summer and fall of 1972 were not on the ground in Vietnam, but at the secret meetings in Paris, Peking and Moscow. Why? Because the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies had made it crystal clear that they had no intention of countering the saturation bombing and mine blockade inflicted by American military might on North Vietnam. The dramatic military victories in the countryside pointed to by Comrade Sterne (most especially the near victory in May 1972) only *dramatize* and *reemphasize* the fact that, for the time being, the forces of massive American air power and international class collaboration have prevailed over the purely military situation in the outskirts of Quang Tri City. The revolution in Vietnam is far from defeated, but it has been thrown back. The United States has been given at least a temporary reprieve from the most immediately disastrous ramifications of its impasse.

As to the nature of the VCP, the recent *ISR* article on the topic by Johnson and Feldman deals very convincingly with the questions raised by Comrade Sterne. I won't attempt to rehash them here. I do, however, want to draw attention to Sterne's comment about "prolonged revolutionary warfare," the lessons of which he considers to be one of the everlasting legacies of the Vietnamese leadership. Sterne completely misses the point. "Prolonged revolutionary warfare" is most often a sign of *misleadership* and the lack of a strong proletarian base and political orientation. It is to be *avoided* whenever possible, and it could have been avoided in Vietnam with the correct leadership in 1945-46 and possibly 1954. Of course, Ho Chi Minh ordered such a *revolutionary* leadership exterminated in the South in 1945-46, so the proposition has never been tested in the crucible of actual Vietnamese history.

The Socialist Workers Party, of course, distinguishes between the specific policies of the VCP and those of Moscow and Peking. We do this to pressure the bureaucracies to provide more aid to the Vietnamese revolution, and to further divide the Stalinist camp ideologically and politically. Where we can, we even make use of article in Hanoi's own newspapers to expose the betrayals of Moscow and Peking—as we did several weeks ago in *The Militant* editorial on the Brezhnev trip, for instance. In the past we have taken a similar orientation towards the Chinese and Yugoslav C.P.s when the narrow nationalism of the Soviet bureaucracy has caused it to attack and sabotage (militarily or economically) its weaker Stalinist rivals.

These centrifugal tendencies within world Stalinism have their roots in the theory of socialism in one country. The VCP today is buffeted between Peking and Moscow to whom it is still tied materially and ideologically, on the one hand, and, on the other, the reality of its own position in Vietnam—its very survival under continued U.S. military presence and potential reescalation, and the need not to be discredited in the eyes of the armed revolutionary masses in the South over whom it must keep its control. In balancing these contradictory pressures, the VCP reacts empirically making many fundamental errors which flow from its political history.

*Where Do Sterne's Errors Originate? Where Do They Lead?*

What has led our European comrades to make such an error? If the VCP has followed an empirically revolutionary line ever since 1939 (in spite of slip-ups in 1945 and 1954), then perhaps the former *Combatiente* section was correct in urging a new regroupment around the North Vietnamese, North Korean, and Albanian C.P.s. If an "empirical break" with Stalinism, an empirical revolutionary methodology, has sufficed in the most hotly contested battle of the colonial revolution where the best weapons and minds of imperialism have been focused for over two decades, then maybe Trotskyism is outmoded—at least for the colonial sector. And if not, why not, Comrade Sterne? That's the logic of your adaptation to these currents.

These novel conceptions are being transmitted into the Fourth International from the ultraleft and Maoist milieu in Europe which goes by the name, in the European perspectives document, of the "new mass vanguard." Such adaptations can—and will, if not corrected—lead whole portions of the Fourth International down the path of the Italian youth group which oriented itself all the way out of the Trotskyist movement into the camp of stone-cold Maoism—or the path of the PRT.

The MMF supporters in Belgium have written in a recent bulletin (Internal Information Bulletin, No. 3): "Most of the differences (except the exact definition of the term *Stalinist party*) have in the meantime been resolved by subsequent events." They are referring to the discussion on China and the Cultural Revolution, and they are right on this point. The correct line on China *was* confirmed by historical events. But what was that line?

In the same bulletin, Comrade Jebrac points to the SWP's alleged "lack of understanding of the separate place the Chinese leadership occupied (*until the Cultural Revolution*)." But the last world discussion on China *centered* on the Cultural Revolution and its significance. Where did the leaders of the MMF tendency stand at that time? They wanted to lend critical support to the Mao wing! They claimed that the Chinese C.P. was not Stalinist, but bureaucratic centrist tending (at least on foreign affairs) in a leftward direction! They ridiculed Joseph Hansen's prediction of a Washington/Peking detente in the near future! Whose methodology was confirmed by *these* events, Comrades Germain, Jebrac and Sterne?

The same error crops up time and time again: seeking in petty-bourgeois currents an alternative to building a strong International and strong national sections around the program of Trotskyism. This method has failed the test in Latin America. It has failed the test of China, and Vietnam. Let's change our course, comrades, before the test costs us dearly in Europe.

It is not the Socialist Workers Party position of pointing to the true meaning of the Vietnam Accords which lays the basis for a demobilization of the world antiwar movement. Such a disorientation develops directly from those who unfortunately echo the "Great Victory" line of the Moscow and Peking Communist parties (which use it as a cover for their betrayals). Continued education through antiwar organizations on the continued imperialist role in Southeast Asia and through the press of the Fourth International and its various sections on the real nature of the Accords, the Moscow and Peking deals and the durable nature of the class struggle in Indochina will

lay a *real* foundation for massive antiwar campaigns when the objective conditions for such activity again arise

— around Vietnam, the Middle East or Africa.

July 16, 1973

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT TO THE POLITICAL  
RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONALIST  
TENDENCY

by Ralph Levitt and Celia Stodola, Oakland-Berkeley Branch; Judi Shayne and Ron Warren, Los Angeles Branch; Jeff Beneke and Garth Chojnowski, San Francisco Branch

This is to inform the Political Committee and membership of the Socialist Workers Party that the tendency formed around the June 10 "Statement of Support to the International Majority Tendency," stands in agreement with the general line of the counter political resolution submitted by the Internationalist Tendency.

It is our opinion that the erroneous course outlined by the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party at its 1971 convention is essentially being repeated in the National Committee's latest political resolution, which represents a significant departure from the methods, principles and perspectives of a revolutionary proletarian party. We believe that the document of the Internationalist Tendency contains what we consider to be the correct perspective, especially in its exposition of the major methodological errors of the present party leadership, and the ways in which it indicates the general steps required as a necessary corrective. However, there are two areas which we feel might be open to possible misinterpretation, and we wish to clarify our own attitude on those questions:

1) We agree with the Internationalist Tendency that the SWP leadership has demonstrated a definite proclivity to falsely equate nationalist ideology (both within and without the imperialist countries) with the national liberation struggles themselves. Nationalism is a bourgeois ideology of class unity which in this epoch is not in the interest of the oppressed, and which therefore must be challenged by the revolutionary party. At the same time a clear differentiation must be made between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressors, and it must be emphasized that the strug-

gles of oppressed nationalities against imperialist domination are wholly progressive. Furthermore, we believe that a primary disunifying factor in the American working class is white chauvinism, which the bourgeoisie feeds and fosters. The paramount duty of the revolutionary party in this regard is to educate through action and propaganda for a class program and against racism.

2) While we agree with much of the section of the document containing the analysis of Vietnam, we feel some of the formulations are unclear. For example, we believe it misleading to characterize the incorrect strategy of the Vietnamese leadership as merely a "popular front on paper" because this could be interpreted to mean that it has no reality and poses no danger.

\* \* \*

In summary, it is our view that the contents of the National Committee's political resolution point in the direction of a major programmatic alteration of the Trot-limit role of the vanguard party primarily to that of champion and extender of already popular demands, as opposed to taking initiatives and raising political consciousness. Also implicit are incorrect theories as to the role and social base of students and other middle-class elements, plus an adaptation to reformist electoral strategy, non-Marxist ideologies, and the refusal to engage in serious work in the trade unions. We call on all members of our party to support the general line of the counter-resolution submitted by the Internationalist Tendency.

July 11, 1973

## THE ROLE OF THE VANGUARD AND THE CURRENT DISCUSSION

by Mike Taber, Chicago Branch

One of the purposes of political discussion within our movement is to isolate and clarify areas of disagreement so that errors can be avoided and corrected, ensuring the health of the movement. In the current debate in the Fourth International on the European perspectives document, there are a number of differences that require clarification. One of the reasons is that the document slurs over rather than clarifies and lacks adequate precision. Of these differences, there is one in particular that requires special attention—the role of the "vanguard" in the constructing of the revolutionary party.

The objective basis for the existence of a vanguard as well as a "rearguard," is the heterogeneity of the working class. The need for a vanguard party is a result of this factor, as Cannon points out. Properly speaking, the vanguard is the segment of the class more consciously aware of its class interests as well as of the needs of the class as a whole. The party, as the representative of the objective needs and interests of the class, attempts to win over these elements, and labels that process a revolutionary necessity. However, we do not simply incorporate the vanguard into our ranks. We win the vanguard to our perspective: to the perspective of reaching and winning the masses. The way we perceive it, there can be no contradiction between winning the vanguard and putting forward our program for the working class and its allies. Our experience in the antiwar movement should serve as an example. We showed our ability to orient it towards mass action, while at the same time recruiting the best elements from it to the YSA. Our success testifies to the party's understanding of the process of furthering the objective interests of the working-class struggle while simultaneously building the revolutionary party. Nothing could be further from the truth than the claim by some European comrades that the "more advanced elements" were ignored by our work in the antiwar movement.

However, the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency has a different view of what the vanguard is. They refer to a "new mass vanguard" which, while left undefined (especially in how it differs from the "old mass vanguard"), at least tells us of whom it primarily consists: students, political opponents, and workers. As such, the interests and needs of such a "vanguard" in no way directly correspond to those of the class and at times can even come into conflict with the objective needs of the working class. An example is the vanguard's rejection of an anti-imperialist movement that would have gone beyond merely solidarizing with the Vietnamese revolution into one that would actively involve the broader masses. The perspectives document informs us that the needs and concerns of the vanguard are the priority, and points to the possibility that these needs and concerns might not correspond to those of the masses as a whole. This situation would signify not the backwardness of the masses, but instead, the backwardness of the "vanguard."

In several places in the European perspectives document, there is an attempt to present the orientation to the "new mass vanguard" as simply an auxiliary tactic in the process of party building. Were this really the case, there would be no disagreement on this point. There is nothing wrong with trying to win more advanced layers, opponents, and other radicals to our positions. We frequently intervene in CP and YWLL events. We directed propaganda at SDS radicals in an effort to win them over. In many instances we were successful. The great bulk of recruits to our movement in the recent past have come out of this already radicalized milieu. However, party building is not the real perspective of the "perspectives" document. The possibility of winning the masses to our politics—what we have always seen as a key task—is ruled out. In doing so, the document would commit the "vanguard" to isolation and the party to disorientation. It is worthwhile to examine Lenin's view on the relationship between the vanguard and the masses contained in his *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*:

"The proletarian vanguard has been won over ideologically. That is the main thing. Without this not even the first step can be made. But it is still a fairly long way from victory. Victory cannot be won with the vanguard alone. To throw the vanguard alone into the decisive battle before the whole class, before the broad masses have taken up a position either of direct support of the vanguard, or at least of benevolent neutrality towards it, and one in which they cannot possibly support the enemy, would be not merely folly but a crime. And in order that actually the whole class, that actually the broad masses of the working people and those oppressed by capital may take up such a position, propaganda and agitation alone are not enough. For this the masses must have their own political experience. Such is the fundamental law of all great revolutions."

While recognizing the role of the vanguard, Lenin cautioned against seeing the vanguard apart from the overall strategy of winning the masses. It is no accident that on this key point, that of how this new mass vanguard will lead the working class and its allies to victory after and if "revolutionary Marxists" *do* win hegemony in it, the perspectives document is either vague or altogether silent. What the document proposes on the decisive question of winning the masses is summed up in a nutshell when the authors see as its key task to "transform the vanguard into an adequate instrument for regenerating the workers' movement." The whole transitional approach to winning the masses is under fire. Rejecting the possibility of winning the masses, the European document has no need for a transitional approach. Perhaps this is the reason that the perspectives document of the IMG could formulate a statement such as the "transitional programme by definition smashes the bourgeois state."

The most serious ramifications, however, come in the realm of adapting programmatically to this "new mass

vanguard." The position of the MMF tendency on Maoism, Vietnam, guerrillaism, the anti-imperialist movement, and on working in elections each constitute in their own ways adaptations, and must be reversed. The "new mass vanguard" is not a real vanguard. It is composed of radicalized youth described in "The Worldwide Youth Radi-

calization and the Tasks of the Fourth International." An adequate review of the weaknesses of this layer should be undertaken by the European comrades, and a correct strategy for winning them should be adopted. This is a necessity in order to avoid the dangers contained in the European document.

July 11, 1973

LETTER TO NATIONAL OFFICE CONCERNING CHANGES IN  
"THE BUILDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN  
CAPITALIST AMERICA"

Internationalist Tendency  
c/o Bill Massey  
Chicago, Ill.

SWP Discussion Bulletin Division  
SWP National Office  
14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014

July 13, 1973

Dear Comrades,

The Internationalist Tendency has requested that I communicate the following corrections, to SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 31, No. 18, July 1973, entitled: *The Building of A Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America*, Political Counter Resolution Submitted by the Internationalist Tendency.

Page 1., second column, 3rd paragraph, line 2 reads "the movements which *has* developed"—SHOULD READ instead "the movements which had developed."

Page 6., second column, 1st full paragraph, 10th line reads "the basic ineffectiveness of all *their* policies"—SHOULD READ instead: "the basic ineffectiveness of all these policies."

Page 10., second column, 2nd paragraph of part entitled

"Single-Issuism and the Tactic of the United Front," line 2 reads: "The traditional united front tactic did not involve a relationship of programmatic partnership, but *an alliance for struggle.*"—SHOULD READ instead "The traditional united front tactic did not involve a relationship of programmatic partnership, but one of struggle."

Page 11, second column, 2nd paragraph, line 1 reads: "There was not merely an American perspective"—SHOULD READ "This is not merely an American perspective."

Page 12, first column, second paragraph, line 1 reads: "This concept *actually* embodies"—SHOULD READ "This concept ALLEGEDLY embodies"

Page 24, second column, 3rd paragraph, line 19 reads: "a marked tendency on the part of PL to intervene as a "progressive force"—SHOULD READ "a marked tendency on the part of the GOVERNMENT to intervene as a "progressive force."

We would appreciate these corrections being circulated through the SWP discussion bulletin, as soon as possible.

Comradely,  
s/John B. for the Internationalist Tendency.



LETTER IN RESPONSE TO JOHN B

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N. Y. 10014  
July 16, 1973

CHICAGO  
John B.

Dear Comrade B.

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 13, 1973, concerning changes in the resolution "The Building of A Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America." The letter will be printed in the Discussion Bulletin as soon

as possible.

Since it was unclear from your letter that, with the exception of the first correction (a typographical error), the changes are those of the authors, I am also submitting this letter to the Discussion Bulletin.

I would also like to point out that the change you listed as being on page 1 was actually on page 3, and that listed as being on page 12 was actually to be found on page 15.

Comradely,  
s/Rich Feigenberg  
SWP National Office

IN SUPPORT OF "THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT  
AND THE STRATEGY OF PARTY BUILDING"

by Helen S. Hollander and Pamela J. Mills,  
San Diego Branch

We wish to add our names as endorsers of the resolution submitted from comrades in San Diego entitled: "The Gay Liberation Movement and The Strategy of Party

Building." We are in full agreement with the above mentioned document and give our full support to it.

July 12, 1973

ONCE MORE ON "UNIVERSAL PRECLASS  
MATRIARCHY"

by Jan Garrett, Twin Cities Branch

Evelyn Reed's reply to "Towards a Critique of 'Political' Anthropology" in No. 14 of this year's Discussion Bulletin so well confirms the case I made that an extended rejoinder on my part is not in order.

But I do think it should be pointed out once more what the central historical difference between us is, and why she failed to deal with it seriously. Reed applies the term "matriarchal" to savagery (the paleolithic, hunting-gathering society) as well as to early barbarism (the neolithic, horticultural society). It is logically consistent with her emphasis on the former that she not hold that women were in any way socially superior to men.

Yet she argues, on the basis of evidence from rainfall horticultural societies (for example, the Iroquois), that preclass females enjoyed their influence because the work they did was more vital than that of the males. (Do you see why I cannot completely believe her when she says "matriarchal" only refers to the fact that there were no

special powers for either sex?)

But she also insists that for all preclass society, women played the chief organizing role, or were "simply the social mothers" in a sense in which the males were not "social fathers." Thus I think that there is still an element of doublespeak in her contention that even during the earliest period of society "matriarchy" just meant equality.

Because I differ with her speculations on "savagery" — borrowed mostly from Briffault, not Engels — and want to use terms precisely, I am willing to use the term "matriarchy" with relative certainty only for a fairly widely distributed group of rainfall horticultural societies in which women did have special social influence because their labor role was more vital than that of men.

\* \* \*

Whatever power women had in earlier society, there



is no doubt that this was tied up with their role in production. On this Reed and I have no quarrel. However, it does not take too much to demonstrate that the power edge that at least some women but probably women as a group, had in rainfall horticultural societies did not exist in earlier societies. Thus, if we accept Reed's argument, we are compelled to ask what *else* was there that gave women so much prestige throughout savagery.

She wrote on p. 36 of her *ISR* article which later became the introduction to Engels' *Origin of the Family*:

"A man may be recognized as the husband of the mother and yet not be recognized as the father of her children or, if recognized, has extremely tenuous connection with them." I deduced from this what Evelyn Reed establishes positively in her reply to me, namely that she firmly believes "that primitive peoples did not know the connection between sexual intercourse and the birth of children."\*

I figured that this fact supplied Comrade Reed with an unstated rationale for the claim that all preclass society was matriarchal, instead of just rainfall horticultural society. She now informs me that I read her wrong. Fine. Then there seem to be only two other possible rationales: one is that women's labor in preagricultural society was always more necessary than that of males; the other is Briffault's theory that women ("matronizingly") led males across the great divide from prehuman condition to human society!

But she has not established that the labor role of women in preagricultural society was generally more cooperative or socially necessary than the labor role of males. (I do not assert either that the opposite was the case.) She has little, if any, evidence from gathering-hunting society to back up her contention and relies dubiously on primate studies which tell us little about very early *humans*.

Now, I am not guessing when I accuse Reed of arguing that females were the first to humanize themselves and males came along later. She wrote (p. 11, Dec. '71 *ISR*):

"The superiority of the human hunting band over any animal pack comes from the unbreakable principle that men hunting together must never under any circumstances hunt or kill one another. This is exclusively a human regulation and relation which does not exist in the animal world. Thus, even in the matter of increasing the food supply of the community, it was only when men learned how to form the cooperative hunting band that this aim

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\*Evelyn Reed misread my argument on this subject. It was primarily quoted from the French anthropologist Levy-Bruhl; therefore, Reed's misreading cannot be attributed to any clumsiness of my writing style. Levy-Bruhl did not say, and I do not believe, that all preclass peoples knew the scientific facts about pregnancy or even the rather simple proposition that male participation was necessary. Levy-Bruhl only pointed out that knowledge of the actual cause and belief in the mystical cause were not mutually exclusive as they are for us. That is, if an informant gave the mystical answer when asked about the cause of pregnancy, *we are not entitled to conclude* that he or she did not understand that male participation was necessary. If, therefore, total ignorance on this subject were less widespread than some people (who failed to observe this methodological caution) tend to claim, then an argument for universal preclass matriarchy on this basis would collapse.

would be achieved.

"How was such a change brought about? All the evidence points to the collectivist society created by the clan mothers, which assimilated the men as clan brothers."

Behind this argument is Briffault's notion that the cooperation of female prehumans in caring for infants developed into the first human societies and only afterwards did the females compel or persuade the males to "evolve" also.

Let me list some of the obvious objections to this argument. I am sure that a zoologist could find several more.

1. "Regulations," i. e., customs, do not exist in the animal world. So the first part of her argument is not as meaningful as might first appear.

2. What kind of argument is it that considers females and males on both sides of the transition from prehuman to human as "women" and "men" instead of female prehumans, women, male prehumans and men? Is the sex line more important than the species line?

3. How could an evolutionary transformation, which is largely biological in character, take place first in one sex and then in another when 98 percent of the genetic components of humans may occur in either sex? Is it conceivable that males, whose physical capacities for speech (a completely social act) evolved simultaneously with females, did not gradually learn to use them at the same time that the females did, and thus become social animals too?

It would make more sense to me to suppose that sociality and speech arose during a pre hunting period, when the sexual division of "labor" was weakly developed, and that they grew out of the needs of defense and communicating the discovery of edibles. The earliest humans required more sophisticated means of defense since the very biological developments that facilitated tool-use and tool-production also meant a decrease in the brute force at the disposal of the individual.

\* \* \*

One final point: I know I'm not the only person in the party to be aware of the shortcomings of Reed's anthropology. Others share at least some of my contentions, including at least two leaders of the party in New York City. There are probably many I don't know about and who don't know about each other. To these comrades, I say that your silence does not help matters. In fact it helps to prevent us from moving beyond the first steps that Engels made almost a century ago.

July 9, 1973

## POLITICAL COMMITTEE "THEORY" OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS

by Mark Lause (Internationalist Tendency),  
Houston Branch

The failure of the party to meet organizational projections over the past two years is serious. Its inability to break new ground, to build new branches, and the increasing necessity to subsidize the party's press and publications have coincided with a general lack of interest in the youth, and a growing necessity to pad the YSA rolls in branch areas with party comrades. The projections to double the size of the youth at the 1971 YSA convention in Houston had to be reversed as "the largest socialist campaign since Debs" failed to pick up the steam we had anticipated. Further, the party has suffered under the burden of maintaining nearly three hundred comrades on movement payroll (almost, but not quite, a third of the party). In general, the party has been plagued with organizational difficulties.

In the words of Comrade Barnes:

"The scope of our expansion program, the character of the activities we engage in, the character of our planned geographic expansion, the size of our effort to increase the circulation of our press and our literature, the perspectives we have for the growth of the youth movement, and the character of the presidential campaign we project for 1972, would all be part of a pollyanna-like dream if they were not firmly rooted in an accurate evaluation of the objective situation." ("Report to the SWP National Committee," *Revolutionary Strategy for the '70s*, N. Y., 1972, pp. 77-8.)

In this context, unmet projections and problems with "organizational dissidence" should not be surprising.

### I. *The Objective Situation As Assessed Two Years Ago*

The Political Committee proclaimed some time ago that we are in a new historical epoch. Comrade Mandel's thesis on neo-capitalism has been seized upon, amended, stretched, and applied to the United States with peculiar results. Apparently, *the middle class has ceased to exist as a separate entity*. The P. C. approaches it as the more orthodox Marxists approached the working-class movement. United fronts, however, are "united-front types." Oppression consciousness has displaced revolutionary class consciousness. Consistent advocacy of democracy has been equated with socialism.

Particularly, this new epoch has affected the student layers. (Students, after all—we are told—contain a lot of people who come from the working class. Most students either dropout or graduate; they then become workers.)

#### A. *The "New Radicalization"*

In the context of the transformed capitalism above indicated (and only in such a context), we may find "the unique approach that we take to the radicalization and to these independent movements" (Ibid., p. 83).

The Political Committee's analysis of the "Current Radicalization As Compared with Those of the Past" is best expounded, of course, by Comrade Breitman:

"The present radicalization in the United States, which has not yet reached its peak, is as genuine and authentic a radicalization as any this country has experienced in the twentieth century; in addition, it is the biggest, the deepest, the broadest—and therefore the most threatening for the ruling class and the most promising for revolutionaries." (*Towards an American Socialist Revolution*, N. Y., 1971, p. 83.)

That "Today's radicalization is bigger, deeper, and broader than any previous radicalization" is echoed in the other documents, statements, and reports of the leadership. (Barnes, "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Revolutionary Strategy*, p. 61.)

Moreover, "there will be no reversal of this radicalization before the working masses of this country have had a chance to take power away from the American capitalist rulers." (Barnes, "The New Radicalization and the Revolutionary Party," *Towards*, p. 108.) *In other words, the radicalization is "irreversible."* Talk about the mouse that roared!

One familiar with the history of American radicalism is taken aback. What criteria is there to substantiate this analysis? Electoral interventions? Both Debs in 1912 and 1920, and Thomas in 1932 polled nearly one million votes. Jenness received about 70,000. (And how many more people were voting in 1972?) The circulation of the revolutionary press? The Debsian *Appeal to Reason* peaked at three-quarters of a million. The *Daily Worker* had a press run in the '30s for New York City alone of 100,000 copies. In addition, both the SP and the CP had numerous other publications which reached hundreds of thousands of radicalizing workers. Apparently, the depth and breadth of the current radicalization is not reflected in such empirical evidence as interest in the revolutionary press. Membership in the revolutionary movement? Comrades, we must keep our heads. We are still a rather small formation of less than 2,000 people. The old SP and the CP saw tens of thousands—even hundreds of thousands go through their ranks.

Here Comrade Breitman begins grasping at straws to prove his point. What of the deluge of radical and Marxist books, literature, and underground publications? (Ibid., p. 95.) One need not be a brilliant dialectician to point out the obvious. There are, to be painfully blunt, more books, literature, and printing materials in this country today than there were in 1932 or 1912. A more penetrating view might have seen as to whether these are publications to incite workers to "direct actions" as those of the I. W. W., the left wing of the old SP, and the CP of the early '30s or whether they represented endeavors of the *Greening of America* ilk.

Another indication noted by Comrade Breitman is that "Even the South is no longer exempt" (Ibid., pp. 94-5). Presumably the American South, prior to the civil rights struggles of the late 1950s, saw no radical activity. Presumably, the long and bloody struggles to organize the miners, textile workers, and others simply never occurred. Presumably, the CP never gained its hold among the

steelworkers in Alabama. Presumably, the I. W. W. never waged massive organizing drives among the timber workers of Texas and Louisiana. Presumably, Debs and subsequent working-class candidates never polled tens of thousands of votes in the South. Presumably, Comrade Breitman's regional chauvinism precludes any sort of objective view of the hard struggles of southern workers, both Black and white.

*In general, we may characterize the idea that we are in the midst of the biggest, the broadest, the deepest radicalization of the century as totally ahistorical.* The evidence to refute such nonsense is available to any objective observer in almost any volume of labor or socialist history, bourgeois or Stalinist.

#### B. *The Independent Mass Movements*

The heart of the entire Political Committee strategy for making a revolution in the United States is the existence of "independent" "mass movements." Blacks are now in motion as Blacks, women as women, and young people as young people. Comrade Breitman went to great lengths to explain the significance of this development. Blacks in the 1930s, for example, moved in the context of the C. I. O. and not independently. The obvious implication is that working-class Blacks are moving into action but such is not the case, for "these movements came into being and became engaged in actions in advance of the radicalization of the industrial workers" (Joseph Hansen, "The New Stage of World Revolution," *Revolution Strategy*, p. 36).

Presumably, it is a progressive development for middle-class Blacks to move separate and apart from the class movement of the proletariat. Presumably, the radical pluralists of the bourgeois academic community are correct and the interests of middle-class Blacks as a nationality transcends their class interest. When dealing with Political Committee "theory," such assumptions would be entirely correct.

In addition to the independent movements of Blacks, Chicanos, women, and youth (i. e., students), Comrade Barnes later cited, as "further indications of the depth and scope of the radicalization": "the emergence of the gay liberation movement; organized revolts in the prisons from New York to California demanding prison reform, inspired by the nationalist radicalization; increased radicalization inside the Catholic Church led by a militant layer of nuns and priests; deepening revulsion against capitalism's destruction of our environment and the ecological system on which humanity depends; the continued formation of radical caucuses in all types of professional organizations; and intensified Black nationalist sentiment and organization; and further antiwar radicalization within the army." (Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 43-44.)

Indeed, the first question that comes to mind regarding any of the "independent" "mass movements" is the *P. C.'s criteria for mass*. Oddly enough, a national demonstration in Washington and San Francisco on November 20, 1971, mobilized about 2,000 women (a sizeable fraction of which were our comrades) and this action was hailed as a sign of mass motion. Yet the strike of 3,000 Oil and Chemical workers in the Houston area alone is, presumably, an indication of the dormancy of the American working class.

Let us consider the following elaboration by Comrade

Barnes.

"1. Each of these movements has essentially an independent character and course. They are not wings of the Democratic or Republican parties. They are outside the stifling control of the labor bureaucracy. They are not under the Communist Party. . . .

"2. Each of these movements has been, from the first, ready, able, and willing to engage in direct action in the streets and schools, and to organize mass protest demonstrations against the authorities and administrations. . . .

"3. As was the case in the early 1930s, the process of radicalization began in other areas prior to an extensive upsurge and politicalization of the working class. . . .

"4. A distinction must be made between radicalization and a revolutionary situation. . . . The borders of a revolutionary situation can be reached only when the politicalization and radicalization has extended to decisive sectors of the working masses, and when a revolutionary upsurge and mobilization objectively poses the basic question of which class shall wield power. . . .

"5. The characteristics of the radicalization so far have made it clear that the American revolution will have a combined character. . . .

"6. The fundamental economic and political contradictions of American capitalism that underlie the radicalization have an international base. . . .

"7. In all stages of building the mass revolutionary socialist party, its cadres must be alert to recognize, and embrace the new forms of struggle and the progressive demands of oppressed groupings that appear as the radicalization develops. . . .

"8. The changing relationship of forces on the American left, which, while far from settled, is turning in our favor, is of decisive importance in the further development of the radicalization." (*Ibid.*, pp. 60-4.)

Let us examine this elaboration more closely, beginning with this question of the "independent character and course" of these "mass movements." Of course, the goal of revolutionists should be to work toward the fragmentation of the bourgeois parties, especially of the Democratic Party coalition. But, comrades, this is not the dividing line between socialists and liberals or radical Democrats. Indeed, the dissolution of the major capitalist parties is a goal we share with the American Independent Party, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Nazis. Nonetheless, let us accept the limited goal of dissolving the bourgeois parties by relating to "independent" political activities.

By way of a brief notation here, comrades should be conscious of the differences between the major parties in this country and those of the European capitalist nations. The Democrats and Republicans are both electoral formations. Unlike the European parties, the major parties in this country do not organize activities outside of the electoral arena. When you hear that something is "independent" in the sense that neither the Democrats or Republicans are organizing it, the subject referred to could be a mass sit-down strike of auto workers or a garage sale. Almost everything that happens in the United States between elections, and most of what occurs during election periods, is "independent" in this sense.

A more penetrating question should be posed. Are the "masses" involved in these "mass movements" "independent" in the same sense that they do not retain their loyalty to the bourgeois parties? Why then have we experienced a

decline of interest and participation in the "direct action in the streets" (i. e., mass, peaceful, legal demonstrations) during every election period? Obviously, *in any area of our interventions such as youth, women, etc., there are quite a number under great illusions as to the power of the ballot and of parliamentary activities in general.*

The second point by Comrade Barnes is a curious one. The use of *mass, peaceful, legal demonstrations* is a tactic today employed by all sorts of groups demanding (or, more properly, requesting) all sorts of alterations of the status quo. The "logic," "dynamic," and "general thrust" of such struggles is to move off the streets and into the legislative halls when it is felt that the demonstrations have softened the office-holders and office-seekers enough to gain their support.

An excellent example of such a struggle was the abortion reform movement. Despite the interventions of the party and all of the best efforts of the women comrades involved, the dynamic of that reform movement kept it off of the streets and in the halls of bourgeois law-making and justice-dispensation. *This provided the American left with the peculiarly amusing picture of the cadres of the revolutionary party urging women to petition and lobby in the state legislatures of New York and other states.*

The third point by Comrade Barnes raises yet another question, that of *the class character of these movements of protest.* Apparently, these masses are not of the ruling class. The mass movements are not in the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Further, as indicated, the proletariat is not involved in any significant way. This, however, does not matter in our analysis of the "current radicalization" or its "independent" "mass movements." As comrade Barnes noted:

"The decisive question for us in analyzing the depth and promise of the radicalization is not whether the working class self-consciously and in very large numbers is at this point involved. That does not settle this question. It does not belittle the radicalization to point out that the working class has not yet intervened in this manner." ("Report to the SWP National Committee," *Ibid.*, p. 85.)

Rather, the mass movements are composed in the main of "radicalized youth still to be won to a developed political program" (Hansen, "The New Stage of World Revolution," *Ibid.*, p. 19). More precisely, as indicated in *The Worldwide Youth Radicalization* (N. Y., 1969, reprinted as *A Strategy for Revolutionary Youth* in 1972), "student youth" is the mainstay of these sectoral movements. The radicalization has also had "big repercussions in professional, cultural, and artistic circles" ("Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Ibid.*, p. 56). In other words, *the mass movements of the current radicalization are composed of elements of the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie and the declassed, non-proletarian student layers.*

As materialists, as Marxists, we know that while sections of the middle class may "fight against the bourgeoisie," their material class interests do not make them revolutionary. They act in a revolutionary fashion only when drawn into action by the class movement of the workers, when "they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat" (Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, our edition, p. 25). *Since* (as the Political Committee has constantly informed us) *the workers are not in motion, we may assume that the pol-*

*itics of the middle class, a petty-bourgeois radicalism* (a radicalism which does not go beyond the advocacy of extending bourgeois rights and petty-bourgeois privileges to sections of society hitherto excluded from the enjoyment of such rights and privileges) *is represented in the mass movements.*

Here, the fourth point of Comrade Barnes' elaboration which differentiated a period of radicalization from a revolutionary situation could be given greater depth. *A distinction must be made between radicalism and revolutionism, a distinction which the P. C. not only fails to draw but seems to consciously blur.* The difference between a period of radicalization and a prerevolutionary or revolutionary situation is not merely a question of whether or not the workers are in motion. (Whether the P. C. cares to acknowledge the fact or not, thousands of workers move every month for higher wages, better working conditions, and other limited demands.) This distinction is *the level of consciousness of the working class.* Struggles in an advanced capitalist nation for extensions of bourgeois democracy and a consciousness restricted to such levels may well be an indication of radicalism. Yet, the question stands: Are they revolutionary?

### C. The Politics of the Current Radicalization

The political characteristics of the radicalization, which is the basis for the fifth point of elaboration by Comrade Barnes should be studied carefully by all comrades. The Political Committee, in dealing with the negative side of the current radicalization, suggests a "three-pronged approach":

"1. On the level of theory, the Trotskyist press should carry sustained polemics in defense of the Leninist concept and practice of party-building against the various tendencies that consider Lenin to have been superseded.

"2. On the level of practice, every Trotskyist grouping should set an example in the thoroughness with which it thinks through to the end and tests out every tactic it engages in. It is good to have a reputation of receptivity to new ideas. It is still better to have a reputation of caution and responsibility in weighing them for their real worth.

"3. Constant efforts should be made to initiate and sustain international campaigns of interest and concern to varied groupings. Defense of the Vietnamese revolution through internationally organized and coordinated anti-war marches and demonstrations is a good example." (Hansen, "The New Stage of World Revolution," *Revolutionary Strategy*, p. 21.)

This is an excellent approach as far as it goes. The building of a professional democratic-centralist party with international ties and conducting internationally coordinated actions is certainly crucial for the world revolutionary movement, but *this approach does not include the necessity of confronting the non-proletarian class content of the politics of the current radicalization.* Why is this the case?

The Political Committee and its spokespersons constantly refer to the radicalization as being "objectively anticapitalist." Implicit in such a characterization are two possible meanings. As dialectical materialists, we know that the entire course of human history and all that is involved in it is "objectively anticapitalist." This reduces

the P. C. characterization to empty phrase-making. Unfortunately this is not what is meant. By "*objectively anti-capitalist*," the Political Committee means that the politics of the "independent" "mass movements" are "revolutionary." This is why we are told that antiwar activists, feminists, nationalists, etc., are "revolutionary socialists" if they are only consistent enough. But is it not a fact that these movements are composed in the main of middle-class and non-proletarian elements? Is it not so that their goals are limited and well within the realm of bourgeois social thought? Are the politics of the radicalization then divorced from its non-proletarian base? What does the Political Committee mean?

Hansen warned us that "If we call democratic slogans 'bourgeois' or 'petty-bourgeois,' we have to add at once that all this really means is that it has fallen to the revolutionary socialist movement to defend the great historic gains of previous revolutions, such as freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom to organize, freedom to control one's own body."

Further, Comrade Hansen makes the rather bold and sweeping assertion that: "In the period of the death agony of capitalism, the observance of democratic rights operates against the need of capitalism to defend itself against its historic successor, the planned economy of socialism." (Ibid., p. 34.)

Thus, *struggles for bourgeois democracy become "objectively" antibourgeois*. That a militant and vigilant defense of the democratic rights of the working class and the lower middle class is a principled position for revolutionary socialists is undeniable. However, we doubt that struggles for bourgeois democratic reforms by radicalized elements of the middle class are "objectively anti-capitalist" in the sense of being "revolutionary" Comrade Barnes' statement then assured us that:

"Trotsky pointed out that in the death agony of capitalism it was not only the far-reaching demands of the workers, but even the serious demands of the petty bourgeoisie and the oppressed sectors that cannot be met by the ruling class within the bounds of capitalist property relations and the bourgeois state." ("Report to the SWP National Committee," Ibid., p. 80.)

This, it is true, is the essence of one of Trotsky's greatest theoretical contributions to the revolutionary movement, the theory of permanent revolution, his thesis as to the course of struggle in the imperialist domains. This observation holds quite true for the Vietnamese peasants engaged in the armed struggle for national liberation. In such struggles, the indigenous bourgeoisie, the puppets of a foreign imperialism, are bypassed. However, in an advanced capitalist nation, such as the United States, struggles for democratic reforms lead directly into the lobbies of the bourgeois parliament. Further, such "revolutionizing" of these demands raised in the context of the petty-bourgeois protestations against their imminent proletarianization represents an approach, which, like Kautsky's, "turned Marx into a common liberal." It represents the injection of a "new" concept into revolutionary socialism: the "revolutionary" middle class armed with their "revolutionary" bourgeois democratic demands moving into action in advance of and "independent" of the proletariat.

Let us examine this element of Political Committee theory in more depth. Comrade Hansen, after acknowledging

that the "rather surprising labels" of "bourgeois" and "petty-bourgeois" could "justifiably" describe democratic demands, quickly added that "That should not cause us to hesitate to use them. In fact, an audacious and aggressive attitude in this respect lies at the heart of the *Transitional Program* and the method it teaches." This "audacity" in the transitional approach consists in attempting to wrest these slogans out of the hands of the bourgeois politicians, who seek to utilize them to divert the masses into safe parliamentary channels." ("The New Stage in World Revolution," Ibid., pp. 32-3.) If it can be said that struggles have their own dynamic determined by their goal, and if it can be further said that struggles of middle-class elements for democratic reforms are generally oriented to the "safe parliamentary channels," Comrade Hansen is in the peculiar situation of having us become the "most consistent" democrats, the most consistent diverters into democratic reform channels. Indeed, *it is, by this approach, the duty of revolutionary socialists to be more consistent bourgeois democrats than the bourgeois democrats themselves*.

Part and parcel of this "revolutionizing" of bourgeois democratic demands is *the application of the dynamic of permanent revolution* to everything that moves, or, rather, everything that the P. C. thinks is moving. Trotsky's theory that imperialist holdings could not win struggles for bourgeois democratic demands such as those for land reform and national liberation without the overthrow of its indigenous bourgeoisie and the establishment of a workers' state stands in sharp contrast to the Stalinist/Social-Democratic theory by which the masses would align themselves with the progressive elements of the national bourgeoisie to expel the foreigners, etc. A slight misinterpretation of Trotsky's theory would be that the bourgeois elements of an oppressed nation had been proletarianized or revolutionized by virtue of their national oppression and that the destruction of some of the more reactionary aspects of the society and the establishment of formal independence constituted a socialist state. Nonetheless, this theory applies to oppressed nations held in bondage by imperialism.

Trotsky, basing his analysis of Black America on the objective material developments as he understood them to be, stands in stark contrast to the Political Committee and its spokespeople who see that "The superexploitation and oppression of African slaves produced a nation within a nation." (Derrick Morrison, "The Combined Character of the American Revolution," *Towards*, p. 52.) There have been no qualitative changes in the conditions of Black Americans since? *Such is moralism rather than materialism*.

Trotsky warned us of "doctrinarism" on this question (See *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, 1970, p. 17). His warning need be repeated in this discussion. We face the task of applying the lessons of our legacy, embodied in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky to the ever changing reality of capitalist society. Several factors must be noted. The southern "Black Belt" no longer exists as the center of Black population; today, it is the urban centers. The urbanization and proletarianization of Black America entailed their entry into industry and into the trade unions on a truly massive scale. They have united with white workers to fight for higher wages, better working conditions, and

similar trade-union level goals. White workers have, in turn, come into day-to-day contact with their Black brothers and sisters, laying a material foundation for further unified struggles; already, layers of white workers have joined the Blacks in the long, hard struggle for civil rights and racial equality. While the demand for self-determination remains a vehicle for supporting whatever independent activities Blacks may initiate, and a not unprincipled slogan for Trotskysts, the watered-down Political Committee version (i. e., "community control") tailends the petty-bourgeois nationalists (i. e., the Black reformists and Blacks of the Democratic Party coalition). *Rather than utilizing this device to show workers the principled grounds for united struggle, the P. C. has cut across such use by abstaining from the day-to-day struggles of workers—Black as well as white, female as well as male, and by covering their abstentionism with supernationalist rhetoric, referring to white workers in the party press as "honkies," etc.*

The central slogan utilized by the P. C. in this effort to "call the masses to action" is "Black control of the Black community." In addition to Blacks, "community control" has been raised by our movement under the P. C.'s leadership for Chicanos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Portuguese, and others. What is entailed in "community control"? The Political Committee equates it with self-determination, but, in the concrete, it boils down to an independent political party (to unite the workers of oppressed nationalities to the corresponding sectors of the middle and upper class), control of welfare funds and other government money, control of the police, control of education, the right to use one's own languages in the schools and elsewhere are all examples given. *All are bourgeois democratic reforms!*

Presumably, the Political Committee would view a Black community in which the Black petty bourgeoisie sat on the school boards, ran the education of Black children, and gave "preferential" hiring to Black wage slaves prodded along by Black cops to be "revolutionary socialism" if it were only "consistent" enough. Of course, it could not happen. Black workers would not allow it to happen. *The position of the Political Committee on the Black question represents an excellent misapplication of a misconception of the dynamic of the permanent revolution.*

Then we find that the Political Committee's semi-official philosopher, Comrade Novack has applied the theory to women! (See, for example, *The Revolutionary Dynamic of Women's Liberation*, 1969.) This "new theory" of permanent revolution is used as a justification for the Political Committee's tailending of *middle-class feminism* on the campuses. Long condemned by orthodox Marxism as represented by Bebel, Luxemburg, Lenin, et al., as "petty-bourgeois feminism," a middle-class radical school that seeks to find a material basis for a struggle of women of all nations and classes against men of all nations and class, this warped alien class ideology is now foisted upon the ranks of our movement as "revolutionary" by virtue of, among other things, the applicability of the dynamic of the permanent revolution. This reduces Trotskyism, as well as Marxism, to bourgeois egalitarianism, to banal liberalism. Today, we are told, women moving as women for abortion reform is sufficient. We need not inject our own socialist demands and slogans because the very logic of the struggle for abortion reform is so-

cialism, etc. More recently, Comrade Novack made an effort to mechanically apply the dynamic of permanent revolution to the gay question. And, in No. 8 of this discussion series, he entitled his contribution "Should We Junk Historical Materialism—Or Hold Fast to It?!" Does Comrade Novack wish us to do what he is saying or what he is doing?

Upon a similar basis, one could apply the dynamic of permanent revolution to *any sector of the population*. Capitalism has a thousand and one ways of oppressing people regardless of their class. People are oppressed because of their age throughout their lives. Children, young adults, older adults, middle-aged, and elderly people are all oppressed because of their age—regardless of their class, although the degree of oppression varies. The Political Committee school of materialism is certainly capable of applying permanent revolution to middle-aged people or any similar sector, because its criteria for a "material basis" as a foundation for an ongoing, multi-class "independent" "mass movement" is the "universal" (i. e., multiclass) oppression of Blacks, Chicanos, youth, women, gays, old folks, and, presumably, anything else that you can come up with.

One can almost hear it now: "Some people were born left-handed. It's quite natural. There were left-handed people before the rise of class society and, under communism, all people will have the dexterous use of both hands. Left-handed people are exploited as workers and oppressed as left-handed people. As young grade schoolers learning to write, they are often taught incorrectly and they consequently suffer for it the rest of their lives. They have trouble learning to drive, play baseball, using pay phones, and in many other ways forced to suffer for the lack of planning under capitalism. The objective, material basis for an ongoing mass movement of all left-handed people is their universal oppression as left-handers. Many workers who are left-handed will be drawn into struggle by such a movement. United in struggles against their oppression, left-handed people will come to realize that only the planned economy of socialism can bring about the development of their full potential as human beings. Therefore, the most consistent fighters for the liberation of left-handed people are revolutionary socialists. It is our duty to embrace the 'democratic and transitional demands' thrown out by the movement as our own: Left is good! Left-handed people must control their own education! Left-handedness—A Person's Right to Choose! More left-handed college professors! Preferential hiring for left-handed people! When left-handed people want the war to end, the war will end! Lefties of the World, Unite!" This example is, of course, not to insult the woman question or the Black question or gay question or to imply that we should not relate to such struggles as develop around these issues. Rather it is to put the Political Committee's approach in a proper historical perspective. Socialism will, I feel, liberate women, gays, left-handed people, and others, but the spontaneously developed demands of women's liberation, gay liberation, and lefty liberation will not topple capitalism in and of themselves as the P. C. implies.

The movements of these oppressed sectors, layers, stratas, and substratas, spearheaded by their student vanguards, is one "to assert its humanity, to demand to be treated as fully human and to demand an improvement



in the quality of life. This American capitalism cannot grant." These movements "pose problems whose solution require more than the reform of capitalism" and they raise demands that "are so basic that they can only begin to be met by a workers' state." (Barnes, "Report to the SWP National Committee," *Revolutionary Strategy*, pp. 80, 81.) The issues they raise "are not peripheral to the process of social discontent; they are central to it." ("Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Ibid.*, p. 68.)

This should clarify the fifth point of Comrade Barnes' elaboration, his reference to "the combined revolution." In theory, the Political Committee sees the tasks of the coming American socialist revolution as both socialist and bourgeois democratic. In practice, however, the Political Committee does little or nothing around the Transitional Program, the demands which destroy capitalist property relations and the bourgeois state, and orients exclusively to the organization of movements of radicalized sectors of the middle class and the declassed students, raising only "our" "socialist" "democratic and transitional demands" among them. Thus, the Political Committee, in practice, acts in anticipation of *another bourgeois democratic revolution*.

Let us temporarily pass over the sixth point by Comrade Barnes and deal with the seventh. What does the Political Committee mean by embracing the "new forms of struggle" and the "progressive demands" of the "oppressed groupings"?

## II. *What the P. C. Saw as the Tasks of Our Party*

The general approach of Leninists to building the revolutionary movement has been to intervene in an arena of struggle and to educate its most receptive layers as to the necessity of a socialist transformation of society. The Political Committee approach has, of course, stood this on its head. By the Political Committee's process, comrades fractionally dissolve their politics into the "objectively anticapitalist" (i.e., "revolutionary") arena of struggle, the "independent" "mass movements" which deal with specific forms of oppression under capitalism. *We do so not to educate among them as to the generalized oppression and class exploitation of capitalism, but to become the most consistent fighter against the specific area of oppression, often just a single issue involved in the specific area. We adopt the "objectively anticapitalist" and therefore "revolutionary" politics of that area of struggle as our own.*

"The Leninist party," stated Barnes, "champions the fight in movements of all oppressed social layers and advances and develops their key democratic and transitional demands as part of its own." (*Ibid.*, p. 63.) The Political Committee has, however, done more than that. It seems to have impressionistically turned its back on the struggle for a proletarian party to accept, in its stead, a multi-issue democratic-centralist coordinating committee to organize the student vanguards of "consistent"—and therefore "revolutionary socialist"—activists in the "objectively anticapitalist"—and therefore "revolutionary"—"independent" "mass movements." The historic role of the Leninist vanguard party is then reduced to that of a type of Socialist Workers Action Coalition. Most unorthodox, indeed!

The development of this new view of Leninism did not occur in the abstract. Rather it reflected the changing attitude of the party, or, more precisely, the changing class composition of the party. In the decade of the 1960s, hundreds of veterans of the witchhunt years, the post-war strike waves, and beyond left active politics to be replaced by the newer recruits of the student milieu. These newer comrades were not proletarianized in relation to the productive and distributive processes, their life styles, their approach to politics, etc. That, under such circumstances, the party leadership found its critical approach to the spontaneity of an alien class radicalism fading away should be no real surprise; the vivid memories of the long, hard years of isolation in the 1950s had severely weakened the party both in our class composition and in our size. This influx of student radicals into the party and, for that matter, the entire student radicalization was a very healthy development, but the leadership made a serious error when it expected the politics of the students to be metaphysically divorced from its non-proletarian base. That certain revisions were to occur in the Leninist norms of intervention and elsewhere were to be expected.

### A. *The "Theory" of "Democratic and Transitional Demands"*

Comrade Barnes noted that: "our job is to champion the movements of all sectors of the oppressed that rise in struggle against the oppression of capitalism. And, over time, we add to our transitional program—our program for the socialist revolution—those demands flowing from these struggles which fit into the strategy of the Transitional Program. We do not see these struggles—regardless of their current leadership or limitations—as something separate from or alien to the S. W. P." ("Report to the SWP National Committee," *Ibid.*, p. 82.)

If the demands of the movements to extend democracy are assimilated into our party's program, "a transitional program that includes the progressive demands of all the oppressed" (Barnes, "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Ibid.*, p. 68), the question then arises: *What happens to the old transitional demands that challenged the right of the capitalist class to rule?*

Like the maximal demands of the classical Social Democracy, they have been shelved as irrelevant, only taken down, dusted off, and paraded through a May Day speech or a rare forum or they are printed in a campaign brochure as "the transitional program for the trade unions" (along with "the transitional program for Blacks," "the transitional program for Chicanos," "the transitional program for women," "the transitional program for students," etc.) only to be returned to the shelf when the show is over. *They exist only on paper. They do not exist in the day-to-day life and practice of the party. A "new" theory, one of "democratic and transitional demands," has replaced the transitional approach of world Trotskyism in the living practice of our party.*

We of the Internationalist Tendency see the reinstatement of the transitional approach as a primary task for our party. Not so the Political Committee approach! All is well when seen through its eyes. After all, we are told, the differences between a bourgeois democratic reform demand and a transitional demand are not all that great. In fact, these democratic demands have assumed a "tran-

sitional character" by virtue of these similarities. What are these similarities?

"The first is that capitalism has reached the point where it becomes more and more incompatible with any form of democracy. The defense and extension of democracy thus become proletarian tasks along with the advancement of transitional measures that go beyond capitalism although stemming from its present point of departure.

"The second and more important way in which democratic and transitional slogans are related is the method by which we defend and advance them. The method is the same in both instances—the proletarian method of mass struggle." (Hansen, "The New Stage of the World Revolution," *Revolutionary Strategy*, pp. 34-5.)

However, the class content of democracy, an essential tenet of Leninism, is ignored. *The distinction between democratic demands and transitional demands, demands for reforms and demands for a revolutionary transformation of society, is totally negated by this uncritical approach of the Political Committee. The fact that each entails a struggle with its own dynamic and its own method of struggle is further ignored.*

The great lesson of the abortion reform campaign should be that particular "methods of struggle" cannot be superimposed on any struggle that develops. Where the possibility of "redress of grievances" is present, as indeed was the case in the WONAAC "mass movement" and similar struggles for democratic reforms, *the very character of the struggle determines the method.* In the case of transitional demands no such recourse exists. Only long, hard, serious work to mobilize the masses of workers can win these demands and overthrow the existing social order.

The concept that democratic demands assume a "transitional character" in this stage of the development of American capitalism reduces Trotskyism to babbling Social Democracy. *That which distinguishes democratic demands and transitional demands is the class content of these proposals for social change, not the form of struggle.* The Political Committee, in failing to maintain an adequate ideological distance from student radicalism, has embraced its "revolutionism" as opposed to the orientation, political program, and methodology of the revolutionary labor movement, of Marxism-Leninism.

In dealing with student radicalism, the Political Committee has neglected to note that *the rhetoric of revolution and a subjectively revolutionary approach is not always objectively revolutionary.* Anarchists, the old Populists, transcendental meditationists, the "Jesus freaks," and others use the rhetoric of revolution and actually believe they are revolutionists. Nixon himself has promised us a "new American revolution."

In an advanced capitalist nation such as the United States, a distinction must be drawn between democratic demands and transitional demands. The Political Committee has failed to even attempt such a distinction and has in fact done nothing to clear up the numerous misconceptions about the character of a transitional demand. If the P.C. will not draw this distinction, it is the duty of the rank and file to do so.

A transitional demand is not just any old demand that makes people more radical, that questions this or that aspect of the capitalist status quo. Such a view would demean the importance of the democratic reform demands which play this role quite well.

A transitional demand is not just any demand that mobilizes people. At times, all sorts of groups espousing all sorts of causes may call a demonstration. The slogans and demands of such demonstrations may range from "Stop Cruelty to Animals!" to "Eat at Joe's!" Simply because people may be willing to carry a picket sign that does not make the slogan on the sign "transitional," not by a long shot.

Nor is a transitional demand one which pits a struggle against a section of the capitalist class. This is a popular "theory" to explain the "transitional character" of the abortion slogan. The slogan "Defeat Landon At All Costs!" certainly pitted the workers against a section of the capitalist class, but was it imbued with a "transitional character"?

Nor can this be approached on the simplistic grounds that a transitional demand is something that capitalism cannot grant. In fact, under certain circumstances, sections of the labor aristocracy, the skilled privileged workers may gain "30 for 40" or similar transitional demands. (Although they cannot be won for the entire working class under capitalist property relations.) This is far too simplistic. It was one of the ways in which "Bring the Troops Home Now!" and "Out Now!" gained a "transitional character." Capitalism could not, we were told, bring the American troops home or, at least, they could not bring them home NOW, not IMMEDIATELY, not THIS VERY SECOND. Then, perhaps we should demand that the earth revolve around the moon. Capitalism cannot grant that either. Again, this is far too simplistic an approach.

A transitional demand deals with the class content of the social order, not with its forms. Just because socialism will provide free health care and legal abortions, this does not imbue "Free Abortion on Demand" with a "transitional character." Just because socialism will bring about peace, "Peace Now!" does not assume a "transitional character." After all, comrades, socialism, with its planned economy, will allot ample time and energy to the question of sewage disposal, but this does not make the demand for "Sewer Repairs!"—or even "Sewer Repairs Now!"—a transitional demand. While we raise certain democratic demands and struggle for them, we must continue to retain our transitional program in practice.

A clear distinction must be made between the forms of bourgeois democracy (and the demands to extend it) and its class content (and the demands which expose its class content, the transitional demands). *The foundation of bourgeois democracy is the right—theoretically of anyone, but in practice only the bourgeoisie—to privately own and control the means of production and distribution, to buy it and sell it, to invest capital, and to accumulate wealth by exploiting labor. The foundation of proletarian democracy is the historic right of the working class to socially own and manage the means of social production and distribution and to bend the material class interests of all other social classes to its own. They are two distinct concepts.*

We would correctly criticize those who restrict their critique of bourgeois democracy to its forms or to the status quo of its forms as "sewer socialists." *Transitional demands attack the class content of the social order by attacking the heart of bourgeois society and bourgeois so-*



cial thought, the right of the capitalists to rule society and to exploit labor by their control of society, and by counterposing to capitalism the right of the working class to rule. That struggles of radicalized elements of the middle class and declassed non-proletarian layers may assume a revolutionary thrust is possible only by their ties to the revolutionary workers movement, ties that the Political Committee seem to be totally disinterested in strengthening by our party's practice.

The demands of the anarchists to resist the authority of the superrich propertied class, of the populists to abolish monopolies, or those of the middle-class feminists to abolish sex discrimination are not "objectively anti-capitalist" in the sense of being revolutionary. While none of them may be met under capitalism, they do not come into conflict with the essence of individualistic bourgeois egalitarianism.

*In practice, as well as in theory, the Political Committee believes that because socialism will bring about peace, abolish the family, and bring about the equality of races and nations, activists who are antiwar, feminist, and nationalist are revolutionary if only they are "consistent" enough.*

Still another misconception is that some demands such as "Defend the New York State Abortion Laws!" are "transitional" in the sense that they lead to raising of other demands such as "Repeal All Abortion Laws!" which are "transitional" in the sense that they lead to the raising of other demands such as "Free and Legal Abortions on Demand!" which are "transitional" in the sense that they lead to the raising of other reform demands which are "transitional" in the sense that they lead to the raising of other demands, etc. Such an approach is not "a transitional approach"; it totally ignores the class content of these demands.

Implicit in this neglect with regard to the class content of these demands is neglect with regard to their ultimate goals. Implicit also is the concept that, if we could only extend bourgeois democratic rights far enough, if we could only win enough such social reforms, it would bring about a qualitative change in society and the lot of its members, an alteration in the class content of that society, a social revolution. This is, of course, at the heart of the classical revisionism of Eduard Bernstein.

Firmly based in the Norman Thomas school of dialectics, it implies that, because quantity may affect quality, you may add up enough reforms (or reform demands) and they will amount to a revolution (or revolutionary, transitional demands). Implicit in such "dialectical" processes is the concept that, if we pile up enough blocks of granite, they will become magically or rather "dialectically" a pile of horsefeathers or what-have-you. Thus, the comrades who have developed such "theories" seem to aspire less to mastering the Marxist dialectic than Merlin's bargain-basement magic.

Obviously, such an approach reduces the social revolution to a condensed series of reforms and inversely implies that reforms are merely a long drawn-out revolution. Accepting such premises, it is equally obvious that "evolutionary socialists" see their primary task as one of exclusively concentrating on a minimal program of "democratic and transitional demands," i.e., democratic demands.

The proletariat can take power only through mass mo-

bilizations directed at the right of the capitalist class to rule. *The transitional approach of world Trotskyism reaches the working masses at their present level and, depending on that level may or may not mobilize them to smash bourgeois property relations and the bourgeois state. That the Transitional Program cannot at this point do that is no excuse for its abandonment. But the Transitional Program not only reaches the working masses at their present level. It raises that level by continually pointing to the socialist solution to the immediate problems and by posing the question of which class will rule. Without demeaning the importance of the role of democratic reform demands of which we as revolutionists must remain very conscious, it must be pointed out that democratic demands do not and cannot play the vital role of our Transitional Program despite the Political Committee's "theories" on the subject.*

*The equating of transitional demands with democratic demands, the abandonment of the former in practice, and the elevation of the latter to the role of "democratic and transitional demands" represents a serious deviation from the methodology and political approach of revolutionary socialism.*

#### *B. How the P. C. Thinks We Will Reach the Workers*

Obviously, the loss of a Transitional Program in practice makes the task of reaching the workers and leading them into a revolutionary bid for state power more difficult. How then does the Political Committee propose that we do this? By colonizing industries? No, for this is seen as a "workerist" deviation. We may colonize campuses, but not factories. How were we to accomplish the job of reaching the working class over the past two years? But of course! By building a campus base! (Caution: not everything that reveals poor formal logic is dialectical.)

The demands of the campus based "mass movements" are "all directed against the interests and authority of the ruling class and in the interests of the working class" (Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Ibid.*, p. 68). As indicated, these movements are middle-class in composition and outlook. Is Comrade Barnes indicating that students, independent of their own material non-proletarian interests, are acting in conjunction with the revolutionary class interests of the proletariat by being drawn to mass workers movement (the existence of which is denied by the Political Committee)? No, he is merely restating the P. C. line that the material interests of non-proletarian elements struggling to maintain and extend bourgeois democracy are now "objectively anti-capitalist," i.e., revolutionary.

The role of the proletariat as a class is, in this light, somewhat altered. *Workers as a class retain the muscle, the brawn, the social weight, but, presumably not the material class interests of the student-led "mass movements" to extend bourgeois democracy to the sectors. This peculiar "new" view sees "material interests" as flowing not from the relationship of people to the organization of production and distribution, but rather from your skin color, your genitals, etc.*

How will the workers, this mass of brawn and social weight, be brought into motion? The movements around the "democratic and transitional demands" will "have an influence of their own on the process that will lend to the

eventual radicalization of major contingents of the working class, and these movements will ultimately converge with them and increase their striking power" ("The New Stage of the World Revolution," *Ibid.*, p. 36).

Comrade Barnes elaborated on this concept:

"According to government statistics, of the total work force in the United States, 22 percent are under twenty-five years old; 28 percent of those between twenty-five and thirty-four have received some college education with a higher percentage in the under twenty-five age bracket; 40 percent are women; 11 percent for basic industry. The Labor Department anticipates that every one of these percentages will increase in the 1970s. These bare statistics alone indicate the potential these movements have in attracting and influencing American workers." ("Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization," *Ibid.*, p. 52.)

The proletariat is thus to be politicalized and radicalized not by struggling along class lines for working-class demands or even working-class demands of particular importance to one or another section of the class. Rather it is to be summoned into action by the raising of middle-class slogans and demands for democratic reforms "in combination with the workers struggle over wages and job issues" (*Ibid.*, p. 69). Thus, the workers, armed with their "revolutionary" economism (presumably such demands as higher wages assume a "transitional character" as well as other reform demands) and the "revolutionism" of the students will be soaked across the class lines into their appropriate sectoral sponge.

Bebel's advice to socialist and working-class women to march separately from the middle-class feminists but to strike together where possible becomes the Political Committee's advice to the American proletariat: "March separately with your appropriate sector of middle-class radicals and strike together where you can!" Unfortunately for the advisors, the unity of Black and brown and white workers, of female and male workers, is based upon their material position in society and class solidarity if too elementary a rule of the proletarian movement to be abandoned on request from the students.

Those of us who "recoil from the independent thrust of these struggles" are "disregarding the interests of the more oppressed workers and pandering to the prevailing prejudices and narrow interests of the privileged layers of the working class and the trade-union bureaucracy" (*Ibid.*, p. 67). We should, as the Political Committee has done in the party press, support *the government's interventions into the trade unions to enforce bourgeois equality (the right of all working people, regardless of race or sex to be exploited by capital). Under such circumstances, not only bourgeois democracy and bourgeois democratic demands, but also their protector and benefactor, the bourgeois state, becomes "objectively anticapitalist."* Under such a state of affairs, perhaps we should simply pressure the state to grant more of these reform demands of a "transitional character" and, if it grants enough of them, we can pack our bags and go home.

Firmly grounded in the Bernstein-Kautsky school of dialectics, this represents an effort by the Political Committee to make any opposition to its scheme appear as a middle-aged, white sexist. The reality is, of course,

that the Political Committee has made *no effort to do any work among the proletariat, "the more oppressed workers" included.* Rather than struggling for the rights of oppressed layers of the class where it must be done, within the proletariat as a whole, the Political Committee prefers the "sidewalk supervision" of the union-wrecking operations of the bourgeois state. Presumably, by building our campus base, the "more oppressed workers" will come, hat in hand, to humbly ask the Y. S. A. comrades for leadership in lieu of the rank-and-file militants who are currently waging their struggle.

As with youth, the workers will be drawn into struggle by helping them to "advance to a higher stage by a series of proposals leading in logical progression along the road of mass action to the socialist revolution" ("The New Stage of World Revolution," *Ibid.*, p. 35). Once again, that disturbing "reform plus reform plus reform, etc., equals revolution" formulation. The political content of these mass actions would be, of course, the "democratic and transitional demands" (i.e., democratic demands). The key is to keep it in the streets. Presumably, the workers love parades of any sort so much that they will march along after a while. The "proletarian methods of struggle" argument vies with the "democratic and transitional demands" as the universal solvent of the Political Committee school of social alchemy.

### III. A Brief Attempt at an Evaluation and Conclusion

The Political Committee approach of building coalitions around particular issues has been elevated to the level of a *crippling single-issue fetishism*. Not only has this occurred in the areas in which we have intervened but within the party itself. Under the supervision of the Political Committee, the ranks of our party carried in demonstrations the slogans of the coalition formations into which we were intervening rather than our own socialist slogans and demands. No speeches made, no resolutions introduced by our comrades were to go beyond the slogans and demands of the coalitions. No effort was made, for example, to build a working class wing of N. P. A. C. or WONAAC around any transitional demands or even more militant democratic demands (such as "Self-Determination for the Indochinese Peoples!" "Free Abortion on Demand!" etc.). Nor was there even an effort to build an anti-imperialist wing of the S. M. C. *By assimilating the lowest common denominator approach, not only to coalition-building, but also to our own interventions and our own political program and demands, the Political Committee has only intensified its failures.*

A shallow understanding of the real dynamic of the antiwar movement led to *our alignment in practice with the pacifists and bourgeois liberals.* That the antiwar movement collapsed with the apparent cessation of hostilities is, in part, due to the fact that antiwar activists—even the most "consistent" of them—saw the war in Vietnam as the problem, not imperialism. Had we made some effort to elevate this level of consciousness, it might be otherwise. The confusion of the Political Committee on the necessity of doing this was compounded by their willingness to pack the antiwar struggle in the closet at the end of 1972. Indeed, in the Political Committee school of socialism, the democratic demand for peace had become

"democratic and transitional" and there was therefore no need to point out that imperialism was the enemy.

The abortion reform struggle makes the matter even clearer. There our position as "consistent feminists" drew us into the building of WONAAC, a phantom mass movement of women as women (or more precisely, the party's women's fraction moving as women). That the best efforts of our comrades could not keep the struggle in the streets is due to the character of the struggle. That we soon found ourselves lobbying at Albany should come as no surprise. The entire crux of the issue came when the U. S. Supreme Court ceded this "democratic and transitional demand," overturning the decisions of the lower courts and, presumably, capitalist property relations and the capitalist state as well.

Outside of isolated instances, the militant supernationalistic rhetoric of the Political Committee, reflecting the spontaneity of middle-class nationalism on the campuses, remains but a cover for their abstentionism with regard to the day-to-day struggles of oppressed nationalities. An obvious indicator of this is the failure of the party to recruit and to retain its Black and brown cadres.

*Abstentionism remains the best characterization of the Political Committee approach to the necessity of engaging in revolutionary work within the trade unions, welfare organizations, and other working-class formations.*

The result has been that the party has lost opportunities and suffered tremendously in membership. The gains made relative to other working-class tendencies, the basis for the eighth point of Comrade Barnes' elaboration have been lost, especially in Black and brown cadre. Our relative advantage over the other tendencies, our recruitment gains of the period from 1966 through 1970 has been lost. While remaining the largest Trotskyist formation in the country (with very little competition), we are still but one-sixth the size of the Stalinist Communist Party. (The Stalinists, of course, have begun to reenter industry; they know where they have to be in order to betray a revolution.)

Further, the Political Committee has warped the distinctions between "alienation" and "proletarianization," between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy, between the bourgeois concept of an abstract and classless "democracy" and socialism, between reform and revolution. As is obvious, their uncritical analysis of the "new radicalization," i.e., the "student radicalization" is mere wishful thinking. *Their replacement of revolutionary class consciousness with a sectoral oppression consciousness as our goal involves a metaphysical misapplication of the dynamic of permanent revolution. This, coupled with the practice of the party under the leadership of the Political*

*Committee indicates that they feel that "material interests" come not primarily from the relationship of people to the means of production and distribution, but from their age, their race, their nationality, their sex, their sex preferences, etc. The motive force of history, the class struggle, then become transformed into the bourgeois pluralist concept of interacting multiclass interest groups and sectors.*

This capitulation can be clearly seen in Comrade Hansen's apologetics:

"Since the ideology of any society as a whole is shaped by the ideology of the ruling class, we must be prepared to accept situations in which the masses, or a sector of the masses, will respond only to slogans of a quite limited nature." (Ibid., p. 32.)

Of course, the distinctions between "accepting" and "swallowing whole" is slurred over. The Political Committee has not only swallowed the reform struggles of the students in one ravenous gulp, but they have displaced our Transitional Program with demands of a quite limited nature," a minimalist approach.

In general, the Political Committee approach represents a reflection within our party of the milieu into which we have unscientifically and uncritically submerged ourselves. A continuation of their "cheerful idiot optimism," their uncritical and opportunistic tailending of the spontaneity, and their pragmatic accommodation to the radicalism of an alien class milieu could only result in an historic defeat of Trotskyism in the United States. *The implications of such a defeat and the continued existence and vitality of American imperialism for the world revolutionary movement are self-evident.*

This brings us to the sixth point of elaboration by Comrade Barnes, his statement that the roots of the "new radicalization" and the Political Committee's "unique" approach are international. Similar statements by the P. C. and its spokespersons, coupled with their activities within the world movement, indicate *an effort to foist this analysis and all its implications upon our comrades in Europe and into the International behind the thin veneer of phony, bogus orthodoxy. In opposition to this effort, we of the Internationalist Tendency stand in solidarity with revolutionists in every section of the world movement.*

We counterpose to the Political Committee "theory" orthodox scientific socialism as embodied in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky. We demand that the Political Committee, in theory and practice, return to the road of Cannon to once again take up the struggle for a proletarian party, and to return the American party to the course of Leninism-Trotskyism in its composition, its orientation, its political program, and its methodology.

July 16, 1973

TWO, THREE, MANY INDOCHINAS!  
AN ACTION PROPOSAL FOR THE SWP  
Draft Thesis — Presented to the SWP Convention for Approval

by Bill Yaffe, At-Large

At the time of this convention we are again trying to give our activity in support of the Indochinese revolution a mass character. Numerous questions regarding the future evolution of the situation in Indochina, the nature of the revolutionary leadership, and the road still left to travel have been posed. To the extent that these matters condition our capacity to intervene, it is high time that we consider them and attempt to find some answers. Failure to tackle these problems has allowed our Indochina activity to be too dependent on the fluctuations of the political conjuncture and on the morale of our organization.

The skepticism and inactivity of a number of comrades probably is the result of a lack of consequent internationalist education and practice. To be able to understand the importance that we give to our support activities for the Indochinese socialist revolution, it is first necessary to begin with an analysis of the place occupied by Indochina in the international situation.

Today we can very schematically characterize the colonial revolution by the following contradiction:

—the continued combativity of the colonial masses in spite of the repeated defeats experienced after the victory of the Cuban revolution. Owing to the explosive character of the structural crises in the underdeveloped countries that prohibits any prolonged stabilization of the social scene, this combativity will be maintained.

—the profound crisis of the first leaderships of the colonial revolution. This crisis is accentuated by the ultra-aggressive course chartered by imperialism which has scored some important points: in Asia—Indonesia, Ceylon, particularly Bengal; in Latin America—Brazil, Bolivia; in the Middle East—Sudan, the Palestine resistance.

In this context, the Indochinese revolution appears as a unique case: the only revolution victoriously holding its own against the world counterrevolution. If one knows that the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries and in the bureaucratized workers' states is generally only at the point of regroupment of forces, one understands our characterization of the Indochinese revolution as the key pivot of the world political situation around which the international vanguard is developing. This is why we have always considered the evolution of the war in Indochina as a decisive element in the transformation of the relationship of class forces on a world level.

The continuation of the Indochinese revolution creates the conditions for another upsurge in the colonial revolution, the decomposition of the advanced capitalist countries, and increases the instability in the bureaucratized workers' states. For thirty years the revolution has been a veritable cancer for the capitalist world. It weighs as heavily in the political and diplomatic areas, exposing the real nature of Stalinist and imperialist politics, as it does in the social and economics domains, exacerbating the inherent contradictions of capitalism. This is why we have always explained that the struggle of the peoples of Indochina is *our* struggle.

We have said that the Indochinese revolution weighs heavily on the international relationship of class forces—it is also partially dependent on this relationship. The essential weakness of the Indochinese revolution is its international isolation. The fact that Indochina is a unique case allows imperialism to concentrate all its forces against it. A revolution has never been forced to carry on under such a murderous counterrevolutionary undertaking. Never has the price to pay for continuing the struggle been so high. Taking this into consideration we see that the aid given to the Indochinese by the official communist movement is pitifully absurd. We call upon all activists to reread the letter written by Comrade Che Guevara to the Tricontinental. This letter permits one to understand a little less abstractly the size of the tasks and the degree of isolation facing the Indochinese.

The Socialist Workers Party reaffirms the necessity to act upon this situation. Because of our international organization we can be effective in rebuilding an international mass movement. *We must be effective and we can be!*

Does this constitute a self-effacing sacrifice on our part that we owe to the Indochinese revolutionaries? No! Because solidarity activity for the Indochinese revolution is a decisive dimension for the building of the American party of world Trotskyism. A deliberate effort on our part for Indochina must effectively exist; the American masses and the far-left groups today do not mobilize themselves spontaneously on this question. It is wrong to stupidly assert that because the masses currently have illusions concerning United States aggression in Indochina are not active it is therefore incorrect for revolutionaries to attempt much at all. In fact we must be more active than before in this most crucial period for the development of the Indochinese socialist revolution. Leninist party builders build an international party. Internationalist activity is not foreign to our strategic task: the construction of a revolutionary party. Because the Indochinese revolution is the key to the world situation it plays a central role in the recomposition of the international revolutionary vanguard. The revolution in Southeast Asia educated in its own image an entire revolutionary generation, giving to it the example of its courage, its consistency and its methods of struggle. This role is only limited by the revolutionary leadership's subjective weaknesses (misunderstanding of Stalinism) and its objective position (isolation preventing the revolutionaries from saying and doing everything they would like). Because the Fourth International is the most homogeneous and the most extensive component of this vanguard in recomposition, it is best able to give its organizational capabilities to developing the influence and importance of the Indochinese revolution. What better assistance could we give to the building of the Asian sections than our defense of the Asian revolution? What better aid to the construction of sections of the Fourth International in the colonial and semicolonial countries could we give than

the example of what we mean by internationalism? What better forum is there for leading the fight against chauvinism, nationalism, pacificism, Stalinism, and all sorts of reformism that are pillars propping up capitalism? There is no better way to illustrate in practice the essence of our political positions. The Indochinese revolution allows us to explain what a revolution is, the role of revolutionary violence, the power of class war, the nature of the bourgeois state, the dead-end of reformism, the limits of bourgeois technical and economic power. . . . For the Indochinese revolution — for the world revolution — for the building of the Fourth International and the American party — there is one objective: the forceful promotion of an active, militant, and permanent mass solidarity with Indochina. This is what we in the Socialist Workers Party fight for.

### *The Imperialist Strategy*

The task of the American bourgeoisie is to attempt to appease public opinion, relieve economic problems in the U.S., and stabilize the puppet regimes in S.E. Asia. Because of the victories won by the Indochinese revolutionaries and because of the international antiwar movement the bourgeoisie could no longer continue the war effort in the same manner. Such a continuation of the previous war strategy could have quickly led to the further extension of the revolution to Thailand and the entire India subcontinent. The U.S.A. has been forced to make a partial retreat in order to create a new balance of forces and new lines of defense. Vietnamization and Asiatization, it is hoped, will allow the puppet regimes to handle the anticommunist struggle on a continental level. Nixon's diplomacy regarding the USSR and China is designed to divide the workers' states, isolate Indochina and encourage the workers' states to evolve even further down the pacifist counterrevolutionary road. The repression in Ceylon and Bengal was designed to smash all revolutionary forces before the signing of the Vietnam Accords to avoid these forces profiting from the USA's partial retreat. The enormous weight of the militarization of Thailand is intended to constitute a second line of defense (a new 17th parallel). All this is a sort of last ditch effort to stop the process of permanent revolution on that continent and in the world. Understanding the goals of imperialism allows us to see the importance that the U.S. attaches to the official integration of China into a game of three-way peaceful coexistence. It is in this light that we can understand the recent "antiwar" moves in the U.S. Congress that were supported and instigated by key enlightened bourgeois sectors.

### *The Nature of the Revolutionary Leadership*

If the international antiwar movement has upset the United States bourgeoisie's political projects it is obviously the politics of the Revolutionary Front of Indochina that have exacerbated the problems of those big "socialist" powers who attempt to apply a theory of peaceful coexistence. The Vietnamese revolution has dealt stunning blows to both Stalinism and imperialism. Today we can firmly characterize the Vietnamese communist leadership as *revolutionary*! This revolutionary leadership has proved its capacity to resist U.S. aggression over long difficult years. It has stood up against the political, economic, technological and military power of

the USA. It has opposed this imperialist monster with the force of the oppressed and exploited social classes in struggle around their own interests in a process of permanent revolution. The revolutionary leaders have *consciously led* the struggle for the growing over of bourgeois-democratic demands into socialist objectives. (See the agrarian question and national independence.)

The formidable development of the mass revolutionary process in Indochina cannot be explained if one refuses to admit the influence and existence of a revolutionary organization. Given the extent to which the Vietnamese CP has led the struggle through the NLF, it can only be considered a revolutionary party. An analysis of the Vietnamese leaders' writings verify that they haven't made the revolution "without knowing it" or "in spite of themselves." Several political viewpoints seem to coexist at the leadership level of the VCP. Here there are two important factors to keep in mind. First all the viewpoints or currents agree on the necessity of the growing over of the struggle into socialist revolution, "burning the capitalist stage. This is a veritable leit-motiv for all the leaders: Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, Giap, and Le Duan. Likewise, they all agree on the role of the party as the leader of the struggle in all areas and at all times.

The Vietnamese CP has produced some fine theoreticians like Giap and Le Duan who have eliminated all Maoist mechanicalism from their analytical works in order to come extraordinarily close to our own theory concerning the general process of the permanent revolution, the role of the party, and the diverse social classes, etc. To clearly recognize this, all comrades must look beyond the circumstantial-tactical writings and assimilate the fundamental texts. Of course, the history of the Vietnamese CP is far from being free from any opportunism; however, the essential fact today is that at all the decisive moments it has known how to make the revolutionary choice and assume the revolutionary position. A reformist leadership always "misses the opportunity" when the class struggle grows hot and usually combines treason and suicide in its politics (Indonesia). We see none of this in the history of the Vietnamese CP. In all the crucial situations — 1929-30, the Nghe -Tinh soviets, 1939-40, the anti-Japanese struggle, 1959-60, recommencing of the armed struggle against the Americans (even if belatedly), 1965, the decision to fight on for their liberation of the South, knowing well that that would mean bombing of the North — *the Vietnamese Communist Party has always chosen revolutionary struggle in the difficult and decisive turning points*. Even today, in a difficult international context, the Vietnamese CP goes further than ever in its declarations and writings (see criticisms of China and USSR prior to and during Nixon's trips). Today the revolutionary leadership continues to carry through its revolutionary objectives in direct contradiction with any policy of peaceful coexistence. Today, in contrast to 1954, the Vietnamese have a greater international audience and independence (this is why direct negotiation between the U.S. and Hanoi is so important; wherever else he goes Kissinger *must* talk to the Vietnamese for it is the Vietnamese who decide), permitting them to resist the advice of their "big brothers." They have quite skillfully played upon the Sino-Soviet split to gain and ensure greater and significant independence.

We can attempt to understand some of the limits of the revolutionary leadership if we consider it to be somewhat "empiric." Of course, this empiricism is of a relative nature and we remember that the Cuban leadership is also "empiric." The Vietnamese CP was founded by militants educated by the international communist movement (Ho Chi Minh from 1920). The party was officially formed in 1930 at the time of the happy encounter between the "ultraleft, class against class" period of the Stalinized Comintern and a veritable, powerful revolutionary wave in Vietnam. From its birth the Vietnamese CP has had a significant theoretical base. Its first program defines the objective of the struggle to be the growing over of the revolution into socialism by means of class struggle and analyzes the role of the party and the different social classes. These acquisitions seem to have been forgotten during the period of the popular front but since that time they have clearly dominated the Vietnamese CP's politics. Where the empiricism appears is when it comes to analyzing the international communist movement. Aside from the recent criticisms of "big powers" we do not really know what the Vietnamese think about the Soviet Union and China. However, what is certain is that they lack a good understanding of Stalinism. The Vietnamese CP not only did not participate in the Left Opposition; it also directly fought the local Trotskyist organizations. Yet, because the Vietnamese CP was profoundly integrated into the revolutionary reality in Vietnam, because at crucial points in time its understanding of the political situation was often better than that of the Vietnamese Trotskyists, and through bitter experiences with Stalinist parties (PCF—French Communist Party during the periods of the popular front and the liberation), it developed a position of total political independence *vis-a-vis* the Stalinized official communist movement. The Vietnamese CP, in contrast to numerous other cases, never was destroyed as a revolutionary CP by Stalinism.

Certainly this empiricism is not without consequences: the Vietnamese CP has a certain sense of "tactic" that permits it to officially defend points of view that are in flagrant contradiction with its (VCP) own practice and general theoretical positions. The best example is the declaration of the party's "disbandment" made when Ho Chi Minh was heading the first revolutionary government in Hanoi in 1946 (this was done in the "interests of the race"). Another example is the program of the NLF. Our criticism of this conception of "tactics" is not a scholastic one. We criticize because some of the official positions of the VCP have miseducated the new international vanguard and inhibited certain mobilizations of the Vietnamese masses.

It is important to state before we go further with our criticisms that revolutionaries must see the reality of the relationships of forces behind the words. In Vietnam today the Vietnamese CP finds itself in a position of extreme strength; much greater in the South than in 1954. No one can possibly say that the VCP is abandoning its revolutionary objectives; the fight that it is leading today is crucial for carrying out the final reunification and for establishing a workers' state in the South. A "free, independent, and reunified Vietnam" means one thing: *a socialist Vietnam*.

The misunderstanding of Stalinism leads to a problem concerning the construction of a revolutionary Interna-

tional. The Vietnamese are profoundly internationalist. They are objectively internationalist by virtue of the fact that their struggle is the key to the world situation. They are internationalist in their theoretical conceptions (where they go so far as to assimilate the problem of revolution in the advanced capitalist countries). They are internationalist in their practice, the best example of this is the aid they give to revolutionary movements in the Third World. However, neither the objective situation nor the subjective conceptions (absence of clarity regarding certain historic political cleavages) permit them to engage in a direct process of constructing a new International. That's up to us.

A problem for the future resides in the absence of the concept of soviets in the VCP's political arsenal. They do not see the workers' state as a state of soviet democracy. The VCP states and restates the necessity of democracy *vis-a-vis* the people but we never find any mention of the nature of workers' councils in their writings. Traces of bureaucratization under the pressure of the retardation of the forces of production and isolation have appeared and will continue to appear in Vietnam. Let us state clearly, however, that the revolution is in progress and does not permit these bureaucratic deformations to become too important under the circumstances.

We don't look for an answer to all the world's political problems in the politics of the VCP. We're not looking for a "pure revolutionary model." We see the Vietnamese CP as the most beautiful example today of revolutionists in struggle, of far-sightedness in combat, of consistency in the reaffirmation of revolutionary practice. We must know how to recognize what the Indochinese revolution can teach us—and this is substantial. If we make criticism, it is because the Indochinese revolution is very important to us and because we believe in it more than ever.

#### *The Real Meaning of the Accords*

The signing of the January 27 Vietnam Accords signifies a strategic retreat that U.S. imperialism was forced to make. The withdrawal of the U.S. armed forces from Vietnam and the cessation of the bombing of both North and South constitute a shift in the relationship of forces in favor of the Vietnamese revolution. This reflects imperialism's inability to smash the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese masses as well as its retreat before the strength of antiwar feeling in the United States itself. The Accords in themselves do not represent the final victory of the permanent revolution in South Vietnam but they mean that the revolutionary process is able to develop with reduced foreign interference. To understand the importance of this retreat we must keep in mind the initial goals of the American bourgeoisie. The support given in the years 1950-52 to the French war effort, the complete assumption of the counterrevolutionary responsibility in 1954, the support given to Diem, the unleashing of "special war," then "local war," all was done with one objective in mind: the destruction of the Asian revolution and its key, Vietnam, and the creation of conditions necessary for the reconquest of the North and possibly the reopening of China to the capitalist market.

This strategic objective was dashed to bits with the failure of "local war" and the 1968 Tet offensive. This offensive was led into the cities of South Vietnam by the



NLF and permitted the opening of negotiations in Paris and the stopping of American bombing of the North. Because of failure, U.S. imperialism has elaborated a new international politic—three-way peaceful coexistence. Unable to reconquer China, the U.S. government now hopes to integrate it into big power diplomacy and neutralize the role it could play in the colonial revolution. After 1968, the objective of the U.S.A. was a return to the situation of 1954. The Nixon Doctrine hoped to play on the bad faith of the U.S.S.R. and China and get them to weaken their already inadequate aid to the revolution. The U.S.A. wanted to reconstitute the basis of a neocolonial structure in South Vietnam (Vietnamization), and smother the resistance in making a permanent division at the 17th parallel, in fomenting the coup d'etat in Cambodia in March of 1970, and in massively intervening in Laos in order to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail. Nonetheless, this new U.S. orientation was also a failure. The Vietnamese revolutionaries more than ever showed their independence *vis-a-vis* China and the Soviet Union; the Cambodian people moved into the camp of the Indochinese revolution, the victory scored by the Revolutionary Front of Indochina during the battle in February, 1971, smashed the U.S. effort to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail, the March-April 1972 offensive broke up the structure of pacification, and the liberated zones as well as the North victoriously resisted the escalation of American terror. The January 27 Accords reflect this series of defeats for U.S. imperialism. The U.S. can no longer hope to return to the 1954 situation in the three countries of Indochina. This defeat inflicted against U.S. imperialism by the three peoples of Indochina, in spite of the extensive American counterrevolution machine, is a major lesson for all the peoples of the world. It gives considerable encouragement to the international anti-imperialist movement in its struggle for the final victory of the Indochinese socialist revolution.

Yet, the Accords do not represent the final victory. The U.S. ruling class is too conscious of the dangers that a new upsurge in the Asian revolution would pose for capitalist order in the world to withdraw purely and simply. The Accords do not go further than a situation of dual power in Vietnam—that is the major difference that they have with the PRG's seven points of July 1971. The imperialists want to build a new line of defense based on Thailand. Their air and naval military infrastructure in Thailand and the China sea is considerable. The accelerated rearmament of the puppet regimes is another indicator. For more than five years the second resistance in Vietnam has been confronted with the problem of urban implantation. This is an important problem given the size of the apparatus of police terror in the cities that has already taken the lives of numerous militants and placed over 300,000 political prisoners in Thieu's jails. The Americans and the puppets are doing everything to block revolutionary political work among the urban masses.

The Accords translate the complex situation in which the Indochinese revolution today finds itself. The strength of the revolutionary fighters lies in the deepness of the revolutionary process that they have led. Only revolutionary war mobilizing the energies of an entire population in the struggle for national and social liberation can be effective in fighting imperialism's power. The difficulties facing the revolutionaries is essentially found in

the inadequacy of Soviet and Chinese aid. The U. S. S. R. refused to make North Vietnam an unviolatable part of socialist territory and did not provide the revolutionists with the quantity and quality of aid necessary to win. Even today the U. S. S. R. recognizes the Cambodian puppet regime. China increased the relative isolation of the Indochinese revolution in normalizing its relations with the United States. Nixon's trip to Peking allowed him to considerably reinforce, at a crucial time, his domestic and foreign position. With all this the Soviet and Chinese governments broke the back of the PRG's diplomatic offensive that was launched on July 1, 1971, with the seven-point proposal that would have meant complete victory for the Vietnamese revolution. Although the international isolation increased before the signing of the Accords, the revolutionaries were in an increased position of strength in Vietnam itself because of the success of the March-April offensive and because of revolutionary successes in Laos and Cambodia. These victories (smashing the Vietnamization apparatus) allowed the Vietnamese to negotiate on new positions with an increased margin of maneuver without abandoning its fundamental objectives: the total liberation from imperialism and reunification with the socialist North. The January 27 Accords leave all the armed revolutionary forces in the South and it leaves them intact (this was not the case at Geneva). The bombardments of Hanoi and Haiphong did not permit the U. S. A. to secure the retreat of the revolutionary troops from the South and their regrouping in peripheral zones nor did it result in the official recognition of two Vietnams—quite the contrary. Vietnam was recognized by the Americans for the first time as being one state. It is the combination of favorable and unfavorable factors that fundamentally explain the move from the seven points to the Accords.

The period beginning after January signifies the opening of an intense struggle that will be crucial for the future of the Vietnamese and Indochinese revolution. The PRG is the only representative of the Vietnamese. It expresses the struggle of the South Vietnamese for liberation. The Thieu government remains a puppet power entirely dependent on the USA. Because the final liberation of Vietnam necessitates a complete rupture with imperialism and the forces linked to it, there can be no independence or real liberty without a socialist revolution. This remains the perspective of the revolutionaries who do not conceive of independence without reunification with the North. The Vietnamese communists fight on for the overthrow of Thieu. At this point in time it is difficult to say exactly what the rhythms of the struggle will be. The revolutionaries are attempting to reorganize the liberated zones economically, politically, administratively, and militarily after the terrible bombings. However, we can trace some general lines in this regard. The puppets will use terror, imperialist aid and social corruption to keep in place. The Front and the PRG prepare an intense political struggle.

They will attempt to swim in the sea of mass mobilizations. The agrarian reform is being accelerated to promote the systematic demoralization of the army and the puppet administration (land held back for those who join the revolutionary side). The fight for the right of the refugees to return to their villages as well as the fight for

the liberation of the prisoners is moving into action.

The masses are being called upon to defend their democratic rights and economic demands. The social revolution continues. Still, it would be dangerous to believe that the cease-fire equals victory. This criminal position has been taken by the Moscow CPs and demobilizes the antiwar movements as does the position taken by some Trotskyist sects which claim that the Accords were a setback for the revolution. Thus, the necessity to intensify our solidarity actions is clear. We must stop Nixon from making any new maneuvers. We must help the Indochinese fighters to obtain the liberation of the prisoners in South Vietnam and support them in all the coming struggles. We also must focus attention on the development of the revolution in Laos and Cambodia. It is already clear that the next few months in Cambodia will be decisive and the FUNK has refused to compromise with the Lon Nol regime. While isolated internationally, the situation continues to develop favorably for the revolutionary forces in Cambodia itself. This country is in the front line of the military struggle in Indochina today and we must organize support for the FUNK offensives. In Laos the strategic positions of the PLF remain favorable and have been politically reinforced by the publication of the accords. Considering the special place that Laos occupies in Indochina, the struggle there depends to a great extent on an Indochinese revolutionary policy and on the situation in South Vietnam. The evolution of the relationship of forces in one country influences the others, while South Vietnam is still the heart of the resistance in Indochina, it benefits from the favorable evolution in Laos and Cambodia.

Vietnam! Laos! Cambodia! Indochina Will Win!

#### *What Is To Be Done*

The role of revolutionists in support movements for Indochina is to broaden these movements by radicalizing them. For activists to have a capacity for prolonged activity, they must have a real understanding of the struggle of the Indochinese revolutionaries. We must combine our "Out Now!" slogan with slogans like "Victory to the NLF!" or "PRG to Saigon!" This will enable us to give the movement an anti-imperialist understanding. Of course our role is not just to mobilize radicals; but by organizing a radical solidarity current that we can lead, we can bring pressure on the entire antiwar movement and increase its degree of mobilization. We cannot support the conception of tail-ending opportunists who feel that the only role of revolutionaries is to broaden the antiwar movement. The SWP will take the job of educating the vanguard that has emerged from the antiwar movement. We will do this with campaigns for the Indochinese *socialist* revolution. We will attempt to construct a mass radical solidarity movement for Indochina which in turn can become the broad backbone for revolutionary intervention into the larger antiwar movement as well as for the maintenance of this larger and broader antiwar move-

ment. It is only the simultaneous construction of a broad mass movement and a radical solidarity movement for Indochina that will enable us to achieve our tasks of international solidarity and the building of a revolutionary party.

This means concretely that we must organize vanguard demonstrations for the victory of the socialist revolution in Indochina. This will be coupled with meetings built on the theme of 2, 3, many Vietnams. We must be especially active in organizing socialist committees for the Indochinese socialist revolution in the Third World ghettos; such regroupments can allow us to effectively intervene in these areas as Marxists and are in fact necessary for solving the crisis of leadership in the Third World communities.

Socialist committees for Indochina could also be built on the campus as a means of educating radicals and activists to the necessity of supporting the Indochinese fighters as well as necessity of building larger demonstrations on the "Out Now!" theme. This is a most crucial period for the revolution in Southeast Asia. Another upsurge in the U. S. is extremely likely. We must help keep the organizations like NPAC visible to the public eye so they will have the authority to heavily influence and lead these coming support fights in the U. S. We can help NPAC build rank-and-file antiwar groups in the plants around themes like war and inflation—this will mean less dependence on the bureaucrats who generally only follow bourgeois politicians on these questions.

A good area to concentrate on is the prisoners in South Vietnam. This is important work for NPAC as well as for the socialist support current. People can be mobilized around this issue and be led to see the nature of U. S. puppet regimes in the world. The fate of the prisoners is also very important for the eventual unblocking of the political situation in South Vietnam—a successful campaign for their liberation would greatly facilitate semi-legal work for the revolutionaries and lead to the disintegration of the Thieu dictatorship.

Finally, this radical support current can be directed towards the plants and especially the young militant workers. Leading such a radical current can solidify radicals on campus and also those who came out of some of the mass movements of the sixties. Our tactic must be the periphery toward the center—influence we gain as socialists outside the factories has to be organized and led toward the factories. This not only politicizes the activists outside the plants, it also allows us to spread the influence of the SWP on the inside by showing how effective we can be in defending workers' struggles.

U. S. Out of S. E. Asia Now!

Stop the Bombing Now! Free the Prisoners in South Vietnam Now!

Victory to the NLF, FUNK, and Pathet Lao!

With Indochina Until the Final Victory!

2, 3, Many Indochinas!

Victory to the Indochinese Socialist Revolution!

July 15, 1973