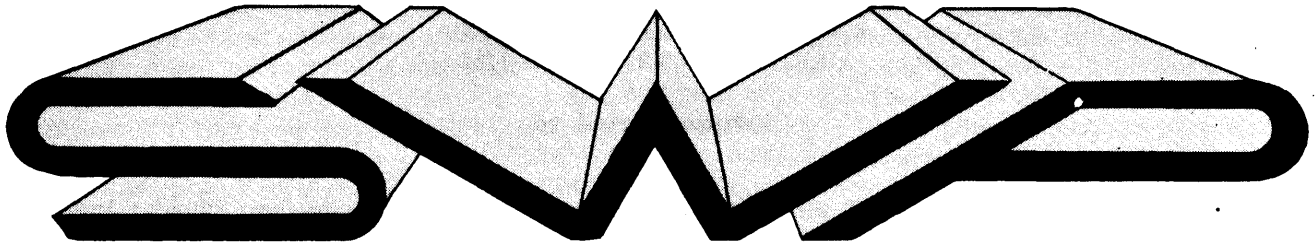


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# Discussion Bulletin

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

Vol. 31 No. 25

July 1973

Published by

**SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

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QUESTIONS CONCERNING OUR DEFENSE  
AGAINST THE GOON ATTACKS  
LAUNCHED BY THE NCLC

by Barry Sheppard

*The Militant* recently received a letter from Comrade Gerald Clark criticizing the tactics the party has utilized in defending itself from the goon attacks launched by the National Caucus of Labor Committees. His letter concludes with the rhetorical questions: "Has the SWP given up the principle of working class solidarity against class enemies in favor of putting trust in the 'justice' of the bourgeois courts?"

Comrades probably find it odd that Comrade Clark would think that the pages of *The Militant* are an appropriate place for a SWP member to charge that the SWP has gone over to putting trust in the class enemy. The editors thought that this was not the proper place for an intraparty discussion and decided not to print the letter. However, the issues raised by Comrade Clark are important and should be answered.

The following is the text of Comrade Clark's letter (all emphasis in the original).

\* \* \*

June 29, 1973

To the Editors:

I was quite interested to read in *The Militant* (June 29, 1973) two articles concerning the use of bourgeois courts by working class organizations. The first article entitled, "Teamsters sue Fitzsimmons, back UFWU," had to do with a group of rank-and-file Teamsters who filed suit in the Los Angeles Superior Court charging the union's top officials with entering into a conspiracy with grape growers to bust the United Farmworkers Union.

Regardless of the truthfulness of such charges, the tactic of one section of the union movement bringing another section of the movement—however reactionary—into the bourgeois courts to settle differences has always been opposed by revolutionary socialists. The reasons are simple: It is a *principle* within the revolutionary workers' movement that differences of opinion, including the resort to violence, can only be resolved by the working class itself. No bourgeois court can provide "justice" whenever the working class is involved in a fight for its rights. It never has and never will be "impartial" toward the class struggle.

But the tone of the article was one of *approval*! Take this quote for example: "As soon as certain technicalities can be ironed out with Superior Court Judge Campbell Lucas, Giler (the attorney for the Teamster group) plans to submit the suit. . . ." No criticisms follow this statement! The entire article simply explains what is happening. By implication, and from what *The Militant* has already written on the UFWU-Teamster dispute, the reader has no real choice but to conclude that the paper approves of such tactics. Is this the proper way to educate Farmworkers and Teamsters interested in working class solidarity?

But the photo beside the article, showing a group of

rank-and-file Teamsters picketing a Safeway store, indicates that *The Militant* also supports that kind of a tactic—a public protest oriented toward mobilizing the ranks in solidarity with the United Farmworkers struggle. But why is there no comment about this *correct* tactic? Surely you were aware of the details concerning this demonstration?

The second article is related to the first. It was entitled, "Arrest of NCLC thugs demanded in N. Y." It begins: "Three Socialist Workers Party members filed criminal charges against National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) goon Steve Getzoff on June 15. . . ." The article also quoted from a statement issued by Norman Oliver, SWP candidate for mayor of New York, which called upon "the 'New York Police Department and the District Attorney's office to arrest these thugs and bring full criminal charges against them in order to stop these outrageous violations of democratic rights.'"

Now, is it the position of the SWP and *The Militant* that NCLC is *not* a working class organization? If so, what kind of organization is it? Fascist? Bourgeois? Petty-bourgeois? The question is not unimportant. Because if NCLC *is* a working class organization, would it not be incorrect to bring suit against it in a bourgeois court? But even if it weren't, certainly the SWP doesn't believe the New York Police Dept. is capable of stopping "these outrageous violations of democratic rights" perpetrated by the NCLC thugs?

Is it not true that the founders of NCLC came out of the SWP just like so many other small groups which exist on the left today (IS, SL, WL, CSL, etc.)? Aren't all of these groups still part of the workers' movement? Why, then, should NCLC be characterized any differently? Its fascist-like tactics are not new to the workers' movement either. They were first introduced by the Stalinists—which the SWP still considers a part of the working class.

Historically, revolutionary organizations have utilized the bourgeois courts and other bourgeois institutions to strengthen the position of the working class vis-a-vis the capitalist class, and at the same time, to dispel the illusions of the masses in bourgeois democracy in general. *But never have they used the bourgeois courts against another working class tendency, regardless of the crimes it may have committed.* (One need only mention here the numerous crimes of the Stalinists against workers and the Trotskyists to show the extent to which a working class tendency can degenerate and still remain a part of the workers' movement.)

What is the significance of these two articles? Has the SWP given up the principle of working class solidarity against class enemies in favor of putting trust in the "justice" of the bourgeois courts?

s/Gerald Clark  
Oakland, Calif.

\* \* \*

I will take up the following points raised by this letter: (1) Is it a violation of principle ever to demand that the bourgeois authorities protect our rights? (2) Is it a violation of principle to demand that bourgeois authorities protect our rights, in situations where we are under physical attack from a tendency in the working class? (3) How do we characterize the NCLC? (4) Why did we use the tactics we have in defending ourselves from the NCLC goons? (5) The suit brought by the rank-and-file Teamsters.

*1. Is it a violation of principle ever to demand that the bourgeois authorities protect our rights?*

Comrade Clark is not clear on this question. He says, "Historically, revolutionary organizations have utilized the bourgeois courts and other bourgeois institutions to strengthen the positions of the working class vis-a-vis the capitalist class, and, at the same time, to dispel the illusions of the masses in bourgeois democracy in general." On the other hand, the central argument advanced by Comrade Clark is that "No bourgeois court can provide 'justice' whenever the working class is involved in a fight for its rights. It never has and never will be 'impartial' toward the class struggle." This argument applies not only to cases where we are physically attacked by other tendencies in the working class, but also to the more general case of such attacks on us from any quarter.

Comrade Clark is correct when he says that the courts are not impartial in the class struggle. The courts are not impartial when the NCLC or the Stalinists use goon tactics against us, and they certainly are not impartial when the Ku Klux Klan, the Legion of Justice, Cuban gusanos, or other right-wing thugs attack us. In any conflict between the bosses and the workers, between racists and Blacks, between reactionaries and socialists, etc., the bourgeois courts and other authorities are not impartial and do not dispense justice equally.

In situations where we are under attack from any quarter, we have to start from the assumption that the capitalist authorities are "neutral" against us. We never place reliance upon them. Our primary line of defense is reliance upon ourselves and whatever forces we can mobilize in defense of our rights, including in the organization of the physical side of that defense.

But at present in the U. S., the capitalist class does not rule through a fascist dictatorship, but through a system of bourgeois democracy. Certain democratic rights have been formally won by the masses through struggle. The extent to which these rights are real for the masses and for organizations of the working class depends on the relation of forces. The working class in general, and ourselves in particular, can win certain concessions and protection of our rights, depending upon what support we can mobilize in the context of the overall relation of class forces. We have been able to win certain defense cases, for example, against attempts by the capitalist authorities to victimize us. Recently we have won cases extending our rights to be on the ballot.

In certain cases where we have been physically attacked by right-wing forces, we have utilized the tactic of demanding that the authorities protect our rights, and we have pressed for the arrest and conviction of the right-

wing thugs. This was done to help build our overall political defense against such attacks, which was the main thrust of our defense effort. Some examples of where we did this have been in defense against the armed attacks on our headquarters by gusanos in Los Angeles, the Klan in Houston and the Legion of Justice in Chicago. In Los Angeles and Houston, these attacks were carried out with lethal weapons. In all three cases, part of our overall defense effort was to demand that the authorities arrest and convict the culprits. We put no trust in the capitalist authorities by doing this. But the campaign put pressure on them, helped expose their lack of enthusiasm in prosecuting the attackers, and even helped expose their direct complicity with the attacks. This aided our overall defense effort and was a factor in halting the attacks in these cases.

The general democratic right we are appealing to when we make such demands is that of equality before the law. This right was raised in the bourgeois-democratic revolutions, and represents an important gain for the masses. It is a right we support, and would certainly be included in the constitution of a workers state. While we know that the capitalist state systematically violates this right, there is nothing wrong with our demanding that it apply to us.

*2. Is it a violation of principle to demand that the bourgeois authorities protect our rights, in situations where we are under violent attack from a tendency in the working class?*

On this question, Comrade Clark's answer is an unambiguous "yes."

This argument would put us in a peculiar position. Let's look at a few examples. Some years ago, our national office was firebombed. We notified the police, and conducted a campaign demanding that the police investigate the incident and arrest and convict those responsible. We suspected, and the police investigation later tended to corroborate this, that a right-wing group was responsible. The cops dragged their feet on the investigation—an example of a violation of our democratic rights. But we demanded those rights. Now suppose that it had turned out that the attack actually came from the CP or a group like the NCLC? Would we then have had to say, "Oh, since it turned out that a working-class tendency firebombed us, we drop charges, because, you see, we would have pressed charges if the attack was carried out by a capitalist-class tendency, but not if it was carried out by a working-class tendency." Further suppose that the authorities themselves went ahead and pressed charges anyway—would we then support a defense committee for those who firebombed us, in the name of working-class solidarity?

In the middle 1960s, a gunman came into the Detroit headquarters and murdered one of our comrades and seriously wounded two others. We notified the police and gave them all the information we have about the killer. We also formed a committee that demanded that the authorities prosecute the killer, and exposed their lenient treatment of him. In this case, the murder was a right winger, apparently acting alone. What should we have done if it turned out that he was from a working-class tendency?

These two examples illustrate the fallacy of Comrade Clark's position that it is a principle that we cannot de-

mand equal protection from the authorities in cases where other tendencies in the working class carry out physical attacks upon us.

The error that Comrade Clark makes is to take a valid principle and attempt to apply it in a situation that falls outside its scope of applicability. We do have a principle of working-class solidarity in the face of attacks by the bourgeoisie. We are opposed to any interference by the by the capitalist class in the political differences within the working-class movement. We are against appealing to the capitalist authorities to intervene into the disputes in the working-class and socialist movements. Although there is a line of blood between ourselves and the Stalinists, for example, we never call upon the authorities to intervene in the political struggle between us.

Along these lines, we say it was a violation of principles for the Stalinists to support the Smith Act proceedings against our comrades in the early 1940s. That was an act of political strikebreaking, of aiding the class enemy in delivering a blow to the rights of all workers.

But differences of opinion in the working-class movement are qualitatively different from the utilization of violence in the workers movement to settle those differences. The goon attacks of the NCLC are not just an extension of the political struggle in the socialist movement—they are just as much a violation of working-class principles as appealing to the bourgeois authorities to settle such differences is. Such attacks are a violation of workers democracy, a violation of democratic rights in general, and unless effectively countered and halted, will harm the socialist and working-class movement. In this case, the demand that the state authorities defend the democratic rights of the victims of such attacks is not at all the same thing as calling upon those authorities to settle political differences within the socialist or broader working-class movement. Insofar as a tendency in the working class utilized such methods, it has forfeited any right to appeal to working-class solidarity to defend such attacks.

There are many examples that could be cited where we have utilized this tactic. I will refer to two: the defense of Trotsky in Mexico and the struggle in the Teamsters union between the international bureaucracy and the revolutionary leadership of Local 574 in the 1930s.

The defense of Trotsky against the Stalinists was the most important instance where our movement had to defend itself from a murderous attack from another tendency in the socialist movement. The main thrust of this defense was a political one of mobilizing whatever forces we could, to counter the mountains of Stalinist slander directed against Trotsky, against the murders of Trotskyists, and against the threat to assassinate Trotsky. But part of that campaign included appealing to the bourgeois authorities, in this case the Mexican authorities, to defend Trotsky's rights. Part of our defense consisted of a physical defense. This physical defense included, but did not rely upon, acceptance of a police guard at Trotsky's home.

When the first attempt on Trotsky's life came in the attack led by Siqueros and his gang, SWP member Sheldon Harte was murdered. We and Trotsky not only cooperated in the police investigation of the crime, Trotsky publicly intervened in that investigation, calling upon the police to specifically investigate the Stalinists. This was necessary to counter moves the Stalinists were making to throw suspicion off themselves and onto us. We called

for the arrest and vigorous prosecution of the perpetrators.

When Trotsky was assassinated, *The Militant* carefully followed the police investigation. We called for exposure of the real criminals, Stalin's GPU, that had ordered the crime. In doing so, we were not calling upon the Mexican police to outlaw or ban the Stalinists, or deprive them of their democratic rights. Nor did we attempt to utilize the Mexican authorities to settle the political questions in dispute between ourselves and the Stalinists. We were demanding that the authorities defend Trotsky's rights. Exactly how we utilized this tactic, of course, was conditioned by the situation, including the nature of the Cardenas regime.

Farrell Dobb's new book, *Teamster Power*, recounts the struggle the leaders of Local 574 were forced to wage against the bureaucracy headed by Tobin. Tobin had sent a force headed by L. A. Murphy into Minneapolis to try to destroy the leadership of 574. This attack included goon assaults. It is worthwhile quoting from the book:

"On the morning of May 21 the new offensive began. Ray Dunne and George Frosig were distributing leaflets and talking to drivers in the freight yards of the Omaha railway. Suddenly a Buick sedan drove up and a gang of Tobin's thugs jumped out of it and assaulted Ray and George with blackjacks. They were severely beaten.

"Ownership of the Buick was traced to L. A. Murphy through a check with the automobile license bureau. This fact, along with an account of the atrocity, was published in the *Northwest Organizer* to inform the labor movement of the new danger. For the record, a protest was also made to the public authorities. But they did nothing about it, as was to be expected.

"Local 574 immediately called a mass protest meeting. Word of the outrage had spread rapidly and the hall was jammed with union members, many of them accompanied by their wives. As the latter development indicated, not since the 1934 strikes had the workers been so aroused. They were more than ready to fight back, and combat veterans that they were by now, they knew it had to be done intelligently.

"Accepting the executive board's advice, the membership adopted a three-point plan of action: efforts were redoubled to obtain speedy renewal of contracts that were about to expire; an assessment was voted to provide a special defense fund; and a resolution was adopted setting forth the basic line for a campaign to mobilize the city's working class against the new goon attack.

"The resolution condemned the gangsterism introduced by Tobin, calling it an open invitation to the enemies of the labor movement. If it could be made to work against Local 574, the other unions were warned, the same methods would be used against them as well. Thus an open challenge had been hurled at the leaders and members of all AFL organizations. It was their duty, acting in their own self-interest, to join in the struggle to free the movement from the menace of thuggery.

"Our appeal fell upon responsive ears. Officers, and especially rank-and-file members of the AFL locals, poured heat on the right-wing officials of the Central Labor Union and the Teamsters Joint Council. They also brought heavy pressure to bear on Mayor Latimer, as did Farmer-Labor Party ward clubs. Finding himself under heavy fire, the mayor felt he had to do something—so he set out to

smear us.

"Late in May a small army of police made a surprise raid on Local 574, charging into our headquarters with drawn guns. They were accompanied by news reporters and photographers. Bearing John Doe warrants for illegal sale of liquor, they searched the premises for evidence. Nothing was to be found, except part of a keg of beer which had been stored away after being left over from a social. Twice more in the next few days the cops descended upon us, but they were unable to spot anything that could be used against the union.

"It was in connection with these smear attempts that Frosig was arrested on the gun charge mentioned previously.

"Taking advantage of the propaganda cover Latimer sought to provide for him, Murphy resumed the physical assaults. In broad daylight on the afternoon of June 3, four rank-and-file members of local 574 driving along Washington Avenue in a passenger car were forced to the curb and ordered out of their vehicle by two carloads of Tobin's musclemen. Some held guns on the union members, while others pulled out blackjacks and beat them. When the victims ran to escape, a volley of shots followed them.

"Bystanders had gotten the license numbers of the thugs' cars, and this information was reported to Latimer with a demand that he take action. As usual though, no arrests were made.

"Instead the mayor held a conference with Murphy and Meyer Lewis. Reporters were then summoned and Murphy issued a statement to them. According to the *Minneapolis Tribune* account, he brazenly accused the victims of 'firing the shots themselves,' falsely asserting that they had done so 'after losing a fight with the employees of Stanchfield Transfer Company,' a firm located near the scene of the crime.

"A week later a Local 574 job steward Harold Haynes was attacked while at work. He had just got back into the cab of his truck after making a delivery. Then the Buick sedan, registered in Muphy's name, pulled up and blocked his way. Five goons leaped out of it. One pointed a gun at Haynes. The other four dragged him out of the car and beat him with blackjacks and gun butts.

"We made a strong protest to Governor Olson. In a letter signed by Bill Brown he was informed that we were holding a special meeting of Local 574 on June 15. We demanded an official answer by then as to what Olson proposed to do about Tobin's criminal attempt, with Latimer's collusion, to destroy a section of the labor movement.

"Coming immediately to our support, the fifth ward Farmer-Labor club insisted that Olson take prompt action. Demands were made that he invoke the executive power of the state to put a stop to acts of vandalism in Minneapolis, and that he uncover the instigators of the plot against organized labor.

"Similar demands upon the governor came from elsewhere in the unions and the Farmer-Labor Party. Since he was coming up for reelection in the fall, it was politically dangerous for him to ignore these pressures, and he knew it. So he passed word along that he would look into the situation right away, pretending that he hadn't known what was going on. Apparently Olson convinced Latimer that it was politically expedient to quiet things

down inside the labor movement, because the physical attacks on us now abated."

We see from this quote that after one attack, we notified the authorities for the record, that is, to help prepare our position to counter these attacks. Later, we were able to mount a powerful campaign that included demanding that the governor "invoke the executive power of the state to put a stop to acts of vandalism in Minneapolis, and that he uncover the instigators of the plot against organized labor." This campaign, based on the mobilization of the union rank and file, and of the labor movement in general, was aided by this demand, and became powerful enough to put a stop to the attacks in the political context of Minnesota at that time.

So we see that neither Trotsky nor the SWP considered that in such cases we could not as a matter of principle demand that the capitalist authorities protest our rights, or the rights of a left wing in the unions which we were in the leadership of, against physical attacks launched by a tendency in the socialist or labor movement. It is a tactical, not a principled question.

Perhaps some further examples will help Comrade Clark understand the difference in calling upon the capitalist authorities to intervene in the political disputes within the socialist movement, and demanding that those same authorities grant us our rights in the face of a violent physical attack on us by a tendency in the workers movement. It would be unprincipled for us to have aped the Stalinists and have called for the conviction of the CP Smith Act defendants. Those trials were an attack on the democratic rights of the whole working class and socialist movement, and the principle we follow in such cases is summed up in the slogan, "an attack on one is an attack on all." But this is an entirely different thing than the trial of Trotsky's assassin, although both the Foley Square defendants and Mercader belonged to the identical Stalinist movement.

Demanding that the governor of Minnesota utilize his executive powers to stop Tobin's goons is a different thing than if we had called for the jailing of Tobin to settle the political dispute in the union.

### *3. How Do We Characterize the NCLC?*

Comrade Clark points to the fact that the leaders of these groups he mentions came out of the SWP. That doesn't prove anything, of course, so did James Burnham.

All of these groups can be characterized as petty-bourgeois sects, operating in the socialist movement and therefore in the workers movement, and are working-class tendencies. This still remains true of the NCLC. In the case of the NCLC, however, we must note that its campaign to attempt to destroy the CP and ourselves by physical means is being utilized by the cops and right wingers. It is becoming more and more stridently anticommunist. Whether this results in the NCLC becoming transformed, and moving right out of the socialist movement, is too early to say, in my opinion.

### *4. What Were the Reasons for the Tactics We Adopted in Defending Ourselves from the NCLC Goon Attack?*

The major thrust of our line from the beginning of the announcement of "Operation Mop-Up" has been to mobilize the left to repudiate the NCLC and such tactics within the movement. This campaign has included attempting to

whatever extent possible to form a united front physical defense to repulse NCLC attacks on any tendency in the left, to keep them out of radical meetings, etc.

We rejected calling upon the police to defend our meetings or the meetings of others. We did this for a number of reasons. First, we decided that with proper organization, we would be able to defend our own meetings. The police could be counted on to attempt to utilize their presence at our meetings to victimize us. In the case of the NCLC attacks, we must assume that the cops would be "neutral" against us, possibly working with the cops inside the NCLC. Where possible, because we cannot rely on the bourgeois authorities to protect our rights, our first line of defense is ourselves and those forces we can mobilize in defense of our rights.

The CP took the opposite course. They placed reliance on the police as their primary defense, and refused to attempt to mobilize the left in a united front effort to repulse the NCLC thuggery. In one instance, this resulted in the cops coming into a CP hall before a meeting was begun, removing table legs and anything else that the CP might utilize to defend itself, and then leaving. Shortly thereafter, the NCLC showed up with clubs, and succeeded in hurting a number of CP members and disrupting the meeting.

Our tactics have been far more successful. The NCLC has to be taught that it cannot physically destroy us. In that regard, the experience they had at Columbia, and especially the education they received when they tried to break up the Detroit educational conference by attacking with clubs, chains, etc., did more to aid the campaign to stop the NCLC than anything the CP did.

The CP's tactics reflect their general class-collaborationist outlook. They placed primary reliance on the cops, rather than on a campaign of mobilizing the left to defend their rights and viewing any tactic of demanding that the authorities protect their rights within the context of such a campaign.

Our tactics began with the recognition that we must rely primarily on ourselves and those forces we can mobilize. However, there is another important point we must take into consideration in deciding tactics. We begin with our understanding of the nature of the capitalist state. We know that the capitalist state will not dispense justice equally. As Comrade Clark correctly points out, the state is not impartial. We must rely on ourselves first of all, and in the long run, help teach the working class to rely on its own power to defend its rights, and to place no reliance at all in the capitalist authorities to do this. But the very reasons why we place no confidence in the capitalist authorities to dispense justice fairly, indicates that there are limits, determined by the objective situation, on the physical means we can utilize to defend ourselves, without walking into police victimization. In the given situation in the country today, for example, it would be utter folly for us to attempt to counter an attack on ourselves with lethal weapons (guns and knives) by similarly arming ourselves. That would set us up for a murderous police trap, much as the Black Panthers were set up. Consequently, part of our decision to rely on our own forces to defend our meetings was predicated on the level of weapons utilized by the NCLC. We could stop them if they used clubs; if they utilized lethal weapons, we would not have been able to effectively counter them on that level, and would have had to review our decision

not to notify the police.

The NCLC has now apparently changed its tactics. Educational experiences such as the one they received in Detroit, the dispatch with which their goons were removed from in front of our headquarters throughout the country, and our demonstrated preparedness to defend all our meetings undoubtedly had had an effect upon them. Obviously, we must continue to keep our guard up until the danger from this quarter passes. But the NCLC has now launched a different kind of attack, not directed at breaking up meetings, but at ambushing individuals or small groups of comrades. It was this kind of attack that resulted in Comrade Jesse Smith's arm being broken. In the face of these new thug tactics, we had a new problem, in some ways similar to that which I cited from *Teamster Power*. Although we did take certain precautions concerning comrades entering and leaving the hall, we could not hope to provide a continuous personal guard for all comrades. Should we counter such attacks by striking back with similar attacks? There is no principle involved, but if we were to do this, we would be making a first-class blunder by providing the cops with a good opportunity to set up a trap for us, and by playing into the hands of the authorities who are attempting to picture the NCLC attacks as a "squabble on the left." To do nothing to defend our comrades is impermissible. Thus we decided, as part of stepping up our political campaign against the NCLC, to demand the arrest and conviction of the thugs who attacked Jesse Smith.

In no way does this imply that we place reliance on the authorities. This is a subordinate part of our overall campaign, which remains to mobilize the left against the NCLC. This aspect of our campaign will not harm our exposure of the role police agents-provocateurs are playing in the NCLC attacks, but can help it just as in the case of the Klan attacks in Houston, where our campaign demanding that the city authorities take action against the Klan complimented our exposure of police collusion with the Klan.

If Comrade Clark rejects the use of these tactics, he should tell us what other tactics we should use in this situation. Otherwise he sounds as if he is telling us that because of what he considers to be principle, we just have to take it if the NCLC uses such ambush tactics, or uses guns against us. That certainly would not inspire the working class with confidence in such "principles."

##### 5. *The Suit Brought by Rank-and-File Teamsters*

Comrade Clark refers to an article in *The Militant* concerning a suit brought by a group of rank-and-file Teamsters against Fitzsimmons and other top Teamster officials, charging them with conspiring with the grape growers to bust the United Farm Workers Union. According to the article, the suit singles out the large sums of Teamster funds going to the goons who have attacked the UFWU pickets.

The principled questions involved in utilizing the courts against such goon tactics within the labor movement have already been discussed. There is another aspect to this question that relates to the method utilized by Comrade Clark of reducing tactical questions to formulas. Our principles help guide our work. But they also have limits of applicability, and sometimes one principle comes into

conflict with another.

For example, we are opposed to strikebreaking. But there are strikes that we do not support. An example was the 1968 teachers strike in New York, which we characterized as a racist strike against the Black and Puerto Rican communities. At that time, our teacher comrades opposed the strike, and our presidential candidate, Fred Halstead, led a group of parents in opening a school shut down by the strike.

We are in principle opposed to government interference in the unions. But recently we supported a suit brought by the NAACP against the steel bosses and the steel union, against racial discrimination by both. We have supported suits brought against some unions by women workers under the Civil rights Act. If the Equal Rights Amendment

passes, we can expect more such suits.

Concerning the recent struggle in the United Mine Workers against the Boyle machine, we warned the miners of the dangers of government intervention into the union. At the same time, we certainly did not object to the opposition group demanding that the authorities arrest and convict the murderers of Yablonsky—whether those killers were from the bosses, the Boyle machine or both. Similarly, we would be opposed to the rank-and-file Teamster group Comrade Clark mentions placing any reliance on the government, or seeking government aid in settling the political dispute they have with Fitzsimmons. But we have no objection to their bringing suit against Fitzsimmons using their dues to hire goons to attack the UFWU.

July 17, 1973

IN DEFENSE OF THE  
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY'S POSITION  
ON BLACK LIBERATION: WHERE THE  
INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY GOES WRONG

by Tony Thomas, Lower Manhattan Branch,  
New York Local

The political resolution submitted by the Internationalist Tendency, "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America," contains a fundamental attack on the positions of the American Trotskyist movement on the Afro-American struggle. This resolution presents a distorted and false view of the development of the Black liberation movement in recent years and our party's intervention in it. It completely misrepresents the development of organizations such as the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. It projects a course of action that would make the party's intervention in the Black liberation struggle an obstacle to the development of that struggle and of the American socialist revolution. This resolution must be rejected if the party is to go forward to realize its historic tasks.

This article will not review all of the falsifications and misrepresentations this resolution makes in regard to the Afro-American struggle and our intervention in it. The purpose of this article is to answer the assaults of the Internationalist Tendency on the fundamental positions of our party in relation to the national struggle.

*Combined Character of the Coming Revolution*

The Internationalist Tendency misrepresents our concept of the combined character of the American revolution. Insofar as they understand this theory correctly, they deny essential political facts of life in this country as well as the analysis of the Afro-American question and the results of the 1860-65 Civil War and the Reconstruction traditionally held by Marxists.

They write: "The theory of the combined revolution is in effect an extension of the permanent revolution to the United States. It depicts the American revolution arising out of a coalition of independent movements based

on separate oppressed sectors of society, including, but not centered around the working class. . . . it is used to designate the combination of separate and parallel struggles by women and other oppressed sectors with the struggle of the working class for power."

Further they write, "But, it would be false to contend that the American bourgeois revolution was incomplete. Since the Civil War, the most advanced capitalist layers, the industrial and financial bourgeoisie have wielded power virtually alone. As in every other imperialist country, bourgeois-democratic rights have been extended and withdrawn as the class struggle developed. The period of Reconstruction was one of extreme radical democracy. If prior to World War I, it may still have been possible to find a major segment of the economy where the basic bourgeois tasks had not been completed, the massive industrialization and urbanization of the post-war period swept it away."

Their position boils down to the following points:

1) The party's theory of the combined character of the American socialist revolution means that the struggles not only of the oppressed nationalities and the working class are combined, but that we ascribe a similar dynamic in the revolution to women's, students', gay and other struggles;

2) The bourgeois-democratic revolution has been basically completed in the U. S. since the Civil War and minor incompleteness that existed after the Civil War were cleared up by the time of the First World War;

3) The only tasks of basic importance in the revolution will be the completion of socialist tasks; The national liberation struggles of oppressed nationalities in this country are basically peripheral struggles dependent on those of the working class without any independent dynamic.



## 1969 Political Resolution

The concept of the combined character of the American revolution was first codified in the 1969 political resolution advanced by the Political Committee and adopted unanimously by the convention. The concept of the combined revolution refers specifically to the combination of the uncompleted tasks of the bourgeois revolution relating to Afro-Americans and other oppressed nationalities and the proletarian class struggle.

Comrade Barnes in his report on the resolution to the convention summarized the resolution's meaning in regard to this topic:

1. The basic character of the Afro-American struggle was a struggle by an oppressed nationality to "accomplish the historically deferred tasks that the American bourgeoisie proved incapable of accomplishing in their second revolution and turned away from as the United States became an imperialist power."

2. Recognition of the vanguard role of the Black liberation struggle in the radicalization and the coming revolution.

3. "The alliance between the struggle by the Afro-Americans and other oppressed national minorities or nationalities in this country and the struggle of the workers is the key to the success of the American revolution. This alliance can only be based on the unconditional support by the political leadership of the working class to the struggles for self-determination of the Afro-American people."

4. "*The Third American revolution will have a combined character. It will be a workers' struggle for power and a struggle by the oppressed nationalities for liberation and self-determination.* It will be a struggle that only a workers' government established in the United States will be able to bring to a successful conclusion. And through it, not only will all the democratic rights of the oppressed minorities and nationalities finally be brought into being and guaranteed, but also the proletarian demands of the workers of all sections of the country will be met."

5. "This struggle is the clearest manifestation in the United States of the permanent revolution. By this we mean that there will be no division of this struggle into separate stages; there will be no middle solution. There will be no solution to the national-democratic demands of the Black masses apart from the solution of the exploitation by capitalism of the workers themselves. The revolution will be combined, or it will not take place. There is no Black bourgeoisie that is capable of winning national-democratic demands on a capitalist basis, and there are no conditions under which American capitalism will grant these demands. It is only the successful struggle for workers power and socialism, through the process of permanent revolution, that can do this." (*Towards and American Socialist Revolution*, pages 143-4, emphasis added.)

The Internationalist Tendency's claim that the combined character of the revolution involves more than the relationship between the bourgeois-democratic struggles of oppressed nationalities and the working-class struggle is completely false.

As Marxists we recognize that the struggles for the liberation of women and the ending of anti-democratic attacks on the rights of the masses will play important

roles in the motion toward the socialist revolution. The struggles for democratic rights of homosexuals and other democratic struggles and issues like the ecology issue will also be important. Nor do we deny an independent dynamic to many of these struggles. However, the national struggles of oppressed nationalities raise the question of state power and point in the direction of an historically differentiated revolution of its own. A struggle which, needless to say, will be part of the overall socialist revolution in this country.

### *Completion of Bourgeois Revolution*

The Internationalist Tendency claims that the theory of combined revolution, even in regard to Afro-Americans and other oppressed nationalities, is erroneous because they claim that the bourgeois revolution has been completed in the United States. They claim this is true because the industrial and financial bourgeoisie has been firmly in control of the state since the Civil War and the economy has been completely transformed into an advanced industrial economy.

This view overlooks the real dynamics of the second American revolution and the Reconstruction (vaguely dismissed in their resolution as a period of "radical democracy"). The second American revolution itself was a combined revolution. It combined the struggle for political power of the industrial and financial capitalists with the struggle for national and social liberation of the Afro-American people. The 1860-65 Civil War clearly achieved the political objectives of the American capitalists as well as the freeing of the Afro-Americans from chattel slavery.

However, the revolutionary process continued in the 1865-1877 period known as Reconstruction. During this period the question of the liberation of Afro-Americans by the granting of equality, economic and social, was posed.

While the "radical" section of the capitalist Republican Party supported this struggle to some degree, as Comrade William F. Warde (George Novack) wrote in the May-June 1950 *Fourth International*, "The main driving force of the revolutionary movement emanated from the four million freedmen in the south. They wanted relief from age-old oppression and insufferable exploitation. They desired land, jobs, a decent living; civil rights and political power represented by the vote; legal and racial equality; educational and cultural opportunities."

During Reconstruction the attempt at completing these tasks through revolutionary means was made. In the southern states people's militias based on the Afro-American population and Union troops maintained their power to carry out these measures. In some areas of the South, freedmen and poor whites seized land and other property formerly belonging to the slaveholders. Radical democratic measures were passed in education, the tax system, and imprisonment for debt and property qualifications for voting were removed by these governments.

The political life of the southern states "reorganized" during the Reconstruction was characterized by Comrade Warde "as dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, democratically supported by the Negro and white masses, actual [and] potential small farmers." This is why the Reconstruction was more than a period of "radical democracy." The petty-bourgeois masses never achieved class independence from the bourgeoisie and the democratic revolution in regard to Afro-Americans was defeated.

In 1876 after its aims in the Reconstruction had been gained—destruction of the political and economic power of the southern slaveholders and gaining economic control over the south—the industrial capitalists agreed to a "Great Compromise," that removed their support to the goals of Afro-Americans in the Reconstruction. They feared the dynamic of the Reconstruction might go over into a social revolution, and recognized the advantages that could accrue to them if Afro-American oppression were maintained in terms of superprofits from first the agricultural and later industrial superexploitation of Black labor.

The rolling back of the Reconstruction was not accomplished peacefully. The main initiating action of the bourgeoisie was to withdraw federal troops that had been protecting the Afro-Americans from the Ku Klux Klan and other irregular armed groups of the racists in the South. For a number of years an intense struggle took place that included a large amount of armed actions by both racists and Blacks, that was decided because of the shift of the bourgeoisie of the North into the camp of the opposition to Afro-American liberation. In some parts of the South this *counterrevolution* was not fully completed until the 1890s.

#### *Turning Back of the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution Central to Structure of U. S. Imperialism*

In an article written in Vol. 9 No. 4 (January 1966) of the YSA's discussion bulletin, Comrade Peter Camejo outlined how the incompleteness of this revolution led to the special status of Afro-Americans as an oppressed nationality serving as a base for the most intense forms of economic exploitation:

"There are three major experiences the Negro people have had since slavery that have determined their present situation in the United States. They are: A. The Second American Revolution (1860-1877). This period was marked by the end of chattel slavery, the drive toward economic integration (land reform), and the drive toward political rights (suffrage, equality before the law, etc.).

"B. The reaction against gains made during the Second American Revolution (1877-1940)—the establishment of *racism as an integral part of modern industrial American capitalism*, the establishment of the specific Southern form of racism, and the confinement of the Negro people as a landless rural working class, a unique class status at that time.

"C. The urbanization and industrialization of the Negro people (1940-1965). The 25 years witnessed the formation of huge ghettos centrally located in the major cities in both the North and South, the entry into industry of over one and a half million Negro workers [this figure actually pertains to trade-union membership at that time—TT], *the establishment of the Negro people as a major supply of cheap labor for the cities and a resurgence in the struggle against racism.*" (All emphasis added.)

Camejo pointed out that the bourgeoisie's own stopping of the bourgeois revolution was hardly a unique phenomenon. "Marx noticed," Comrade Camejo wrote, "that once the capitalist class becomes dominant over pre-capitalist ruling classes it may turn against its own bourgeois-democratic forms and use many of the reactionary pre-capitalist forms of oppression. After the Civil War, as the industrial bourgeoisie achieved its domina-

tion, it sought to use the racist heritage left by chattel slavery."

These developments were also linked to the advent of the U. S. as an imperialist power, itself a product of the victory of the capitalists in the Civil War. The superprofits the U. S. imperialists gained from the superexploitation of Blacks helped enable them to compete with the European powers with their already large colonial empires. Imperialism also buttressed racism and Jim Crow in the entire country as a rationalization for the pillage and the colonization of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Lenin saw the national oppression of Afro-Americans as directly linked to the setting back of the gains Blacks won in the Civil War. In his unfinished article, "Statistics and Sociology," written in January 1917, he said:

"In the United States, the Negroes . . . account for only 11.1 percent [of the population]. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861-65 and guaranteed by the Constitution of the republic was in many respects increasingly curtailed in the chief Negro areas (the South) in connection with the transition from the progressive, premonopoly capitalism of 1860-70 to the reactionary monopoly capitalism (imperialism) of the new era, which in America was especially sharply etched out by the Spanish-American imperialist war of 1898. . . ." (Volume 23, pp. 275-6, Lenin's *Collected Works*, current English edition.)

The incompleteness of the national-democratic struggle launched by Blacks during the Reconstruction, in the context of the development of U. S. imperialism, laid the basis for the current positions of Afro-Americans. Afro-Americans are oppressed *as a nationality*, although differing degrees of effects of this oppression are accorded to different sectors of the Black community. The oppression weighs heaviest against the Black worker. This oppression, in turn, is the base for the position of Afro-Americans as part of the reserve army of labor, and for the society's refusal to grant equal economic and social benefits to Afro-Americans.

This whole system of national oppression is of extreme importance to U. S. imperialism. In 1967, Comrade Robert Vernon computed that the wage differential between Afro-Americans and whites was then worth roughly \$23-billion in superprofits to U. S. imperialism. This figure is only part of their superprofits since Afro-Americans' lower standard of living is reflected not only in lower wages but in inadequate social, educational, and housing facilities provided for Blacks. U. S. imperialism is also given an easier time in periods of economic difficulties by its capacity to shift unemployment, social cutbacks, etc., onto the backs of Blacks thus easing potential conflicts with more organized sections of the working class.

#### *Independent Character of Black Liberation Struggle*

It is the fact that the oppression of Black people is permanently built into the U. S. capitalist social structure that gives the Black liberation struggle its independent dynamic, related and at the same time separate from that of the working-class as such. It springs from the different material conditions Afro-Americans face politically, economically, culturally, etc. They are the reflection of the denial of equality in these spheres which Blacks sought during the Reconstruction.

The Internationalist Tendency claims that the Afro-American struggle has had a dynamic independent of that of the labor movement—in a conjunctural sense—only since the beginning of a period of relative quiescence of general working-class struggle that began during the late 1940s and early 1950s. They claim that integration of Afro-Americans into the labor movement at the time of the previous labor upsurge essentially eclipsed any dynamic of independent struggle on the part of Afro-Americans.

However, this is completely different from the estimate which the party drew at the close of the labor radicalization in the 1940s. The report on the Black struggle resolution, "Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism," adopted at both the 1948 and 1950 conventions, given to the 1948 convention says this about the relationship of the proletarianization and unionization of Afro-Americans to the independent Black movement:

"Those who believe the Negro question is in reality, purely and simply, or to a decisive extent, merely a class question, these pointed with glee to the tremendous growth of the Negro personnel in the organized labor movement. It grew in a few years from three hundred thousand to one million; it is now one and a half million. But to their surprise, instead of this lessening and weakening the struggle of the independent Negro movement, *the more the Negroes went into the labor movement, the more capitalism incorporated them into industry, the more they were accepted in the union movement, it is during that period since 1940, that the independent mass movement has broken out with a force greater than it has ever shown before.*" (Emphasis in original.)

The report continued on the independent character of the Black struggle and its role in bringing the proletariat into motion: "Now Lenin has handled this problem and in the resolution we have quoted him. He says that the dialectic of history is such that small independent nations, small nationalities, which are powerless [get the word, please—*powerless*] in the struggle against imperialism, *nevertheless* can act as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which can bring on to the scene the real power against imperialism—the socialist proletariat.

"... what Lenin is saying is that although the fundamental force is the proletariat, although these groups are powerless, although the proletariat has got to lead them, it does not by any means follow that they cannot do anything until the proletariat actually comes forward to lead them. *He says exactly the opposite is the case.*

"They, by their agitation, resistance and the political developments they can initiate, can be the means whereby the proletariat is brought on the scene.

"Not always, and every time, not the sole means, but one of the means. That is what we have to get clear." (Page 245, *Fourth International*, December 1948, emphasis and dashes in the original.)

It is this recognition of the dual national-democratic and class character of the Afro-American struggle and its capacity as an independent struggle to bring the working class on the political stage that confirms our estimation that the socialist revolution in this country can only take place as a combined struggle of the oppressed peoples for national liberation and self-determination and the working class for socialism.

### *Black Nationalism Reactionary?*

After rejecting the combined character of the coming American revolution, the Internationalist Tendency proceeds to attack our position of support to Black nationalism. The arguments they present are: (1) Afro-Americans no longer really constitute a nation or nationality; (2) even if they did, all nationalism of oppressed peoples like Afro-Americans is equivalent to the reactionary national program put forward by capitalist layers in oppressed nations and is therefore reactionary.

These arguments are similar to those utilized by Comrade Ernest Germain in his article "In Defence of Leninism: In Defence of the Fourth International" (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin Volume X*, number 4).

Comrade Germain attacks the nationalism of all oppressed peoples in this epoch as "reactionary as a rule." He makes one exception to this: ". . . there can be some exceptions to the rule based upon exceptional 'historical and economic circumstances,' i.e., those of oppressed nationalities which do not yet possess their own ruling class, or which have only such a miserable embryo of a bourgeoisie that, in the given and foreseeable situation, it is excluded that this embryo could actually become a ruling class without a complete disintegration of the imperialist structure. The best example of such exceptions are the black and Chicano nationalities inside the United States" (page 34).

The Internationalist Tendency's analysis is at least more consistent than Comrade Germain's in regard to the Afro-American and Chicano nationalist movements. The existence or nonexistence of a capitalist or middle class in a given nationality cannot be seen as a decisive criterion in regard to the character of nationalism. Nationalism can only be examined as a concrete program for material action and be judged whether or not its program is historically progressive.

The projection of a true capitalist and reactionary program for national liberation is not subordinate to the presence or nonpresence of capitalists. With the dominant class in the society—in all places except the workers states the capitalists—determining the ideology, it would be hardly unlikely if Black capitalist or Chicano capitalist stragems were to appear within the general context of Black nationalism or Chicano nationalism, despite the relative weakness of the Chicano and Black "embryo" capitalists (and it must be added that the small layers of capitalist and middle-class layers in the Black community and Chicano community are no smaller and perhaps greater than the capitalist and middle-class layers in Tanzania or some of the other African countries).

Thus the Internationalist Tendency's application of Comrade Germain's view that nationalism is reactionary in oppressed nations in a scientific sense is more consistent than that advanced by Germain in his resolution itself. This only makes it more incorrect and useless.

The Internationalist Tendency claims to agree with Leon Trotsky's position on the question as published in the book *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*. They claim that the basis for Trotsky's support for national rights for Afro-Americans and to the potentiality of the development of an Afro-American nationality was because there was "a massive concentration of Black people in the South under predominantly rural

conditions. Under those conditions, and due to their relatively smaller weight within the labor movement, it was possible for true nationalist aspirations to develop."

However, they say application of Trotsky's views to the present would be incorrect because, "Since 1939 the objective basis for the development of nationalist aspirations has been considerably weakened." Why? "There is only a small minority of sharecroppers. The majority of the Black population has been dispersed in the cities and integrated into the industrial production process." Under these conditions they feel that Black nationalism cannot develop. They speak in this way, "In the unlikely event that a nationalist consciousness develops," claiming it will not develop, and has not developed.

They further claim that "as the working class radicalizes, the subjective basis for nationalist aspirations [which is supposed to have disappeared anyway—TT] will tend to wither away and make way for working-class solidarity."

In any event they state they would strongly object to Black nationalism as reactionary:

"We see the ideology of nationalism as separate from the Black movement. We support the democratic content of this movement while we reject the ideology of nationalism. The main tenets of Black nationalism are an emphasis on the communality of the interests of Black people (which includes Black agents of the bourgeoisie) and rejection of the white population as a potential ally (which excludes the white working class). In fact this ideology has two objective functions. For the extremely small layer of Black bourgeoisie and especially petty bourgeoisie, it serves as a protective shelter against the competition of white big business. But more importantly, it objectively serves the American ruling class by hindering the process of united working class struggles."

#### *Evolution in the Use of Terms*

In the history of the Marxist movement there has been an evolution in the use of the term nationalism. During the period of the rise of capitalism, the capitalist class advanced a program in the national struggle reflecting its class needs and interests—which were on the whole progressive. They stressed not only the fact that the nation involved faced a common problem in solving the national tasks (true), but that the way to achieve these and other tasks was by subordinating the social interests of other classes to the dictates of the capitalists (false). The bourgeoisie, along this line, pushed the backward idea that its nation had cultural, intellectual or even physical superiority and the inferiority of oppressed nationalities, nations competing with it, was also pushed by the bourgeoisie.

During this period, the national movement was almost completely synonymous with the struggle of the bourgeoisie to power. Marxists, while recognizing the progressive historic role of the bourgeoisie, opposed its ideology in the national struggle. Marxists tended to call this ideology nationalism.

However, in the era of permanent revolution, the nationalism of the masses of oppressed nationalities has a tendency to mesh with the needs of the proletarian struggle, not with the bourgeois solutions. Rather than being achievable under capitalism, national liberation now becomes achievable only through a process of permanent revolution. As part of this change, the weight of the work-

ing class in oppressed nations tends to grow and become much stronger relative to the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois layers than it was in oppressed nations during the epoch of the rise of capitalism.

The "Freedom Now" resolution passed by our party's 1963 convention draws on this view. It defines nationalism—especially in regard to Afro-Americans—to mean "that a certain group of people, living in a certain place, has decided to take its political destinies in its own hands." (Page 106, *International Socialist Review*, Fall 1963.)

Understood in this way, nationalism becomes more directly identified with the aspiration for national liberation. For all oppressed nations this concept is progressive. It is clear that in this context it would be sectarianism to consider all nationalism among Afro-Americans or any other oppressed nationality to be "bourgeois," or "petty-bourgeois" inherently and therefore basically reactionary. In fact the thrust of such aspirations can lead to a revolutionary confrontation with imperialism.

#### *Canadian Trotskyists Speak*

This question is dealt with adequately in "Canada and the Crisis of World Imperialism," a resolution on the national question in Canada adopted by a large majority at the April 1973 convention of the Canadian section of the Fourth International:

"In general terms, nationalism is an identification with the integrity, the independence, values, culture or language of the nation; the belief that the nation as a whole has common problems, goals or tasks; and the concept that a struggle or common endeavor in pursuit of these goals is called for.

"In a national struggle or movement, different social classes tend to stress different aspects of nationalism, to connect the struggle with their own objectives. But this does not mean that several distinct 'nationalisms' coexist, one for each major social class. The pursuit of national goals by elements of every social class will have a common point of reference: the situation of the nation as a whole and the tasks that flow from this.

"Nationalism has a progressive character only where it promotes the struggle against real aspects of national oppression suffered by a people—that is, where it corresponds to real national tasks (winning of national independence, establishment of national language, etc.) left unachieved by the bourgeois revolution, and which can now be achieved in their totality only through socialist revolution. In such struggles of oppressed nationalities, the working class does not develop a 'different' nationalism from the bourgeoisie. Rather it is the most thoroughgoing and revolutionary advocate of the full achievement of the tasks of national emancipation, and has the most consistent interest in carrying through such tasks. In contrast, in imperialist nations where such tasks are already realized, nationalism serves only the bourgeoisie." (July-August 1973, *International Socialist Review*, page 25.)

Our view, of course, is not restricted to nationalism. We believe that the national struggle of oppressed nationalities cannot be gained without a socialist revolution based on the class struggle of the working class. We believe that not only nationalist, but revolutionary socialist consciousness is a necessity for oppressed peoples fighting for liberation. Our concept of internationalism—a prime necessity for all fighters against capitalism—entails support to the nationalism—the national liberation

struggles — of all oppressed peoples and the unity in struggle of all oppressed and working people in support of all struggles against oppression.

#### *Other Voices*

The U. S. and Canadian Trotskyists are not the only Marxists to have utilized the term nationalism in this way.

In 1931 Trotsky wrote, "But while the 'separatism' of the Catalan bourgeoisie is only a pawn in its play with the Madrid government against the Catalan and Spanish people, the separatism of the workers and peasants is only the shell of their social rebellion. One must distinguish very rigidly between these two forms of separatism. Precisely, however, in order to draw the line between the nationally oppressed workers and peasants and their bourgeoisie, the proletarian vanguard must take the boldest and most sincere position on the question of national self-determination." ("The Revolution in Spain," page 78, *The Spanish Revolution*.)

In 1940, the Fourth International held an emergency conference to prepare itself for the tasks posed by World War II. That conference adopted a resolution "The Colonial World and the Second Imperialist War." This resolution states, "Nationalism in the West is a tool of capitalist power, a weapon used to pit exploited peoples against each other in wars fought by military and economic means for exclusively capitalist interests. But in the backward, subject countries of the East, the nationalist movements form an integral part of the struggle against world imperialism. As such they must be supported to the fullest possible extent by the working class of the entire Western world."

Similar usages of the term nationalism can be found in the writings of Ernest Mandel and of Ernest Germain — at least until his recent factional outburst in "In Defence of Leninism."

#### *Basis for Nationalist Consciousness*

The Internationalist Tendency's claim that the basis for nationalist consciousness on the part of Afro-Americans "has been considerably weakened," because of the disappearance of sharecroppers is completely without basis either in the real experience of the Black liberation struggle in the last ten years or in the traditional Marxist methodology in regard to the national question and its relation to the agrarian question (see Comrade Roberts' "The Agrarian Revolution and Nationalism: Trotsky's View," Vol. 31 No. 17, *Discussion Bulletin*). Its only roots in the working-class movement can be the Black Belt theory developed by Stalin himself and rejected by Trotsky and the Fourth International.

Was the basis for Trotsky's application of the national question to Afro-Americans the "predominant rural conditions," or Afro-Americans' "smaller weight within the labor movement"? In fact, *nowhere* in Trotsky's *Black Nationalism and Self-Determination* is there any statement of the kind. In fact, Trotsky more than once mentions that the development of nationalist consciousness on the part of the Blacks will be a result of the *explosiveness of the proletariat's* radicalization in the U. S. and of the fact that doubly-exploited Afro-Americans will proceed to the proletarian dictatorship ahead of white workers:

"I believe that by the unheard-of political and theo-

retical backwardness and the unheard-of economic advance *the awakening of the working class* will proceed quite rapidly. The old ideological covering will burst, all questions will emerge at once, and since the country is *so economically mature* the adaptation of the political and theoretical to the economic level will be achieved very rapidly. It is then possible that the Negroes will become the most advanced section. We have already a similar example in Russia. The Russians were the European Negroes. It is very possible that the Negroes also through the self-determination will proceed to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers. They will then furnish the vanguard." (*Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, page 18, emphasis added.)

In fact, it is not the existence of rural layers or isolation from industry that is the objective basis for national consciousness. We have always held as materialists that national oppression is the basis for national consciousness and the desire of the militant layers of the oppressed nationalities for national liberation. What could be simpler than that to a Marxist?

National oppression of Afro-Americans still continues, and will continue until after U. S. imperialism has been replaced with socialism. Afro-Americans are still not afforded equal rights and opportunities. In fact, economically, the special oppression of Afro-Americans is both more intense and more important than it has been at any time since the second American revolution. This is because Afro-Americans' basic function is as a sector of the industrial proletariat, where the exploitation and superprofits are more intensive than it was in "Black Belt" agriculture, and because Afro-Americans are now concentrated in the main proletarian centers of the U. S. .

In fact, if anything, the consistent oppression and exploitation of Afro-Americans as a nationality linked with the development of increasing nationalist consciousness has decisively proved that it was not the rural isolation of Afro-Americans that lays the basis for this oppression but the necessity of U. S. imperialism to maintain national oppression of Afro-Americans.

#### *"Dispersion of Afro-Americans"*

The Internationalist Tendency makes the further astounding statement that Afro-Americans have been "dispersed in the cities and integrated into the industrial production process." In actuality, the process of Afro-American urbanization has had the process of *concentrating* Afro-Americans both in terms of the establishment of large urban Black communities and in terms of the relative segregation of Afro-Americans within many industries.

While the 1939 SWP resolution on self-determination noted that "In the cities of the North and East, the Negroes form only a small minority of the population, generally less than ten percent," and that only in Birmingham, Alabama, were Afro-Americans as much as 50 percent of the white population (one-third of the whole population), as of the 1970 census—which probably underestimated the Black population significantly—there were 89 U. S. cities of over 50,000 with a Black population of 20 percent or more. The census also found that 42 of these cities had Black populations of over 50,000 and 21 of these cities had Black populations of over 100,000.

And since the national oppression of Afro-Americans

has changed only in form, Afro-Americans have tended to be concentrated in urban communities of highly concentrated size. If anything, this process has tended to bring Afro-Americans closer together rather than disperse them. And it is especially in regard to the demand for the ending of the oppressive conditions in these urban Black centers that Afro-American nationalism has been traditionally centered on.

Contrary to the pretensions of the Internationalist Tendency—and Stalin's Black Belt schema—in previous periods of radicalization Black nationalist currents were centered in the cities. This is true of the Garvey movement that grew up during the first massive period of Black urbanization during and shortly after World War I. Nationalist trends such as the Nation of Islam, the Black power trends, the Black Panther Party, etc., found their origins and their base in these concentrated Black urban centers, not in the countryside.

The Internationalist Tendency's claims about the "objective basis" for Afro-American nationalism having disappeared are contrary not only to Marxist theory but to the reality of Afro-American life and the continued development of Black nationalist trends in the twentieth century.

The Internationalist Tendency's position on this question reflects a schematic view which denies the national struggle because Afro-Americans are a nationality and not a nation with a separate territory or a common language other than English. Their mistaken notion that nationalism is "petty-bourgeois" or bourgeois, no doubt, is the root of their insistence that no nationalist consciousness can take place without a large Black petty-bourgeois "peasant" base.

#### *Why We Support Black Nationalism*

In this context, how could Black nationalism be anything but a development whose essence is not a diversion from the proletarian revolution, as Comrade Ernest Mandel put it, but leads toward it. Can it be anything but revolutionary that (inserting Afro-Americans into the formulation on nationalism in the "Freedom Now" resolution), "Afro-Americans, concentrated in Black communities in the major industrial centers of the U. S., predominantly proletarian, decide to take their political destinies in their own hands."

Can a successful struggle for these aims be accomplished otherwise than through a proletarian revolution? Isn't this struggle a struggle aimed at a social revolution against one of the essential features of the structure of U. S. imperialist society, the oppression and exploitation of Afro-Americans. Isn't the recognition of Afro-Americans of this fact and their determination to overcome this, part of the revolutionary awakening that Trotsky foresaw as a basic part of the process of revolutionary awakening that Trotsky saw as basic to the process of proletarian revolution in the U. S.

Perhaps the Internationalist Tendency thinks that national liberation for Afro-Americans can be achieved through a reform of American capitalism? Comrade Ernest Germain in his "In Defence of Leninism" says that he believes that national liberation can be achieved through a political reform under capitalism in other oppressed nations. Does the Internationalist Tendency think this is true in regard to the national struggles in the U. S.?

Even if these goals were totally achievable under cap-

italism, as Marxists we would support the Black nationalist struggle:

"It is not the viability and competitive capacity of capitalist industry, nor the profitability of capitalist finance which the communist parties should pay regard, but the poverty which the proletariat cannot and should not endure any longer. If the demands correspond to the vital needs of broad proletarian masses, and if these masses feel that they cannot exist unless these demands are met, then the struggle for these demands will become the starting point of the struggle for power." (*Theses on Tactics of the Comintern*, adopted 1921, page 249, Volume I, *Documents of the Communist International*, Cass, London, 1971.)

Our starting point in all struggles is not whether or not the struggles' demands can be met by the bourgeoisie, but whether the struggles express the needs and desires of the masses.

#### *Black Bourgeoisie?*

The resolution of the Internationalist Tendency claims that Afro-American nationalism has two "objective functions." The first is, they state, "For the extremely small layer of Black bourgeoisie and especially petty bourgeoisie, it serves as a protective shelter against the competition of white big business." This claim is not substantiated by any proof.

If we can take at face-value the claim of the Internationalist Tendency that there is a significant Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie that is using Black nationalism for its own ends, it would not be any reason for us to reject it, any more than the fact that a petty-bourgeois bureaucracy within the trade unions attempts to use the labor movement for its own ends would cause us to reject trade unionism.

In fact, our understanding of the historical inadequacy of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois social forces in meeting the democratic and national tasks of oppressed peoples leads us not to oppose the national struggle but to intervene in it as the best fighters, because we understand that only the working-class struggle for socialism can fully realize these demands and that in the course of such a consistent struggle the inadequacies of the petty-bourgeois layers will be exposed before the masses. This is the essence of the theory of permanent revolution.

Comrade Trotsky makes this point in his discussions with Swabeck in 1933:

"Weisbord is correct in a certain sense that the 'self-determination' of the Negroes belongs to the question of the permanent revolution in America. The Negroes will through their awakening, through their demand for autonomy, and through the democratic mobilization of their forces, be pushed on toward the class basis. The petty bourgeoisie will take up the demand for 'social, political and economic equality' and for 'self-determination' but prove absolutely incapable in the struggle; the Negro proletariat will march over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution. That is perhaps for them the most important road." (Page 14, *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*.)

In fact, the Internationalist Tendency's claim that this is one of the "objective functions" of Afro-Americans' desire to take their destinies in their own hands, can only be said to be a denial of the logic of permanent revolu-



tion and an expression of complete lack of confidence in the revolutionary capacities of the Afro-American proletariat and the revolutionary party.

In fact, the tendency of conscious petty-bourgeois layers within the Afro-American community is not to be wedged between a powerful Afro-American bourgeoisie and a powerful Afro-American proletariat, but to be wedged between the American imperialist bourgeoisie and the Black proletariat with much less room for maneuver than most of the "nationalist" petty-bourgeois layers in some of the colonial and semicolonial nations. Its class tendency towards lack of social and political independence finds its most usual expression in its dependence on U. S. imperialism and fear of the mobilization of the Black masses that would upset that apple cart.

Rather than being consistent examples of Afro-Americans attempting to "take their destinies into their own hands," the few attempts at "Black capitalism" have based themselves on the necessity of Afro-Americans collaborating with U. S. imperialism politically and economically. Similarly, on the political field, the chief expression of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois roads for the Black liberation struggle has not been for Blacks to take their destinies in their own hands by building an independent Black party based on the masses of Black proletarians but to propose collaboration with the U. S. imperialists' two main political parties.

In fact, such a scientific investigation of Black "bourgeois" forces shows that its extreme weakness heightens its dependence on U. S. imperialism, obviating a social independence powerful enough to be one of the two chief causes of Black nationalism.

#### *Tool of U. S. Imperialism?*

The second objective function of Black nationalism according to the Internationalist Tendency is, "more importantly, it [Black nationalism] objectively serves the American ruling class by hindering the process of united working-class struggle." This is a truly fantastic statement as totally divorced from the Marxist appreciation of the national question and the reality of American political life as is possible. It is essentially a rehash of the Stalinist-sectarian line that Black nationalism blocks working-class unity.

This proceeds from a methodology that is common throughout the Internationalist Tendency's political resolution—an undialectical counterposition of any specific struggle of a part of the U. S. working class or an oppressed layer on its own to the necessity of a united proletarian onslaught on capitalism if the fundamental goals of the oppressed are to be obtained. In this particular instance, it represents counterposing the Afro-American struggle for national-democratic liberation to the overall socialist revolution.

Lenin attacked this point of view as "imperialist economism." He wrote "It is absurd to *contrapose* the socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism to a *single* problem of democracy, in this case, the national question. We must *combine* the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary programme and tactics on all democratic demands: a republic, a militia, the popular election of officials, equal rights for women, the self-determination of nations, etc." (page 408, Volume 21, Lenin's *Collected Works*, empha-

sis in original).

Similarly, it is totally absurd to claim that Black nationalism "hinders the process of united working-class struggle." The real problem is the unevenness of political levels between Afro-American and white workers. Because Afro-Americans are doubly oppressed and less integrated into American imperialist society, Afro-Americans have been more willing to struggle especially around their own oppression as well as general class issues than white workers. It has been the reluctance of white workers to support the nationalist demands of Afro-Americans, and not Black nationalism that has prevented "united working-class struggles." The only alternative would be the reactionary solution of subordinating the Black liberation struggle to the racism of white workers.

This would be working-class unity, but working-class unity on the basis of subservience to the racist policies of the American imperialist bourgeoisie. As to why U. S. imperialism would be desperately pushing for Afro-Americans to reject this type of unity, it is left to the Internationalist Tendency to explain.

#### *Prepares Unity on Basis of Proletarian Internationalism*

The very fact that Afro-Americans are refusing to subordinate their struggles to the backwardness of white workers can only help to radicalize and mobilize not only Afro-Americans but white workers. This is because these struggles can set an important force with strong weight inside the working-class movement against the class-collaborationist policies of the union bureaucracies. In fact, the major examples of labor militancy that the Internationalist Tendency is able to draw on are all essentially nationalist actions by all-Black or Black-led actions: the Pan-Africanist Polaroid Revolutionary Workers movement; the Black workers and community strikes in Atlanta which fought for demands like upgrading of Black workers, preferential hiring, etc., as well as job condition and wage demands; the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, etc.

The Internationalist Tendency's attack on Black nationalism for prompting such actions—under the rubric of preventing united working-class actions—underestimates the revolutionary potential not only of the Afro-American nationality but of the white sections of the working class itself. Our faith in the revolutionary potential of the white workers in this country leads us to believe that Blacks' insistence on their own demands not being subordinated to anything including the prejudices of white workers, will not stand in the way of working-class unity once the American proletariat takes the road toward political independence from the imperialists on all fronts of the class struggle including the front of Black liberation.

#### *Transitional Program for Black Liberation*

The real meaning of the Internationalist Tendency's positions on Black nationalism are made clear in their section "The Black Party and Community Control" where they attempt to outline a "program" for Black liberation. Their first target is the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* which they claim is a result of our party's "one-sided opportunist emphasis on nationalist demands for the Black masses." They state, "the very concept of a separate program and a separate strategy for Black peo-

ple negates the task of integrating the Black vanguard into a global strategy for proletarian revolution, around a program for the unification of working-class struggles."

The thrust of their position is to counterpose the existence of an independent dynamic of the Afro-American struggle to the overall proletarian revolution on a U.S. and apparently on a "global" scale. They imply that the development of such a program is a rejection of our view of a unitary international transitional program for socialist revolution and that the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* proposes that Afro-Americans can win liberation simply through their own struggle or simply on the basis of nationalist demands.

The Transitional Program of the Fourth International itself calls on the national sections to make specific applications of the overall Transitional Program to specific problems of non-proletarian layers, not to speak of proletarianized layers like the Afro-Americans: "The sections of the Fourth International should work out with all possible concreteness a program of transitional demands concerning the peasants (farmers) and urban petty bourgeoisie and conformable to the conditions of each country. The advanced workers should learn to give clear and concrete answers to the questions put by their future allies." (Pages 86-87, *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*.)

In his discussions in 1939 Trotsky himself raises the perspective of a transitional program for Black liberation in the context of his proposal to build an all-Black organization to fight for Black liberation. He wrote that our intervention into such a movement, "supposes the adaptation of our Transitional Program to the Negro problems in the States—a very carefully elaborated program with genuine civil rights, political rights, cultural interests, economic interests and so on."

Contrary to the claims of the Internationalist Tendency, the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* is not simply a collection of nationalist demands, but an attempt to show how the struggle for national liberation of Afro-Americans can only be completed by carrying out a series of transitional demands, through a process of socialist revolution. Any examination of this document will show this to be true.

Contrary to the Internationalist Tendency's implication, the resolution points to the fact that only the united struggle of Black and white workers for socialism can win Black liberation and that one of the positive features of Black nationalist radicalization and the possible formation of an independent Black party is that these developments can help prepare Black/white working-class unity:

"In the country as a whole, a struggle for government power by the working class is not an immediate perspective. This obviously holds true for the white workers, who remain relatively quiescent politically and still tied in with the Democratic Party machinery through the union bureaucracy.

"Without the white workers, the movement for black liberation cannot realistically pose an immediate struggle for government power." (Page 167, *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*.)

"The unity of black and white workers is indispensable to combat and overthrow capitalism. But where white workers are privileged and black workers are penalized, black unity in action must precede and prepare the ground for black-white unity on a broad scale (Ibid., page 173.)

### *Preferential Hiring: Reactionary and Divisive?*

The real meaning of the Internationalist Tendency's objections to the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* is spelled out in their section on preferential hiring. They write:

"Preferential hiring is supposed to deal with the reality of high unemployment in the Black community. *But unemployment is not an ethnic phenomenon.* To pose this narrow solution to a chronic disease of capitalist society which affects all workers doesn't solve anything. Instead it adapts to the bourgeoisie's strategy of dividing the workers' struggle and gives an opening for the bourgeois state to intervene in unions as a 'progressive' force.

". . . Our solution for unemployment is not preferential hiring but 'jobs for all!' The dynamic of 'jobs for all' is toward working-class unity whereas the preferential hiring demand exacerbates intra-class conflicts. We would incorporate propaganda explaining to the entire class the reasons for higher unemployment among Blacks." (emphasis added.)

First of all it is necessary to point out that the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* does not counterpose the demand for preferential hiring to the demand of jobs for all. In fact, the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* has a section that explains the usefulness of this demand, especially in regard to pointing the way to a workers government (page 176, *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*).

Secondly, it is not the ruling-class attitude, but a revolutionary proletarian attitude to recognize the need for preferential treatment for oppressed sections of the working class. In regard to the national question, Lenin felt such preferential treatment was a basic precondition for class unity:

"That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or 'great' nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view, and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view.

"What is important for the proletarian? For the proletarian it is not only important, it is absolutely essential that he should be assured that the non-Russians place the greatest possible trust in the proletarian class struggle. What is needed to insure this? Not merely formal equality. In one way or another, by one's attitude or by concessions, it is necessary to compensate the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for the suspicion and the insults to which the government of the 'dominant' nation subjected them in the past." (December 31, 1922, from "The Question of Nationalities or 'Automatisation,'" page 608, Volume 36, Lenin's *Collected Works*.)

Our support to preferential hiring for Afro-Americans and other oppressed layers is not put forward by the party as the solution to unemployment. This demand is put forward as a special demand referring to the specific problem of national discrimination in employment that Afro-Americans face. Contrary to the Internationalist Tendency,



unemployment in the Black community is not only a "class" problem but an "ethnic" problem. Blacks are unemployed because this society nationally oppressed Blacks in order to rationalize a number of "diseases" of capitalism.

Our party raises national demands for Afro-Americans because it is opposed not only to the oppression of the class as a whole but to the specific problems faced by oppressed layers. In a Leninist sense, it recognizes that failure to do so will impede the development of class consciousness and class unity among both Afro-Americans and white workers.

Failure to champion such demands can only lead to adaptation to the petty-bourgeois position of the labor bureaucrats and many racist white workers of defending the privileged positions of white workers. In fact, the only objective understanding of the Internationalist Tendency's rejection of preferential hiring as divisive because they call for unity on the proletarian basis of support to the demands of the most oppressed. This position is a liberal, rather than a revolutionary democratic position on Black oppression.

#### *Black Political Party*

The Internationalist Tendency makes a similar counterposition in regard to our propaganda around a Black political party:

"If Comrade Breitman is actually proposing a Black party which would aspire to govern the United States, as an answer to the disaffection with the existing bourgeois parties, then the problem of its class position and alliances is immediately posed. On whose interests would such a party base itself? Those of Black workers, or those of the Black petty bourgeois and compradores of the ruling class? How would it represent the interests of the non-Black masses? Insofar as this disaffection does exist, the revolutionary party should pose clear class action alternatives, including the call for a labor party, as the concretization of the need for a break with the ruling class. Trotskyists have always explained that their call for a labor party is a call for a labor party with *revolutionary* policies, not one which would reflect racist, pro-ruling class policies of the union bureaucracy. It is raised to give clear political content to a motion in the masses against the parties of the bourgeoisie. This would also be a correct answer to a massive loss of confidence in the bourgeois parties by the Black masses." (Emphasis in the original.)

The Internationalist Tendency thus counterposes the demand for an independent Black political party with our demand for a labor party based on the trade unions. They further claim that "there has been no evidence of this [the demand for a Black party] corresponding to any actual sentiment among Black masses." They claim that the development of a Black political party would be a "highly unlikely event."

#### *Trotsky's Position on a "Negro Organization"*

For some reason the authors of the Internationalist Tendency's political resolution believe that Comrade George Breitman was the originator of our concept of a Black political party and Black independent political action. While Comrade Breitman has played a key role

in the elaboration of our party's position on the national struggles in this country and internationally, the real origins of this concept go back to the SWP's discussions with Trotsky on the Black struggle in 1939 and to the discussion on the projected "Negro Organization," in particular.

The following is directly from Trotsky's discussion on the all-Black organization they projected:

"12. The relationship of the Negroes to the Republican and Democratic parties

*Trotsky:* How many Negroes are there in Congress? One. There are 440 members in the House of Representatives and 96 in the Senate. Then if the Negroes have almost 10 percent of the population, they are entitled to 50 members, but they have only one. It is a clear picture of political inequality. We can often oppose a negro candidate to a white candidate. This Negro organization can always say, 'We want a Negro who knows our problems.' It can have important consequences."

Later, in response to a question, "Isn't that coming close to the People's Front to a vote for a Negro just because he is a Negro?" Trotsky responded, "We considered that the Negro's candidacy as opposed to the white's candidacy . . . is an important factor in the struggle of the Negroes for their equality; and in this case we can critically support them."

Thus if an onus for supporting an all-Black political party is to be placed on the SWP which has had the policy of supporting independent candidates since 1939, it must also be placed on Leon Trotsky himself.

#### *Unique Position of Afro-Americans*

In regard to oppressed nationalities in other countries we do not support independent political parties based on that nationality such as the Parti Québécois (Québec Party) in Quebec. The call for a Black political party flows from the specifics of Blacks' position in the U.S. as a highly oppressed section of the working class. An independent Black political party would be the result of a breach with the capitalist political parties of U.S. imperialism and its composition and orientation would be overwhelmingly proletarian. Whether or not this would be the conscious direction of the initiators of such a party, the class character of a Black party development would be proletarian. In that sense we put forward a Black political party as an example of the type of independent political action and mass political organization that could advance the Black struggle and as a means of attacking the subservience of Black and white capitalist politicians to the imperialist political parties.

Like the demand for a labor party, the party does not see our position in favor of a Black political party as an historical absolute. Our call for a Black party proceeds from a concrete level of the development of the Black struggle, just as our call for a labor party proceeded from a specific stage in the development of the working-class movement, the explosion of industrial trade unions during the CIO upsurge.

Our demand for a labor party—rather than directly raising the historical absolute of a revolutionary Marxist party of a mass character—poses the question of independent political action for the working class in terms that take the next steps forward from the current levels

of organization of the working class. Similarly, the demand for a Black political party proceeds from the current dual character of the Black struggle combining nationalist and class struggles.

Despite the lack of evidence that the Internationalist Tendency claims, our call for a Black political party has proceeded from a large amount of discussions and attempts at forming such a party in the last ten years of Black radicalization. We had the experience of the Freedom Now parties, the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County, the Black Panther Party in Oakland, and a number of other attempts at actually forming an independent Black party. National Black power conferences and Pan-Africanist conferences attended by thousands of Blacks in 1968 and 1970 passed proposals favoring an independent Black party. At the Gary Black Political Convention held in 1972, the pressure for a Black party was so strong that even long-time Democratic Party supporters like Jesse Jackson had to pay lip-service to this idea.

While it is no reason to drop our current propaganda demand for a labor party, there has been much less evidence of any type of sentiment for such a party in the labor movement in the past 25 years than there has been for a Black party in the Black liberation movement in the last five years. While the formation of a Black political party is not inevitable and while sentiment for such a party may have its ups and downs, it remains a correct means of propagandizing our concept of independent political action by working people and the necessity of a mass organization representing the interests of Afro-Americans.

Of course, just as we do not counterpose a labor party to the construction of the mass revolutionary Marxist workers party needed to make the revolution, we don't counterpose a Black political party to the multinational revolutionary vanguard. We believe it, like the labor party, may be one of the variants that the masses will take on the road toward a mass Trotskyist party.

In counterposing a labor party to a Black party, the Internationalist Tendency is guilty of counterposing the real concrete struggles taking place at this time by Blacks with implications for political independence to their hope of a future radicalization on the part of the "class as a whole." The real way to prepare for the radicalization of the class as a whole is to spur the motion of those sections of it willing to struggle right now. This is why we have always pointed out (even before our call for an independent Black political party) that independent Black political action can play an important role, by both example and by breaking up the Democratic Party, in spurring the formation of a labor party.

### *Black Control of the Black Community*

The Internationalist Tendency's resolution also attacks our party's support to the slogan of "Black control of the Black community." They themselves admit that "This concept actually embodies the essence of many community struggles which have broken out over a whole range of issues." They add that "the overwhelming majority of these struggles were waged in reaction against the aggravated deprivations which the lower layers of the working class are made to suffer."

However, instead of embracing these struggles, the Internationalist Tendency attempts to counterpose these democratic struggles for autonomy to our program for socialist solutions to Afro-Americans and other working people's problems. In fact they write that "we should warn that it would solve none of the major problems of Black people."

Furthermore, "It is either the pooling of scarcity through consumer cooperatives or window-dressing for continued capitalist exploitation through Black agents. It creates a dangerous tendency to become absorbed in the administration of the bourgeois state. It leads to emphasizing re-districting and restructuring of local institutions. Instead, we should put forward the concept of class struggle committees in the community against police brutality, against evictions, against organized crime, against governmental policies in housing, education, healthcare facilities and welfare."

The Internationalist Tendency on this issue stands completely against the Leninist attitude toward the struggle for democratic demands. In the first place we believe that a mass struggle for democratic demands can play a key role in mobilizing and organizing the masses and leading them to revolutionary conclusions.

Comrade Mary-Alice Waters in her criticism of the IEC majority European resolution cites an excellent quotation from Lenin on this question which is worth repeating again:

"Marxists know that democracy does *not* abolish class oppression. It only makes the class struggle more direct, wider, more open and pronounced, and that is what we need. The fuller the freedom of divorce, the clearer will women see that the cause of their 'domestic slavery' is capitalism, not lack of rights. The more democratic the system of government, the clearer will the workers see that the root of evil is capitalism, not lack of rights. The fuller the national equality . . . the clearer will the workers of the oppressed nations see that the cause of their oppression is capitalism, not lack of rights, etc.

". . . But without the proclamation of these rights, without the training of the masses in the spirit of this struggle, socialism is *impossible*." (From "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism," written August-October 1916, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, pp. 72-74.)

### *Dual Character of the Demand*

The demand for Black control of the Black community has a dual character reflecting the dual national and class character of the Black population. It is not simply a demand resulting from an abstract desire for democracy within the Black community. Rather it reflects the desire of Afro-Americans as both nationally oppressed and the most exploited section of the working class that power over the institutions and politics of the Black community pass from the oppressing nationality and its imperialist exploiters into the hands of the oppressed Black population. What Blacks want in this regard is to lay the basis for winning their democratic rights as well as achieving solutions to the social problems affecting them as workers, unemployed, students in rundown schools, women, etc. Even the Internationalist Tendency is forced to recognize this in a distorted way.

Our task in this regard as fighters for proletarian democracy is not to oppose these struggles with the concept of class solutions, but to support these struggles because their thrust is in the direction of class solutions and to combine our Transitional Program for solutions to the problems of the Black community with the democratic demands raised for Black control of the Black community. The existence of action committees based on class-struggle solutions to the various problems is not counterposed to this demand as the Internationalist Tendency claims but is consistent with it. Anyone who reads the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation* should be able to understand this.

The Internationalist Tendency claims that the demand for Black control of the Black community tends in the direction of the "exclusive, national-cultural autonomy, under which only members of the majority national-cultural group can participate in local affairs." In the January 1972 *International Socialist Review*, dealing with the Wohlforthite-Healyite raising of this same position, I deal with this falsification and proved that Lenin's demand for territorial autonomy for oppressed nationalities was completely consistent with our party's support of this demand, not only as a question of local autonomy but as a national demand.

Their claim that such a demand would exclude "Latinos, Asian-Americans and poor white minorities in the ghetto or barrio" is false, since we raise this demand in relation to all of the oppressed communities. In the concrete instance of the struggle that has been taking place over the past few years in District 1 in New York, we have raised the concretization of our position on community control: "Puerto Rican, Black and Chinese Control of District 1."

The real counterposition relating to the demand for Black control of the Black community, but between it and the oppressive power the U. S. imperialists maintain over the Black community. On this question and on the current struggles taking place on this issue, the Internationalist Tendency's attacks on Black control of the Black community, represents a sectarian refusal to take a stand in the struggle of Afro-American working people against imperialist oppression.

They talk so much about "drawing the class line" that they forget that for Leninists the class line is drawn between the oppressing policies of the imperialist rulers and the national-democratic struggles of oppressed nationalities.

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Over the last 35 years, the Fourth International has considered the Socialist Workers Party's positions on Black liberation one of its most important accomplishments, one of the signs that the world Trotskyist movement is the continuation of Marxism and Leninism. This support is so strong that even Comrade Ernest Germain in his article "In Defence of Leninism" which runs completely against the grain of our position on Black nationalism has to claim agreement with our position on the Black struggle in the United States.

The Internationalist Tendency's attacks on our party's traditional position on Black nationalism is thus an attack on concepts of the national liberation struggle, of the democratic struggle and of the character of U. S. society commonly held by revolutionary Marxists for decades. Their formal and sectarian misunderstandings of the combined character of the American revolution, the nature of Black nationalism, our party's strategy and tactics in the Black struggle, must be rejected if the party is to maintain its Leninist and Trotskyist course.

Their positions on this question cannot be separated from their positions on other questions. In regard to women's liberation, the feminist struggle, other national struggles and the student movement, they counterpose the real struggles taking place now around issues that reflect the interests of the working class to an abstract schematic view of what the struggle of the class as a whole will be like. This policy if carried out by our party, could only lead to minimizing the radicalization of the working class and increasing the isolation of the party. In all probability when the first contingents of the working class begin to take independent political action around the economic questions facing the working class, the sectarians of the Internationalist Tendency will find some way to counterpose these struggles to the need to struggle for the demands of the "class as a whole."

July 17, 1973

## THE SEARCH FOR GREENER PASTURES

by Stu Singer, Los Angeles Branch

An irony of this preconvention discussion is in the contribution "Support to IMT" signed by Shayne, Warren, Levitt, et al. (Vol. 31, No. 11). This represents a unity between Ralph Levitt, the main spokesperson at the last convention for the For A Proletarian Orientation Tendency (FAPO), and Judi Shayne and Ron Warren, two of the leaders of the former group around Mike Bartell in Los Angeles. Comrades who recall the contribution entitled "For a Proletarian Orientation" in the last preconvention discussion may remember that it traced the degeneration of the SWP to a capitulation to the politics of Mike Bartell, which they claimed began to happen around 1957:

"Cochran and Bartell, in their desire to find 'greener pastures,' were reacting to the long years of waiting for the revolution and to the reactionary climate of McCarthyism. Precisely because Cochran and Bartell saw no immediate prospects in the trade unions, they wanted to abandon the proletarian orientation and 'orient' the party elsewhere. As we have shown, the party majority fought the Cochran-Bartell 'greener pastures' scheme in 1953. Yet in the period from 1957-64, the SWP eventually came to accept the Bartell position on 'greener pastures' without open acknowledgement of it." ("For a Proletarian Orientation," by Massey, Passen, Gregorich and McCann, p. 14.)

While it is not true that we ever capitulated to Bartell's politics, it is interesting that Comrade Levitt himself has now joined—or been joined by—the real followers of Mike Bartell.

Mike Bartell, Bert Cochran and George Clarke were the three central leaders of a group that was expelled from the SWP in 1953. This group was an unprincipled combination—it disagreed on basic political issues within itself. It moved away from the positions of the SWP under the pressures of the McCarthyite witchhunt and the decline of the radical movement. After leaving the SWP they set up a group called Socialist Union which soon broke up itself.

After being expelled from the SWP, Bartell played a role in the regroupment process in New York in the late 1950s. This was after the Khrushchev revelations about Stalin and the crushing of the Hungarian revolution. Bartell, whose real name is Milt Zaslow, then moved to Los Angeles. Since the mid-1960s Bartell has tried to practice an orientation to what he viewed as the new vanguard. This is especially interesting to look at in light of the current discussion. Because of the adaptation to Bartell's positions running through the counter political resolution of the Internationalist Tendency and the role in the discussion of the open followers of Bartell, this is no academic question.

Last fall, Bartell/Zaslow applied for readmission to the SWP. His application was rejected by the L. A. branch after a subcommittee interviewed him about his political views and an extensive branch discussion took place. The transcript of the interviews was made available to branch members during the discussion.

The same Comrade Shayne who has joined with Comrade Levitt in support of the IMT and has now announced

support for the counter political resolution of the Internationalist Tendency, presented a minority report to the branch advocating Bartell/Zaslow's readmission to the party. Comrade Shayne is one of 7 or 8 comrades who joined the SWP from Bartell's last grouping, Liberation Union (LU). Not surprisingly, every SWP member who had been a member of LU voted in favor of readmitting Bartell to the SWP, and they all now constitute the group in LA supporting the IMT and the counter political resolution of the IT.

Bartell/Zaslow was a key figure in the Peace and Freedom Party in California in 1967 and '68. He was one of the organizers of the Cleaver caucus of that petty-bourgeois formation, and he spoke publicly against the SWP presidential ticket of Halstead and Boutelle. He branded us as sectarians for running a socialist alternative instead of being buried in the Peace and Freedom Party. He had helped organize the Newton-Cleaver Defense Committee which degenerated into a white panther type group called Friends of the Panthers. Bartell himself described this as a "bizarre auxiliary to the Panthers." In the interviews we had with him, Bartell took credit for breaking the people in Friends of the Panthers away from the Panthers. But some of those same people say the break was forced by the Panthers, not by Bartell. The Black Panther Party leadership treated Friends of the Panthers with contempt. No matter how slavishly Friends of the Panthers acted, the Black Panther Party insisted on dictating every move to them. The members of Friends of the Panthers sold the Panther paper, studied Panther politics—Mao, Kim Il Sung, pick-up-the-gun—and let themselves get ripped off putting up bail for Panther defendants. But the Black Panther Party leadership was never satisfied and Friends of the Panthers was broken up.

Bartell took what he could from Friends of the Panthers and formed Liberation Union. The new group was of necessity independent of the Panthers. LU emphasized discussion and was mainly Maoist, although Bartell/Zaslow claims he was an "independent Trotskyist not oriented to the SWP in particular" at that time. A process of political differentiation and constant shrinking took place with people leaving to join other Maoist sects or becoming counterculturalists. For example, the Maoists around Marv Treiger who later joined the Spartacists came out of the grouping around Bartell. By early 1972 Liberation Union consisted of 15 people who were apparently in political agreement with Bartell and considered themselves Trotskyists.

In the winter of 1971-72 SWP leaders in LA approached Bartell about his cooperation in building the April 22 national antiwar demonstrations in Los Angeles. LU had generally supported the immediate withdrawal wing of the antiwar movement and had helped build previous antiwar demonstrations. But prior to April 22 they had never had a major orientation toward building the antiwar movement. They had counterposed at various times white pantherism, the Peace and Freedom election campaign and abstract political discussion to the defense of the Viet-

name revolution. Late as it was, their turn to the antiwar movement in 1972 was a positive political development. In building the successful April 22, 1972, antiwar demonstration they played a good role. A few sharp disagreements arose because of Bartell's bending to pressure from ultralefts generated by the Stalinists in their attempt to wreck the demonstration.

In the period before and after April 22, we recruited a number of members of LU to the SWP. After 2 of them joined individually, Judi Shayne and others who had not yet joined insisted that the rest of LU be admitted to the SWP as a group. We refused and the 5 or 6 other members of LU who joined the SWP were recruited as individuals.

Bartell/Zaslow's application to rejoin the SWP was treated differently than the other members of LU. He, and his supporters then inside the party, insisted that he be admitted not just in spite of, but because of the numerous political differences he has with us. For instance, in the interviews with the subcommittee, Bartell said that he had not changed his mind on any of the political issues in dispute in 1953. He said:

"Cannon had an inclination toward an over-centralized, over-authoritative type of regime with too much direction from the top down and not enough emphasis on greater participation of the lower levels of the rank and file in the actual decision-making of the party. I think it is a tendency that has continued in the party except that it's hardened and deepened since then."

That is, Bartell/Zaslow was asking to rejoin a party he thought was worse than the one he had left 20 years earlier.

The following version of the Cochran fight is from Comrade Judi Shayne's summary report to the LA branch in favor of Bartell/Zaslow's readmission:

"The party not only took his (Bartell's) advice, a little late perhaps, but went much too far and much too long. We see 20 years later that the party has virtually no perspective toward intervening in the organized workers movement.

"Milt (Bartell) took particular umbrage at the charge that he left the party voluntarily in 1953, that he wanted out or was in any way responsible for the split. He told me that he wanted desperately to remain in the party and that he offered the most exceptional concessions to prevent the split.

"The minority did everything in its power to avoid a new outburst of hostility but was given no choice but to defend itself.

"Finally, in exasperation and frustration, the minority made a protest. They decided to boycott a public meeting because, as usual, they were denied a speaker. It was an extreme step, but they never expected to be expelled for it. It's true that by then they were thoroughly alienated and embittered, not as a result of the pressures of bourgeois society, but by the assault against them within the party and by the fact that they had been frozen out of the party by what Comrade Cannon called a cold split.

"It's now part of the staple party diet that history has passed final judgement on the antagonist of 1953. The Cochranites disintegrated and that proved they were wrong. The SWP survived and that proved they were right. Virtue is always rewarded. So obviously history cast the

deciding vote in the final analysis. But in the short run, pragmatism is a very unreliable measuring stick.

"How did the majority fare? It experienced progressive disintegration for a number of years until its ranks were reduced to a couple hundred. It undoubtedly lost more members than the minority had all together."

It would be interesting to know if Comrades Levitt and Massey or other cothinkers of Comrade Shayne agree with this analysis. The supporters of "For A Proletarian Orientation" did not agree two years ago.

In the counter political resolution of the Internationalist Tendency there are important concessions to the new vanguard orientation as practiced by the Bartell group. The counterresolution is a combination of this orientation plus the third attempt in the last three conventions to find a formulation to prove that factory work is a panacea for political problems. In 1969 there was the mildly worded suggestion by Passen and Gregorich that we send a few spare comrades into factories. In 1971 a whole tendency based on "For A Proletarian Orientation" by Massey, Passen, Gregorich and McCann, told us that everything they thought was wrong with the SWP could be solved by being at the point of production. In 1973 the Internationalist Tendency presents a rather mild formulation about union work this time, in three paragraphs on page 27 of their document.

But this counterresolution is not a suggestion on how we can do better union work. The IT comrades do not seem to have anything to contribute in this regard. All their counterresolution says is that we should do more. But you can always say that about every area of work. The point of the IT counterresolution is to attack every aspect of the current radicalization. IT describes the radicalization as "spontaneous levels of consciousness" (p. 4) and as a "frenzied student upsurge caused by the Vietnam war" (p. 4). Let's look at the apparently spontaneous level of consciousness of the frenzied Internationalist Tendency.

On page 13 of their counterresolution IT attacks the SWP for criticizing the Black Panther Party move "beyond nationalism" to "'Marxism-Leninism,' however distorted." The IT comrades are confusing Stalinism with Marxism-Leninism. The Black Panther Party's moves "beyond nationalism" have continued to Democrat Bobby Seale's race for mayor of Oakland this year. The "Marxism-Leninism" of the Panthers went through different fads: Mao, Kim Il Sung and power from the gun; Dimitrov's popular front against fascism and Huey Newton's version of dialectics. Not only was it not "progressive" to introduce these into the Black community as IT claims, but it played a negative role. The role of Stalinist ideology is not progressive in the Black community or anywhere else, regardless of whether the CP or the Panthers introduce it. Many Black militants were badly disoriented by Panther "Marxism-Leninism," and it will be that much harder to win them over to Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism and the revolutionary nationalism of Malcolm X, as we want to do. The original Panther advocacy of community control and self-defense—their nationalism—did play a positive role in the Black movement at one point. Our criticisms of their turn away from this were correct as were our criticisms of their joining first the Peace and Freedom Party and now the Democratic Party.

The Internationalist Tendency is wrong to say savage repression came down on the Panthers as they moved "beyond nationalism." The savage repression against the Panthers was against their nationalism. While their lack of defensive formulations abetted the repression to some extent, the repression subsided as they moved away from nationalism. The Black Panther Party today in Oakland is not suffering from severe repression as it enjoys its alliances with white organizations like the Democrats.

The IT version of the development of the Panthers is not surprising. It is an integral part of their rejection of nationalism. This most likely stems from the opposition to Black and Chicano nationalism that afflicts virtually every sectarian, ultraleft, Maoist, reformist, Social-Democratic, Shachtmanite and Stalinist group. The new vanguard cannot easily be regrouped around support for Black and Chicano nationalism.

Black and Chicano nationalism grow out of the special oppression suffered by Blacks and Chicanos. The necessity for fundamental social and political change to break this oppression gives Black and Chicano nationalism a revolutionary dynamic. Malcolm X said, "If you're afraid of Black nationalism, you're afraid of revolution. And if you love revolution, you love Black nationalism." The comrades of the Internationalist Tendency may find this description unpleasant, but it is true. Fear of revolution is one of the causes of opposition to nationalism. Another cause is adaptation to the racism in sections of the white working class. As Malcolm X and SWP documents have pointed out time and again, nationalist struggle against the unique oppression of Blacks and Chicanos does not divide the working class. On the contrary it provides inspiration and encouragement to the more backward white, Anglo sections of the working class. The problem is not that nationalist struggles move too fast, but that the more backward sections of the working class move too slow. Those radicals who fear nationalism are holding back the struggle.

In the section of the counterresolution titled, "The Student Movement, May '68, Ultraleftism" (pp. 22-3), the Internationalist Tendency attacks the SWP for criticizing the "working-class orientation" of Herbert Marcuse and SDS after the May-June 1968 events in France. They also say we "failed to put forth any real strategy for building bases in the working class." Two of the main lessons of May-June '68 in France that Marcuse and the new left failed to assimilate were first, the need for a revolutionary combat party and second, an understanding of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. The IT seems to have been fooled into thinking the petty-bourgeois ideologies of Marcuse and the new left got healthier the more they used the word "worker" after June 1968. SDS degenerated into Stalinist sects trying to out-Mao each other. They all agreed on giving lip-service to "workers." After May-June '68 the remnants of SDS and most of the rest of the new left continued their abstention from the movement to defend the Vietnamese revolution. In general, those who talked the most about workers did the least. They used their talk to abstain from the living movement of students — and of workers.

The Internationalist Tendency implies that the supposed misunderstanding by the SWP of May-June '68 in France

was when the SWP began to go wrong. This raises an important question. Since this counterpolitical resolution is calling for a fundamental revision of the long-standing political line of the SWP, the comrades supporting it must have some idea of when the SWP went bad. There are probably differences of opinion within the Internationalist Tendency on this question. The former members of Liberation Union in the LA branch think the SWP went wrong before 1953 under the "over-authoritative Cannon regime." They think the SWP has gotten progressively worse by throwing out the Bartell group, opposing the Pablo leadership of the Fourth International, supposedly turning away from the proletariat, acting sectarian to SDS, Black Panthers and Peace and Freedom Party, and refusing to readmit Mike Bartell to the party.

The comrades who supported FAPO at the last convention claimed the SWP started to go wrong around 1957 by turning away from the proletariat and adopting the orientation of Bartell.

The current counterresolution is a little vague on this question. On page 3 it says: "For several years now the SWP leadership has implied that the party could be built gradually without any organic connection to the class." On page 4 they date our degeneration from the "long post World War II period of relative prosperity and the absence of united working class struggle of national scope." They go on to say that:

"The SWP's adaptation to the spontaneous level of consciousness of the movements of the sixties, its almost complete estrangement from activity in the working class and, in particular, the different lessons it drew from the events of May '68 in France, could only lead the American organization into a deepening programmatic divergence from the majority of the International." (p. 4).

According to these false charges the degeneration of the SWP seems to have started at the end of World War II. As the radicalization of the '60s deepened, the intervention and relative weight of the SWP grew and, according to IT, the degeneration of the SWP got worse. We are not told how bad the degeneration was by 1968, but that was apparently a turning point. After May-June '68, the IT seems to think the SWP really began to get bad. When did the comrades in the Internationalist Tendency first notice this degeneration? If they noticed it five years ago, why didn't they say something? Did the IT comrades who joined the SWP since five years ago notice this degeneration before they joined?

The last paragraph in the section, "The Student Movement, May '68, Ultraleftism" is an attempt to smuggle in the idea that Maoist Stalinism is more progressive than Brezhnevist Stalinism. Note that Maoism is described here as another "centrist current." IT claims Maoists and other ultralefts have always been described by "Marxists" as "misguided fellow revolutionaries" whereas apparently the same Marxists have always looked upon reformists as "still basically committed to the capitalist order." This must mean that the ultralefts who supported McGovern because they were misguided were more revolutionary than the reformists who supported McGovern under the illusion he would end the war. This is not a Marxist position.

IT claims that we attempted to build united fronts with the reformist CP/YWLL while viewing the ultralefts as

"beyond the pale of humanity." If this poetic description is supposed to mean that we treat the CP as our main opponent on the left, IT is correct. But two pages later they admit, "the CP remains the main opponent tendency." It's hard to know what their point is. Maybe they feel guilty about our often having to protect the movement in defense of the Vietnamese revolution against the physical attacks by some of the "misguided fellow revolutionaries," the ultralefts, who were "more aware of the need for conscious anti-imperialism."

The Internationalist Tendency has very little to say about its origins and predecessors. But there is one reference on page 26:

"The Class Struggle League-Vanguard Newsletter is partly a result of a subjective reaction by a group of dissident SWP members to the drive-them-out-of-the-party campaign conducted by the SWP leadership. Their ludicrous call for a Fifth International is a typical example of the tendency for SWP splinters to be "fun house" mirror images of the SWP's current practice."

The people the IT is referring to are Passen, Gregorich and McCann, three of the four co-authors of FAPO at the last convention. In one of his own contributions two years ago, Comrade Massey, now of the Internationalist Tendency, but then the fourth co-author of FAPO, claimed that the four of them had a ten-year or longer perspective in the party. The CSL-VN is not only the distorted image in the fun house mirror.

As with their misunderstanding of the Panthers and nationalism, the International Tendency's views of Maoism, ultraleftism, the Vietnam war and how to reach the US working class comes from their willingness to adapt to the level of the people they want to orient to: "the forces to the left of the CP."

This is an attempt at continual regroupment such as practiced in Los Angeles by Mike Bartell. But the comrades in the IT should study Bartell's experiences. His efforts led nowhere. The grouping around him was at its smallest size in years when Liberation Union was dissolved.

Some of the characteristics of the Leninist Party and of proletarian methods of struggle are programmatic precision, democratic-centralist organizational norms, professionalism in internal institutions and a long-term perspective. A group or individual with an orientation to con-

tinual regrouping displays different political characteristics: lack of programmatic clarity, lack of organizational continuity, looking for shortcuts and, over the long run, a shrinking and weakening of forces.

There probably are temporary shortcuts to growth by dropping controversial parts of your program and not being tied down by a party, a newspaper or internal institutions. Mike Bartell's maneuvers for the last 20 years have not been hampered by program, party or newspaper.

In studying Bartell's experiences in Los Angeles, the Internationalist Tendency and other comrades should not neglect the current period. Liberation Union was dissolved after 7 or 8 members joined the SWP under the assumption that Bartell/Zaslow would be readmitted shortly afterwards. (Actually Liberation Union continued to function after it was formally dissolved through regular weekly meetings of a study group that Bartell more or less secretly conducted. One of their main topics of study was why the SWP position on nationalism is wrong.) At first glance, the decision to join the SWP by the Bartell grouping might appear as a rejection of their previous strategy of continual regrouping. But that may not be true. In 1953, Comrade Joe Hansen described Bartell's politics as always looking for greener pastures. The decision to join the SWP was not necessarily contradictory to the search for greener pastures. On the scale of groups on the left, the SWP is not small. Our central role in building mass antiwar actions is well known. In the interviews with Bartell he frankly explained that he had advised the members of Liberation Union to join the SWP and fight for their views on organizational and political questions. Those who joined the SWP have definitely carried this out. It is possible that the Bartell grouping joined the SWP thinking that the greener pastures in left-wing politics at this time are to be found in the SWP.

A final point about Mike Bartell/Milt Zaslow. Since the rejection of his application to rejoin the SWP, he has announced a new political group. Its eight members were all formerly in and around Liberation Union. For some reason, they chose as the name of the new group—Socialist Union; the same name chosen 20 years ago by the Cochranites after they left the SWP. Socialist Union has no publication and has announced no political program.

July 17, 1973



## THE DIFFERENCES OVER VIETNAM

by George Johnson, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

Differences in the world Trotskyist movement that have arisen over Vietnam include perspectives on antiwar work and the nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party's leadership. Other differences are involved also, although they may not be so apparent at first glance. These differences concern questions which go to the very heart of the Trotskyist program.

We have had differences with some of the European leaders for some time concerning how to build the antiwar movement, with the Europeans trying to build "vanguard" actions, while we have built mass actions.

Then at the December plenum of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement with which we are in political solidarity, other differences emerged.

Some of the European leaders favored calling for "Sign Now." This was a demand for Nixon to sign a treaty wrung out of the Vietnamese through massive terror-bombing and under the pressure of the Stalinist bureaucrats in Moscow and Peking. In principle, that treaty granted the United States the right to a substantial voice in deciding the government of the peoples of Vietnam, and it was unprincipled for Trotskyists to support it.

Second, differences came to the fore over the estimate of the accords. The Europeans held that the accords signaled a change for the better in the relationship of forces in Vietnam. They based that on the fact that under the accords the U. S. imperialists could no longer bomb Indochina with impunity, and that U. S. forces would no longer be fighting on the ground.

However, this was *not* the heart of what the accords represented. The accords were a political package, in signing which the Vietnamese made far-reaching concessions. They gave up their demand that the Thieu regime be dismantled prior to a cease-fire. They agreed to a three-segment "National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord" (in fact, they insisted on this), which is to combine all factions—the Saigon puppets, the Provisional Revolutionary Government, and a mysterious "Third Force," which evidently includes former generals who have fallen out with Thieu or Ky, as well as other non-NLF antagonists of the regime. These diverse elements are to get together and organize elections for what the Vietnamese CP leaders hope will turn out to be a coalition government.

That was part of the accords, as was the toehold given U. S. imperialism to intervene in any way it can, when it judges that to be possible—just as the French were granted such a toehold by the Vietnamese CP in 1945-46, and as imperialism was granted once again in 1954, with the Geneva Accords.

For Trotskyists to call these accords in essence a "victory" is to deny the gravity of the betrayal by Moscow and Peking.

The European comrades went even further, however, at the December IEC plenum. The resolution they voted for also pooh-poohed the dangers involved in the coalition government the Vietnamese Stalinists are calling for. The reasoning the European comrades gave was based on a favorable estimate they have made of the leadership of the Vietnamese CP. The Sterne-Walter resolution,

which was passed, described this Stalinist party as one "which in its practical orientation has broken with Stalinism's classical Menshevik line in the colonial and semi-colonial countries and which is independent of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies." (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, No. 6, April 1973, p. 23.)

That is another difference we have with them, and one which is still developing. We don't see that the Vietnamese CP is no longer Stalinist, or that it has broken with its Stalinist-Menshevik theory, program, or practice.

\* \* \*

Since the December IEC plenum, the Europeans have published several further expositions of their views. The first was a book, *Le Parti communiste vietnamien*, or "The Vietnamese Communist Party," written by Pierre Rousset, a leader of the former Ligue Communiste. This book departs from much that the Trotskyist movement considers its most important assets. Our analysis of Stalinism, the theory of permanent revolution, the Transitional Program, the need for Trotskyist organizations in all countries—all of this is called into question in this book. Since the book was made available to the general public, we were obliged to make our views known publicly as well. We did so, in a friendly tone, in the article on the Vietnamese CP in the July-August issue of the *International Socialist Review* by George Johnson and Fred Feldman.

Rousset's book is probably going to be published in English. However, an accurate summary of Rousset's views is available in "The Debate on Indochina" by Sterne in the *International Internal Discussion Bulletin* No. 7, June 1973, in his sections on the Vietnamese CP.

The Sterne document, which criticizes the attitude of the Socialist Workers Party toward the Vietnamese CP, and also our antiwar work, is another step in the discussion by the Europeans. So is the rather enthusiastic estimate made of the Vietnamese CP by Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor, Tariq, and Delphin, in "Some Fundamental Differences Between the PRT and the International Majority," (that's them), in the same bulletin as Sterne's article, on page 32.

And now we have the political counter resolution submitted by the Internationalist Tendency, the political supporters in the Socialist Workers Party of the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency, in which these comrades have taken over virtually wholesale the MMF tendency's orientation toward antiwar work, its underestimation of the setback for the Vietnamese revolution that the accords represent and hardly least, the MMF tendency's attempts to portray the leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party as other than Stalinist, and to give political confidence to this leadership.

### *Differences of Perspectives: The Antiwar Movement*

The differences over what orientation our world movement should have toward defense of the Vietnamese revolution have revealed two basic approaches. It is becoming easier to discern the differences between them as the



discussion develops.

We believe that mass action, around the principled point that the U. S. has no right whatsoever in Indochina, can make a significant contribution to the Vietnamese revolution. We *know* that this orientation worked in this country, where the antiwar movement was able to tie the hands of imperialism, in conjunction with the resistance to imperialism in Indochina itself.

We also know that we had to fight almost everyone else in the radical movement for this perspective. It was us and the healthy independents drawn to the Student Mobilization Committees and the national coalitions *against* the rest of the "New Mass Vanguard."

We thought, and still think, that revolutionists in countries besides the United States have had rich opportunities to struggle against "their own" government's complicity with America's imperialist war in Vietnam. Sweden shows that it is possible for governments to break with the Saigon puppet regime because of mass sentiment in their countries. The reaction of Washington to this break—diplomatic relations remain extremely strained—shows the power such steps have, and indicates that a mass campaign in Europe around this issue could have had a profound influence on U.S. imperialism's ability to prosecute the war against Vietnam.

While it is of course impossible to say just how much impact such campaigns on U.S. "allies" might have had, we do have a precedent for believing that substantial results were possible. Lack of support internationally, particularly from England, prevented Eisenhower from intervening in Vietnam in 1954 to prevent the looming French defeat. According to the *Pentagon Papers*:

"President Eisenhower finally reached a decision against intervention on April 4 after a meeting of Mr. Dulles and Admiral Radford with Congressional leaders the previous day showed that the Congress would not support American action without allied help.

"As journalists wrote, at the time, the President felt he must have Congressional approval before he committed American troops, and the Congressional leaders insisted on allied participation, especially by Britain." (*N. Y. Times* edition, Bantam, N. Y., 1971, p. 11)

Another account says of this meeting,

"In the end, all eight members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, were agreed that Dulles had better first go shopping for allies. Some people who should know say that Dulles was carrying, but did not produce, a draft of the joint resolution the President wanted Congress to consider." ("The Day We Didn't Go To War," by Chalmers Roberts, in *Vietnam*, edited by Marvin Gettleman, Fawcett, Greenwich, 1965, p. 99)

These eight senators included Lyndon Johnson, who later as president showed that he was still *very* concerned with international cover in prosecuting the war.

The example of Australia, where a mass campaign led by our comrades against complicity and for withdrawal of troops was successful in ending Australian participation in the ground war, is instructive. This success produced added difficulties for American imperialism.

Against this mass-action approach, making demands around concrete issues directed at the imperialist criminals and those who cooperated with them (including the governments of every country in which there is a Trotsky-

ist section), the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency has posed "solidarity" actions in Europe aimed at the vanguard, not the masses. For a short time some European sections had a mass perspective, which resulted in a demonstration of 100,000 against the war in London on October 27, 1968. In turning away from the mass action approach, the Political Committee of the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International, explained:

"... the youth vanguard has matured and is no longer prepared to be limited to single-issue campaigns." ("From a Propaganda Group to a League for Revolutionary Action" [political resolution submitted by the PC of the IMG for its 1970 conference], from SWP *Internal Information Bulletin* No. 6 in 1970, p. 36)

We were informed by Alain Krivine, a leader of the former Ligue Communiste and like Rousset currently in prison for his role in the antifascist struggle, that the "vanguard" was tired of marching. (*IIDB* No. 9, July 1973, p. 26) This was in 1969. He was no doubt right. The so-called vanguard has *often* been tired of marching. We've heard that argument once or twice here, too.

Not only was the vanguard tired of marching. The European leaders also held that nothing could be accomplished for the Vietnamese revolution in Europe by our comrades short of making the socialist revolution in Europe:

"For French revolutionists, Italian revolutionists, German revolutionists, there does not exist any possibility of making an immediate direct contribution to the victory of the South Vietnamese revolution, except by making an immediate victorious socialist revolution in their own country. For them, the key question is therefore the one of inserting themselves in the general trend of political radicalization, and contributing to the maturing and political clarification of that vanguard." (*International Information Bulletin*, No. 1, January 1971, p. 7). This was the view of Ernest Germain at the December 1969 meeting of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International.

The vanguard was tired of marching, and besides, it wouldn't do any good if they did! The comrades who now support the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency followed the logic of this false perspective for two years. That is, they abstained from antiwar work. It is fully to the credit of such comrades as Pierre Rousset that they fought for a change from this abstentionist policy, and had some success.

Unfortunately, when the European sections returned to Vietnam work, they retained their adaptation to the moods of the so-called vanguard. Rather than to build a movement around concrete actions and demands aimed at their own governments' complicity with Vietnam, the European leaders preferred to avoid demands around which masses could be mobilized, with "slogans" acceptable to the so-called vanguard. Thus, instead of the European sections demanding that their governments break relations with Saigon, or denounce the U.S. escalations, and organizing campaigns on such issues to draw in masses in action, they followed the "vanguard," which preferred "slogans" that amounted to no more than cheerleading of the struggle. There is a world of difference between a few radicals saying "solidarity until final victory" and those radicals organizing mass actions that would help contribute to that final victory.

And now the MMF tendency and their American supporters of the Internationalist Tendency, have decided that we, too, should have been orienting toward the so-called "vanguard." They have posed a dual-level approach, as if we could have built the National Peace Action Coalition and the Attica Brigade at the same time. We, however, know that sections of the "vanguard" here, too, were often tired of marching, and opposed mass actions almost from the beginning. The impossibility of this "dual-level approach" was shown by Geoff Mirelowitz in his article in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* No. 16.

Clarissa Howard indicates the direction the MMF leaders and their American followers think we should have taken in the antiwar movement. He writes:

"In our opinion its [the SWP's] primary thrust should have been an attempt to win the *leftists* to revolutionary Marxist positions." ("On the Disputed Questions in the Fourth International: A Brief Summary," in *IIDB* No. 3 in 1973, p. 29)

The Internationalist Tendency echoes this when it stupidly writes that "the whole current of sympathy with the NLF—the anti-imperialist current—simply bypassed the party." ("The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America," *SWP Discussion Bulletin* No. 18, July 1973, p. 18)

The reason for this alleged "by-passing," they say, was this:

"The absence of any campaigns to raise the level of political consciousness of the antiwar movement is the most important failure of the party leadership. The party should have intervened in the united front with an energetic campaign of *solidarity with the NLF*, and an explanation of the imperialist nature of the war. Such a campaign should not have been confined to the pages of *The Militant* and the Pathfinder literature tables. It should have been consistently embodied in speeches before mass audiences, *special slogans, special contingents, special actions and organizations aimed at strengthening the consciously anti-imperialist wing of the antiwar movement.*" (*Ibid.*, emphasis added)

There you have it. The Attica Brigade and "Solidarity with the NLF." Our fundamental mistake was in failing to accept the line of our opponents. That's the position of this tendency.

We reject the notion that the self-styled anti-imperialists had any higher anti-imperialist consciousness than the activists of the SMC. Those who were there, in the SMCs, know full well that a majority of the activists in them favored a defeat of U. S. imperialism. Further, they understood the *duty* of anti-imperialists to organize mass opposition to the war. In this they were far and away the most conscious anti-imperialists, and we should be proud of those we have recruited, for they were the best of all. And they were the *real* left wing of the antiwar movement.

Of course, you couldn't spot these anti-imperialists so readily in a crowd. They tended not to wave flags, but to organize. They did their job so well, in fact, that the crowds got so large the *real* anti-imperialists, the SMC activists, became even harder to spot. But they were there. And so were we.

The Internationalist Tendency goes even further in their attempts to belittle and slander our defense of the Vietnamese revolution. They write that the Vietnamese revolu-

tion "is paying for [the SWP's] errors." (p. 19) They are accusing us of social patriotism here, and when they say:

"One of the most alarming signs of this rejection of the pro-NLF sentiment is an *incipient third-camp position* toward the NLF-DRV. Many comrades sincerely believe that we do not call for victory for the NLF because it is a Stalinist or popular front organization, counterposing instead abstract support to the Vietnamese revolution or the Vietnamese masses." (*Ibid.*, emphasis added)

At this point, these comrades have the duty to explain the *content* of this "solidarity," and to explain their charge that we have a Shachtmanite position (that's what "third camp" means) of neutrality in the struggle between the Vietnamese people and U. S. imperialism.

### *The PRG "Disappears"*

Fortunately, the authors of the Internationalist Tendency's document hint at the *real* meaning of the so-called "solidarity" position, when they say the SWP should call for "Victory to the NLF-DRV, Pathet Lao, and MUFK." (*Ibid.*, p. 26)

What happened to the Provisional Revolutionary Government? Doesn't it exist any longer? You couldn't tell if it did from this tendency's document, which mentions the PRG *once*, as opposed to the hyphenated NLF-DRV four times, and the NLF by itself nine times. The PRG seems to embarrass them.

The PRG *does* exist, however, and the fact that some European sections of the International have called for "The PRG to power" shows the real content of the so-called "solidarity" position—it is meant as an umbrella under which this unprincipled support to a class-collaborationist government, which the PRG is, can be smuggled into our movement.

Have you had trouble understanding the meaning of solidarity? Have you thought all along that we *were* in solidarity with the struggle of the Vietnamese masses against imperialism, and were effectively building solidarity actions? Well, you were right. What you and the rest of us couldn't understand was that those who want us to call for "solidarity" have formed a bloc that includes those who mean by this calling for the PRG to power, and those who may not mean this, or who may be afraid to do so.

For us to call for "victory to the NLF-PRG" requires us to differentiate ourselves sharply from the PRG. That is precisely what the MMF tendency and the Internationalist Tendency object to. According to them, it is "third camp" to counterpose independent class politics to the class-collaborationist conception that underlies the PRG, and which is supported by the NLF and the Vietnamese Stalinists.

### *The December IEC Plenum*

At the December plenum of the International Executive Committee, supporters of the United Secretariat minority who a month later formed the Leninist-Trotskyist tendency put forth a motion containing three points:

1. The nine-point accords offered by the Vietnamese to the U. S. were concessions to imperialism forced on the Vietnamese by Moscow and Peking.

2. The Fourth International should differentiate itself from support for a coalition government, which the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam calls

for. Trotskyists, this motion declared, project their own program of immediate demands, democratic demands and transitional demands, in accordance with the theory of permanent revolution, to carry out the democratic and socialist tasks of the Indochinese revolution.

3. It spelled out, "The line of the Fourth International has been and continues to be unconditional defense of the Vietnamese revolution, irrespective of the policies of its present leadership." In so doing, it went on, the major fire of Trotskyists is directed against the imperialist aggressors." And, "We are opposed to any conditions forced upon the Vietnamese in the current negotiations. We will support no demands, such as "sign the nine-point agreement" (directed against Washington), involving support of conditions that violate the right of the Vietnamese people to self-determination and that constitute obstacles to the path of the revolution."

This sums up the Trotskyist position pretty well. But this motion was voted down. Instead, the motion put forward by Sterne and Walter was adopted.

This motion managed to sidestep the question of support for the nine points. We have since been informed by Sterne, in his article in the *International Bulletin*, that there were divisions among those whom he terms "the present majority" over this. Some were for "sign now;" others opposed it. (*IIDB* No. 7, June 1973, p. 15) These divisions were reflected in the publications of the various sections. For instance, *Rouge* in France and *La Gauche* in Belgium supported "Sign now," while the *Red Mole* (now the *Red Weekly*) in England first was for "sign now," but reversed itself.

This means that the resolution adopted by the IEC deliberately gave no guidance on a principled question to sections and supporters of the International. Instead, it fuzzed over principled questions. IEC members could, and did, support or oppose the "Sign now" position and vote for the Sterne-Walter resolution. In other words, differences of principle were papered over in this resolution. That is a method of leadership that is, or at least should be, totally alien to our movement.

Since the resolution adopted by the IEC gave no guidance for what attitude Trotskyists should have toward the nine-point accord, we had no clear idea of how this settlement was viewed by the European leaders until Sterne wrote:

"The recent accords represent the definition of a new and more favorable framework for a continuing struggle." (*Ibid.*, p. 16)

Sterne—who speaks for the MMF tendency—does *not* consider the accords a concession wrung out of the Vietnamese, but "the definition of a new and more favorable framework." From this viewpoint, he argues that the SWP is wrong to raise the question of "sign now" to the level of principle, and to oppose it on that basis.

The fact is, however, that the accords in effect grant the U.S. imperialists a handle for asserting the right to say who is to govern South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The accords also call for the formation of a coalition government. We are opposed to these two parts of the accords on principle, in accordance with what we have been taught by the Marxist leaders, including Lenin and Trotsky. The fact is, however, that sections of the Fourth International, under the guidance of Maïtan-Mandel-Frank,

have called for the signing of these accords.

These sections have bent to the pressure of Hanoi and the pro-Hanoi "vanguard." That is the only honest way of putting it. They find themselves, in refusing to call the accords a concession wrung from the Vietnamese, aligned with the same forces who supported sign now in this country: i.e., by the "New Mass Vanguard" (our opponents of the ultraleft) and by the Stalinists.

On this point, the estimation of the accords, the gulf that existed between us was wider than it appeared to be December.

The MMF tendency leaders do not judge the accords as a setback. This may be the reason for an apparent difference in how our press and theirs judges the extent of the betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution by Moscow and Peking. It seems to me—and I hope I am wrong about this—that their press has not yet come to grips with the meaning of the detente, with the fact that the price for it, the betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution, was so willingly paid by Moscow and Peking.

Sterne's article and the "differences with the PRT" document both underestimate the betrayal in comparison with the way we see it. The reason for this lies in what Sterne has to say of the effects of the betrayal on the Vietnamese CP leadership itself. He writes:

"But these pressures have not gotten the Indochinese leadership to bow to the demands of peaceful coexistence. On the contrary, after the announcement of Nixon's trip to Peking, the Vietnamese CP asserted its *independent* orientation more openly than ever in statements as well as in acts."

He repeats these same ideas a few pages later, to emphasize his point. So I think we can take this point, the differing estimates we have of how the Vietnamese CP leaders have responded to the betrayal by Moscow and Peking, as the real crux of the differences within the International over Vietnam.

The Vietnamese CP leaders describe the accords forced on them by imperialism and this betrayal as a "great victory." The MMF tendency does not go this far, but they do see them as favorable, and thus they are a victory. Not the "final victory," but a "victory."

And, since they refuse to call the accords a setback, they cannot say there has been a betrayal of monstrous proportions. (The MMF tendency's American supporters say on page 18 of their resolution that the accords "represent a *modest* setback in relation to what could have been hoped for in early '72.")

Whose interests are served by Hanoi's refusal to describe the horrendous scope of this betrayal? No one's except those of imperialism and the counterrevolutionary bureaucracies themselves, for whom the Vietnamese Stalinists are trying to cover. That is why they use such terms as "great victory" in describing the accords.

To give ground to the Stalinists on this point is, in my opinion, an adaptation to the politics of both the Vietnamese Stalinists and the "New Mass Vanguard," which happen to coincide on this point, and on others.

That is a serious accusation to have made, and might seem unwarranted if all that is involved is a difference of assessment of the February accords. But that is *not* all that is involved.

### "Class Collaboration Doesn't Really Matter"

Refusing to term the accords as a concession is not the only error these comrades who voted for or support the IEC resolution have made. No less alarming is their adaptation to the class-collaboration of the Vietnamese Communist Party. While the motion the IEC rejected refused to support the coalition government called for by the Vietnamese PRG, the motion the IEC adopted *disregards* the dangers of this practice by the Vietnamese CP. It says:

"... The Fourth International remains opposed to coalition governments with the bourgeoisie, whatever the specific composition of these governments. Even when the bourgeois ministers are hostages of an already proletarian state power, their presence does not facilitate the consolidation of the revolutionary seizure of power and can only disorient the proletariat's class consciousness.

"But this principled opposition to any coalition government with the bourgeoisie does not entitle us automatically to define all cases of such governments as popular-front regimes stabilizing and defending the economic rule and the state of the possessing classes. History offers us the example of France and Spain in 1936, France, Italy, Greece, Indonesia, and elsewhere at the end of the second world war, where this was the case. But it was not the case in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and China, where the presence of bourgeois ministers in the central government did not prevent the socialist transformation of the revolutionary process from occurring. The decisive thing is the nature of the state, that is, the class character of those who control the armed forces. If the bourgeoisie is in reality disarmed, then the bourgeois ministers are hostages of the proletarian state (whether bureaucratically deformed or not). If the proletariat and poor peasantry are in reality disarmed, then the revolution has suffered defeat. If both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie retain their arms, then the "government" or structure of "national coalition" can only be an expression of dual power; that is, it represents but a momentary hiatus in an ongoing civil war that can be ended only by the victory of one or the other existing camp of class antagonists." (*IIDB* No. 6, April 1973, p. 22)

If this makes you think those who voted for this document don't really think the offer by the PRG and the Vietnamese CP to take part in a coalition government is a danger to the Vietnamese revolution, you are not alone.

Comrade Sterne, who speaks for this tendency, spells out why they think class-collaboration is not a danger in the case of the Vietnamese CP. He writes:

"We have always condemned the use by the Vietnamese leadership of formulations of the "national-union" type. Because, by obscuring the class conflict, they *can* cover up (and have on several occasions) an opportunist policy. Because they make it more difficult to educate the vanguard in the spirit of internationalism. Because they do not facilitate the mobilization of an international anti-imperialist movement.

"But the use of these formulations by the Vietnamese leadership today does not necessarily imply that the VCP is following a class-collaborationist policy of the "popular-front" type."

This is wrong from top to bottom. The main thing that is wrong with "national-union" type coalitions—they

are very real, and not just "formulations"—is that in order to draw bourgeois and land-owner elements into it, the program and interests of the workers and poor peasants must be suppressed. It is not that they *can* cover up an opportunist policy. That is their purpose. They do not simply "obscure" the class conflict. They *try to prevent it*. They try to prevent the revolutionary mobilization of the workers and peasants against their class enemies, all too often successfully, including in Vietnam. Nguyen Huu Tho, president of the PRG, was just quoted by Wilfred Burchett:

"The NLF and PRG protect the property rights of plantation owners, of peasants and religious communities regarding the land they own." (*Guardian*, June 27, 1973)

The American supporters of the MMF tendency make the totally false claim that "it is obvious that the NLF and PRG are popular fronts only on paper." (*SWP Discussion Bulletin* No. 18, July 1973, p. 17) There is *no such thing* as a "paper" class-collaborationist front. The guarantees Nguyen Huu Tho—and many other PRG spokespeople—have made to plantation owners and other capitalists and landlords are not just on "paper." The Vietnamese CP fully intends to protect capitalist property relations in South Vietnam, just as they did in 1945, when they murdered Trotskyists who opposed this betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution, and as they did during the entire struggle against French imperialism. Listen to Pham Van Dong, the premier of the DRV:

"I re-emphasize the objective in South Vietnam is to fulfill the national democratic revolution, not the socialist revolution.

"When people said we want to press a communist administration on South Vietnam they spoke stupidly.

"It is clear that our perspective is this: the construction of socialism in North Vietnam and the successful realization of the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam, [which] will, step by step, lead toward the peaceful reunification of our country." (March 7, 1973 *Daily World*)

Pham Van Dong's category of "those who spoke stupidly" must include those who say of the Vietnamese Communist Party:

"... It grasped the dynamic of permanent revolution in the Indochinese revolution and systematically worked to pull out the roots of capitalism in the liberated zones of the South as well.

"In other words, the PCV did not practice a policy of subordination to the so-called national bourgeoisie as did the Italian and French CPs in 1944-47, the Chinese CP in 1925-27, and the Indonesian CP in the 1960s, and the fronts it set in motion were based on committees effectively tied to the masses, where the dominant classes had no way of making their interests prevail or of exercising important influence." (*IIDB* No. 7, June 1973, p. 32)

That description is by Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor, Tariq, and Delphin, in their article on the differences that they have with the PRT.

### *Revising Stalinist Reality to Fit Preconceptions*

What has happened is that these comrades are being led to rewrite history to fit their favorable estimate of the Vietnamese CP. They are bending facts to fit their conceptions. That is a dangerous sign that their conceptions are wrong. A few examples will show how far they

have gone.

First, from the Sterne-Walter resolution adopted by the IEC in December:

"All indications are that the cadres of the NLF and the Vietnamese CP are systematically preparing the South Vietnamese population for this mass political struggle." (*IIDB* No. 6, April 1973, p. 23)

The Vietnamese CP is telling the Vietnamese masses they have won a victory of epochal proportions. How is this preparing them for further struggle? In addition, this IEC statement is based on nothing but cheerful speculation.

This document goes on:

"First of all, a capitulation of the CP leadership, which could entail the dissolution of the revolution's independent armed forces, seems very unlikely in light of what happened both to the cadres and to the South Vietnamese masses after the Geneva accords." (*op. cit.*)

What they failed to include in this was what happened to the cadres and the masses after the Geneva accords. What happened was that the Vietnamese CP *did* capitulate, the revolution's independent armed forces *were* dissolved in the south, the Geneva accords were described as a great victory, and the cadres and masses who had fought in the resistance were slaughtered by Diem while the party ignored it, attempting to build "socialism in one country" in North Vietnam.

Because the Vietnamese Stalinists did this in 1954 with disastrous results, the MMF tendency does not believe they will do so again. What they leave out of this prediction is that the 1954 capitulation of the Vietnamese Stalinists *was itself* a repeat of their capitulation to French imperialism in 1945, which had results no less disastrous than those of 1954.

The IEC resolution also states,

"Further, if the Stalinist training of the Vietnamese CP leaders implies the possibility of opportunist maneuvers—which are reflected in the written public program of the NLF—the balance of the past fifteen years clearly demonstrates this party's tenacious commitment to the overthrow of the bourgeois state in South Vietnam." (*op. cit.*)

It will take a lot to convince Pham Van Dong and Nguyen Huu Tho of this. They are guaranteeing the rights of plantation owners.

Sterne and Rousset go the furthest in this, since they have written the most about it. Rousset writes in his book (and is quoted approvingly by the MMF leaders in their "PRT" letter):

"The Vietnamese CP belongs to that generation of Communist parties that, before and after the second world war, broke in practice with the international politics of the Soviet bureaucracy. . . . Of all these parties, (he includes here also the CPs of Greece, Yugoslavia, and China) the Vietnamese CP is the one that went the furthest in rediscovering the principles of Marxism." (p. 125)

But none of this is true at all. The Vietnamese CP has *never*, at any time in its history, gone outside the framework of the world Stalinist movement, unless you include in this the three occasions in which they were forced to work with Trotskyists in united fronts. In all three cases, in 1933-1937 in Saigon, in 1947 and recently in the American and European antiwar movements, the Vietnamese Stalinists were forced into these united fronts by their national interests and the strength of the Trotskyists,

which left them no alternative. These three occasions can no more be taken as evidence of a break with the Kremlin than can the willingness of the American CP to work with us on rare occasions in the antiwar movement, or that of the French CP in its half-hearted defense of the former Ligue Communiste against Pompidou's frameup attacks. In both these cases, the Trotskyists are too big for the Stalinists to ignore, and they have been forced by this to work with us, despite their wishes or those of the Kremlin.

I will not take up here all the errors made by Sterne-Rousset in their description of the history of the Vietnamese CP. They claim that it differed with Moscow and Peking from 1939 through 1954, and again later in the war against American imperialism. Comrades can read about these specific times and periods in the review of Rousset's book in the July-August *ISR*. I will take up only one short paragraph, from Sterne's article:

"The important thing is that in 1939, taking advantage of the break in the PCF's relations with Moscow owing to the war, the VCP was to reorient its policy in accordance with the needs of the struggle for national and social liberation in Vietnam. It was then to gradually take its distance from Moscow. In 1945, it took power and formed the DRV against the orders of the Kremlin which had ceded Indochina to the Western sphere of influence at Potsdam." (p. 11)

Was the Vietnamese CP in opposition to Moscow in 1939, when the VCP re-adopted for its program the call for independence, and applied it to both France and Japan? No, it was not. The Soviet Union at that time was a military ally of Germany, which was at war with France, and the USSR also was opposed to Japanese imperialism. It was in no way against the Kremlin for Ho Chi Minh to call for independence in 1939. The change from the Popular Front policy by the Kremlin to the Stalin-Hitler pact required Ho to re-adopt the call for independence, which the Vietnamese CP had dropped along with a demand for land reform in 1936, when the Kremlin's Popular Front policy demanded it.

[Incidentally, the Vietnamese CP did not call for land reform in 1939. Sterne is wrong here to say the party reoriented its policy in accordance with the needs of the struggle for *social* liberation in Vietnam.]

What does it mean to say that the Vietnamese CP "was then to gradually take its distance from Moscow"? The fact is that by 1943 the VCP was making bids to the Gaullists to "consider" granting Vietnam independence in five to ten years. The party did this out of deference to the needs of the Kremlin, which was trying to use the Gaullists to prevent an anti-Soviet bloc by the Western imperialists. It is nonsense to talk of "distance from the Kremlin" in this.

It is likewise totally wrong for Sterne to say that the VCP took power and formed the DRV government *against* Moscow's orders. Where is the evidence that Moscow ordered Ho not to form a government? This cannot simply be assumed because it fits some preconceptions of the authors. The fact is that if the Vietnamese Stalinists had *not* taken power in 1945, their betrayal of the August Revolution in that year—out of their deference to the needs of the Kremlin—would not have been possible. Sterne's contention that the Vietnamese CP acted against the Krem-

lin's orders in taking power and then beheading the Vietnamese revolution is made up out of whole cloth.

#### *Revising Trotskyist Conceptions to Fit Stalinist Reality*

These are just a few examples of how the MMF tendency bent and twisted facts to "reconstitute" reality to fit the Vietnamese CP. But there is another, no less dangerous side to this. Where Trotskyist conceptions conflict with the realities of the Vietnamese Communist Party, these comrades, including their supporters in this country, have begun to soften and adapt some of the most fundamental concepts of revolutionary Marxism, including the theory of permanent revolution and the transitional program. They are confusing the Marxist concept of the state, which is based on what class owns the means of production. They are revising the meaning of the words Stalinist and Stalinism to the point of rendering them meaningless.

The book by Rousset on the Vietnamese CP makes the claim that the leaders of this party have "as a whole, assimilated the decisive implications of the permanent revolution for the colonies and semi-colonies." (p. 98) The document on the Maitan-Mandel-Frank tendency's differences with the PRT says the Vietnamese CP "grasped the dynamic of permanent revolution in the Indochinese revolution and systematically worked to pull out the roots of capitalism in the liberated zones of the South as well." (p. 32)

This is a long step in a wrong direction. What separates the theory of permanent revolution from the Stalinists' two-stage theory is the *denial* by the Stalinists of the interdependence of the bourgeois and socialist stages of the revolution, of their *combined* character. In practice, this results in the Stalinists' policy of limiting demands to what they hope the bourgeoisie and landlords will accept during the first "stage." They *oppose* demands that go beyond bourgeois property relations, backing up their opposition with armed force when possible. In doing this, they stand opposed to the Transitional Program of Trotskyism, which is a system of demands, based on the theory of permanent revolution, which *bridge* the bourgeois and socialist stages of the revolution. The Stalinists insist, instead, on a program of *minimum* demands for the first "stage." When the first stage is basically *completed*, then and only then can the workers and peasants be mobilized against the employers and landowners.

The heart of the opposition of the Vietnamese Stalinists to permanent revolution is of course their practice of alliances with bourgeois and landowning elements. Besides the limits this places on their program, the class independence of the workers is undermined by this practice. The workers and peasants are miseducated to place trust in class enemies. The Vietnamese concept of a "national united front" is only another name for the old "bloc of four classes," and they favor such a multi-class bloc as a government. This has been opposed by our movement from Lenin's time. The revival of coalitionism by Stalin in China was the beginning of the struggle of the Trotskyists to hold onto the heritage of Marxism. Any attempt to soften our opposition to this practice today can only be looked upon with alarm by revolutionary Marxists.

Unfortunately, this is what the MMF tendency and its American supporters are doing. The Vietnamese Stalinists' call for a coalition government doesn't matter, you

see. The Internationalist Tendency writes, "The possibility of a peacefully received liquidation of revolutionary forces under a coalition government is ruled out by the existence of the armed units of the N. L. F.-D. R. V." (p. 17)

That puts things backwards. It is a sophisticated version of Mao's "power comes out of the barrel of a gun." The fact is that the existence of the armed units of the NLF-DRV depend on the policies of the Vietnamese CP, not vice versa. And the policies of the Vietnamese CP aim at forming multiclass coalition governments in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. To simply dismiss these policies with a wave of the hand and say "they won't work" is to deny that they have been carried out by Stalinist parties, including the Vietnamese CP, wherever imperialism has been willing to accept them. To say imperialism cannot accept a coalition government in any country in Indochina ignores the fact that such governments have been accepted already in Laos—not to mention the rest of the world including for instance Chile and France.

No less alarming than the disregarding of class-collaborationist practices by the Vietnamese Stalinists is the further logical extension of this practice to other areas of the world. Germain's denial that the Anti-Imperialist Front in Bolivia, the FRA, was not a class-collaborationist front (*IDB* No. 4, April 1973, pp. 13-14) is one example. This FRA included General Torres at first, and later the so-called "revolutionary" wing of the *national police*!

Another example of the miseducation that is being spread in the world movement by the MMF tendency's adaptation to class collaborationism is the recent election in France, in which the Ligue Communiste supported the class-collaborationist Union of the Left, calling for a vote for bourgeois "left radicals" as well as for reformist workers' candidates. That was explained away by references to the "hegemony" of the Stalinists in this front, just as the class-collaborationist fronts of the Vietnamese Stalinists are explained away by the hegemony of the CP in them.

This softening of the Trotskyist opposition to class-collaboration is taken to grotesque limits when the Internationalist Tendency writes that the Black Panther Party "had taken a progressive turn" in "taking the difficult step of beginning alliances with ostensibly revolutionary, predominantly white organizations." (p. 13) They are writing here of the electoral bloc of the Panthers and Peace and Freedom Party, which was consummated at the end of 1967. This was a class-collaborationist bloc if ever there was one, and the SWP took the Panthers to task for it. Are the American supporters of the MMF tendency now saying we should have *avored* this bloc? If so, why? Does the domination of Peace and Freedom Party by Progressive Labor, the International Socialists, and a few CPers mean the "proletariat" had "hegemony" in it, and it was therefore all right to support it? They indicate that this is their view when they denounce the party's criticisms of the Peace and Freedom Party. We have a right to sound the alarm over this.

#### *Stalinism—Does It Exist?*

In refusing to call the Vietnamese CP Stalinist, the MMF tendency has redefined Stalinism to an extent that makes the term largely useless. (The Internationalist Tendency manages to sidestep the question of the nature of the Viet-



namese CP. Perhaps they think that if they tried to defend this MMF position, they will lose supporters. Such maneuvers have characterized the "evolution and maturation" of this grouping.)

Sterne writes:

"The international minority defines the VCP as a *Stalinist party*. They do this on the basis of their own definition of what constitutes such a party. For the majority, a Stalinist party is a party that *subordinates* the interests of the socialist revolution in its country to those of a bureaucracy in a degenerated workers state. This is certainly not the case of the VCP which has had to carry on the struggle *against* the orientation set by the Kremlin and today by the Kremlin and Peking!

"For the minority, a Stalinist party is one that advances a program that in appearance is Stalinist. The program assigned to the Vietminh and the NLF fronts by the VCP appears to be a program for a *bourgeois democratic stage* of the revolution. The comrades of the minority, moreover, are unaware of the *basic programmatic documents* published by the Vietnam Workers party in which an analysis is developed that is largely one of permanent revolution." (p. 9, emphasis in original)

We are not at all unaware of the basic programmatic documents of the Vietnamese CP. But I'll let that pass.

Let's take up his definition of Stalinism as "a party that *subordinates* the interests of the socialist revolution in its country to those of a bureaucracy in a degenerated workers state." Since his contention that the VCP has not done this is wrong, the VCP must be regarded as Stalinist even by this truncated standard. The Vietnamese CP has subordinated the interests of the socialist revolution in its country to those of the Stalinist bureaucracies in Moscow, Peking and Hanoi. They have done this most noticeably in 1945 and 1954, and in 1960. They did it again in 1973, by refusing to speak out about the nature of the accord forced on them by the U.S., Moscow and Peking.

Nevertheless, his definition of Stalinism is inadequate. It fails to take note of the fact that there is more than one Stalinist bureaucracy, and that a CP can be in agreement with one and disagreement with others at the same time—and still be in the framework of Stalinism. Sterne's definition leaves out the fact that Stalinist parties can and do have tactical disagreements over how the international system of Stalinism can best be protected, and that Stalinist parties, especially those in power, have their own national bureaucratic interests to defend, which can and do bring them in conflict with other such parties.

Sterne writes that "for the minority, a Stalinist party is one that advances a program that in its appearance is Stalinist. The program assigned to the Vietminh and the NLF fronts by the VCP appears to be a program for a *bourgeois democratic stage* of the revolution." The limitation of the NLF and PRG programs to the bourgeois democratic stage, refusing to see the interdependence of this stage with the beginning of socialist tasks, is indeed one of the indications of the VCP's Stalinism. But it is not merely this party's program that gives it away as Stalinist. That is *secondary*. What is *primary* is this party's *actions*. It demobilized the movement for independence in Vietnam in August 1945, at the time of Vietnam's best chance to date for victory, out of deference to the

diplomatic interests of the Kremlin. When it was finally forced to take up resistance, against both the French and the Americans, it did so within the framework of Stalinism. The method of struggle it chose was the non-proletarian "people's war." The launching of this struggle coincided with Stalinism's "left turn" during the height of the cold war.

If Sterne had used the method of *Marxism* in his examination of the Vietnamese CP, if he had looked at that party's origins and traced its development through the context of the real forces that have molded that party, and if he had not ignored the real facts of that context and the VCP's development in it, he would come up with different conclusions. Further, he would have some understanding of the essential nature of Stalinism.

Sterne and Rousset do not understand Stalinism, and as a result their understanding of Trotskyism is also undermined. It is not they, however, who are primarily responsible for this. It is the top leadership of the MMF tendency. In October 1972, the Central Committee of the Ligue Communiste voted 46-6 to support the PRG's seven-point program, and the International leadership did nothing about this violation of our political principles. Rather, they showed that this miseducation of cadre is coming from them, right from the top, when they proposed the December IEC plenum resolution which failed to take a position against "Sign Now" or on coalition government—in effect supporting those in favor of these violations of our norms.

#### *An Edited "Theory of Permanent Revolution"*

Sterne and Rousset are changing our program and theory, perhaps without realizing it themselves. It is the task of the leaders of the International to *correct* these errors. Instead, they *approve* them.

Rousset, in his book, defines the theory of permanent revolution in a way that avoids the question of alliances between the workers and peasants and the bourgeoisie. He leaves the role of the proletariat open. Instead of it being the *decisive force* in the revolution, it is reduced by Rousset to one part of the alliance of the workers and poor peasants. Its actual presence is not required since it is so well represented by the Vietnamese CP. Here is how Rousset describes Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution:

"1. The bourgeoisie there [in the colonial countries—G. J.] is incapable of providing a real and complete solution of bourgeois democratic tasks and of national liberation.

"2. In consequence, only the dictatorship of the proletariat which takes the leadership of the oppressed nation and before all of the peasant masses, can do this.

"3. The importance of the agrarian and national questions assigns to the peasantry, which constitutes in general the majority of the population of the backward countries, an extremely important role.

"4. The alliance, which is decisive, of the proletariat and peasantry, is not conceivable except under the political direction of the proletarian vanguard organized in the communist party.

"5. The democratic revolution, in the course of its development, itself directly transforms into socialist revolution and [becomes] therefore a permanent revolution." (pp.

Where is the leading role of the proletariat itself, as a class? Where is the need for an uncompromising struggle by the workers and poor peasants against the national bourgeoisie? Above all, where is the bitter struggle fought by the Left Opposition against the Stalinists' attempts to revise Marxism, which began with the permanent revolution? Instead, we are given long quotations from Le Duan purporting to show that he *really* believes in permanent revolution. He cannot do this and still hold to the bloc of four classes — which he does, although Sterner-Rousset neglect to mention it. However, if one is going to reconcile the Vietnamese CP with the theory of permanent revolution, *something* has to give. And it won't be the Vietnamese CP.

The MMF tendency's political confidence in the Vietnamese CP leaders means that they refuse to call for political revolution to overcome the bureaucratic deformations they admit exist in North Vietnam. Instead, they offer advice to the Vietnamese Stalinists, on the mistaken assumption that it will be accepted. We, on the other hand, expect that the Vietnamese CP leadership would oppose a revolutionary mobilization of the masses for socialist democracy with all the repressive means at their disposal.

We have a right to ask both the Internationalist Tendency and the Levitt-Stodola grouping, who claim to support the MMF tendency: Do you call for political revolution in North Vietnam, or do you have political confidence in the leaders of the VCP, in their ability to carry out the tasks of socialist democracy in North Vietnam?

We are given some hint of the Internationalist Tendency's position when they write of the SWP's "gross underestimation of the objectively revolutionary role of the NLF in Vietnam" (p. 18) and when they declare the war in Vietnam to be "a highly organized and technically elaborate war for the defense and extension of the workers state . . ." (p. 17) The Vietnamese CP leaders, despite their own claims, are *fighting to extend the workers state!* This is hundred-proof mechanical thinking. It amounts to political confidence in the leadership of the Vietnamese CP that it *will* carry the struggle in the south to the point of extending the workers state. Without saying so, it amounts to total agreement with the Rousset-Sterne-MMF view of the VCP as somehow revolutionary, and therefore not Stalinist.

#### *Earlier Estimates of Stalinism*

Why the nature of Stalinism is now in question in the International requires us to go back to earlier discussions in the Trotskyist movement over the class nature of the states in Eastern Europe and China. I won't get into that here, but I want to indicate some directions such an inquiry will lead us in.

At the end of World War Two, capitalist regimes collapsed all over Asia and Europe, and in many of them in Eastern Europe, plus Vietnam, Stalinist parties came to power, forming coalition governments and maintaining capitalist property relations. Stalin tried to preserve capitalist property relations, succeeding in such countries as France and Italy. There, imperialism and Stalinism worked hand in glove to save capitalism. Imperialism was not satisfied with leaving the question of property relations — and thus state power — in the hands of these

sometimes shaky and unreliable coalition governments. The imperialists put pressure on the Soviet Union, beginning at the end of 1946, with the cold war, in an attempt to stabilize capitalism in Western Europe. This forced the Kremlin to respond with a left turn at the end of 1946. As part of this, insurrections were launched by Stalinist parties in Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, Malaya, and elsewhere. The Vietnamese Stalinists responded at this time to French imperialism's escalating provocations. The Chinese CP began the campaign that ended when Chiang Kai-shek fled the mainland.

As part of this left turn, the Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe threw capitalist parties and ministers out of the coalition governments and took power themselves. As this process developed, capitalist property relations were overthrown. The Stalinist bureaucracy, under the pressures of the cold war, could not afford to share power with the bourgeoisies in Eastern Europe, who might furnish a base for imperialist conquest.

The Fourth International, in a long and educational discussion, appraised these changes and decided that bureaucratically deformed workers states had been created in Eastern Europe. North Korea also fits this category.

In Vietnam and China, however, imperialism tried to reassert its control against massive nationalist upsurges, which the CPs in those countries had managed to bring under their control. By 1949 the Chinese CP-led peasant armies had chased Chiang to Taiwan. In 1954 French imperialism gave up on Vietnam, and the Vietnamese CP agreed to the division of the country. They held power in the north and a U.S. puppet regime was created in the south.

In China, Mao Tse-tung tried to construct capitalism ("New Democracy"). But imperialism was threatening in Korea, and by 1953 the Chinese CP had been forced to overturn capitalist property relations, and another workers state, albeit deformed, was created.

In Vietnam, it is not clear because of a paucity of information just when the DRV became a workers state, but it had certainly done so by 1958 — even though the leaders appear not to have been aware that the process they were heading was going in that direction.

The Fourth International has not yet reached agreement on the process by which China became a workers state. In the case of Vietnam, that discussion is only beginning. Many of the differences we have over China are present (and perhaps amplified) in Vietnam.

At question in the China-Vietnam discussion is reconciling how Stalinist parties can overthrow feudal, colonial, and capitalist regimes, and take that process to the overturning of capitalist property relations and the creation of deformed workers states — but still workers states.

This question is not limited just to Stalinist parties. The case of Cuba shows that petty-bourgeois formations that are not Stalinist can take power and overturn capitalism.

This is not a question of *whether* these things are possible. That has been answered by life. The question for our movement is *how* these parties have come to power and destroyed capitalism. The context was the weakening of imperialism in the Second World War, and its subsequent inability to impose its rule everywhere. Then, imperialism's cold war brought the overturn of capitalism in Eastern Europe and war in China, Korea and



Vietnam. Imperialism's attempts to reassert control failed totally in China and partially in Korea and Vietnam.

As this process unfolded, the theory of the permanent revolution has received ample confirmation, both positively and negatively. Throughout Eastern Europe, in China, Vietnam, Korea, and Cuba, there has proved to be no separation between the carrying out of the bourgeois-democratic tasks and socialist tasks. The leaders of the regimes in those countries were forced to proceed to the construction of workers' states, even though they did not intend to do so, and in most cases were opposed to so doing.

Other countries, such as Algeria, Greece, Indonesia, Bolivia, and others, show negatively that despite the political defeat of imperialism or imperialist-backed regimes, only the destruction of capitalism, and the construction of a workers state, can provide the basis for solving the bourgeois tasks of the revolution.

But having said that, our movement is left with the task of explaining how Stalinist parties can overthrow capitalism. After all, if these parties are adequate to this job, what need is there for the international revolutionary party of Leninism-Trotskyism?

The MMF tendency claims that parties which struggle against imperialism and which are at the head of a process which leads to the creation of a workers' state can no longer be Stalinist. This leads them to define parties such as the Yugoslav, Chinese and Vietnamese CPs as other than Stalinist. In the case of Vietnam, in the document "Some Fundamental Differences Between the PRT and the International Majority" (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin* Vol. X, No. 7, June 1973) comrades Ernest, Livio, Pierre, Sandor, Tariq, and Delphin spell this out:

"... we don't share the position of those who characterize the Vietnamese party as Stalinist. . . . We know that rejecting this characterization can pose problems of historic analysis and theoretical synthesis which merit ample discussion. But much graver problems are posed if one agrees to include in the category of Stalinism a party that has destroyed capitalism in its country and was, for a long period, in the vanguard of the struggle against imperialism on a world scale." (p. 32)

They are right, of course, that this poses problems of historical analysis and theoretical synthesis. What they mean by this delicate phrase is that the Vietnamese CP has been considered by the Trotskyist movement to have been a Stalinist party like the Chinese CP. Trotsky considered them such, and wrote it down. Now these comrades consider this not to be the case—which provides *them* with a thorny problem indeed of historical analysis and theoretical synthesis.

They attempted to get around this problem in China by ignoring our movement's previous characterization of the Chinese CP as Stalinist, adopting instead the term "bureaucratic centrist." This was a term Trotsky used to describe the Stalinist bureaucracy at a time when there was still a Left Opposition and a right opposition as well within the Russian party, which forced the bureaucracy to vacillate between these two positions (hence the term "centrist"). Once the right and left oppositions were destroyed, however, the bureaucracy then had the entire base of the workers' state to itself, and it shifted far to the right of both oppositions. At that time Trotsky dis-

carded the term "bureaucratic centrist."

#### *Why the VCP and CCP Aren't Centrist*

The use of the term "centrist," which the European comrades are now attempting to apply to the Vietnamese CP (see Sterne, p. 11), evidently is meant to show that a Stalinist party can sometimes respond in a revolutionary direction to a revolutionary impulse. If this is their intention, this may stem from a one-sided definition of centrism as the policy of a "leftist" organization that vacillates between reformism and revolutionism. In general, that definition can apply to *some* degree to *any* political organization that is other than revolutionary Marxist. That definition ignores the *social base* of the organization. We normally also say of centrist parties that they have *no* stable social base, and this is why they vacillate—between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (although most of them seldom get much beyond the petty bourgeoisie). *Stalinist* parties, however, have as a social base either *their own* bureaucracies or another bureaucracy in a degenerated or deformed workers' state. They have specific social interests to defend not shared by centrist formations.

A characteristic most centrist parties also share is their heterogeneity—they include several currents or factions. They are generally led through maneuver rather than by clear presentations of opposing views, and their leaders abhor democratic centralism, which makes the leadership accountable to the ranks.

If the Vietnamese CP includes anything like factions within it, that has escaped all documentation. There are, of course, rumors and speculation from bourgeois academicians and journalists. But the fact is that every one of the top VCP leaders defends the policies of the leadership. In 1960, when the pressure was highest from party members in the south to allow them to resist Diem's savage repression, the top leaders *all* spoke for the line of continuing to build socialism in North Vietnam and cutting the defense budget. If there was ever a time that a grouping would have made its presence known in this party, that was it. There is no such record.

For these reasons, it is not accurate in any way to characterize either the Vietnamese or the Chinese CP as centrist. They began as Stalinist, and they haven't changed.

#### *The Class Nature of the State is Coming Into Dispute*

Another point at issue in the discussion is the nature of a workers state. The nature of the state depends on who owns the means of production. Since there is no petty-bourgeois mode of production, states are defined as capitalist states or workers states, depending on who owns the means of production. On that basis, we say China was *not* a workers state in 1949, when the CP came to power, but rather when, in 1953, *property relations* were changed, with nationalization of basic industry and state control over large-scale commerce and foreign trade.

There are indications, however, that the MMF tendency and their American supporters believe that from the moment of the *seizure of power* by one of these parties that we would call Stalinist, a workers state is in being. The Internationalist Tendency writes, "Withdrawal of U. S. support would most likely mean the smashing of the Saigon regime, *leaving state power in the hands of the prole-*

*tariat.*" (Emphasis added)

According to this concept, the coming to power of a leadership that is (a) petty-bourgeois in composition and program, which the Vietnamese CP is, (b) based on peasant armies, with minimal proletarian participation, (c) currently determined to maintain capitalist property relations, and (d) organized into a class-collaborationist government (the PRG), amounts to "leaving state power in the hands of the proletariat." Is this feat accomplished with mirrors?

While the MMF tendency leaders have not written expressly that the coming to power of the PRG automatically makes South Vietnam a workers state, they *have* been moving in that direction by such mistatements of fact as that the Vietnamese CP has "systematically worked to pull out the roots of capitalism in the liberated zones" of South Vietnam. (From "Differences with the PRT," p. 32). Sterne writes that agrarian reform in South Vietnam "in many regions has already gone beyond dividing the land and begun 'agricultural cooperation,' that is, has surpassed the bourgeois democratic stage of agrarian reform." (p. 9)

Not so. Agricultural cooperatives do not surpass the bourgeois democratic stage of agrarian reform unless private ownership of land is abolished. And this is hardly the case even in *North* Vietnam, much less South Vietnam. This evident confusion of the MMF tendency and their American followers, it seems to me, may be another source of disagreement. We are *not* about to say that "Stalinism in power equals a workers state," or that "revolutionary [or bureaucratic] centrism in power equals a workers state." If we modify the Marxist theory of the state to accept *this* hodgepodge, we will be in trouble indeed. The Vietnamese CP came to power in 1945. It had state power in all of North Vietnam until it left the cities under French attack. Was North Vietnam a workers state from August 1945 until the end of 1946? Was it afterward still a "workers state" in rural liberated zones, even though during that entire period capitalist property relations remained intact? Such concepts remove the term "workers' state" from all contact with the material world. We need a better guide than this one.

#### *The Discussion in our Movement*

The issues now being discussed in the Trotskyist movement are manifold. They include armed struggle, mass actions versus vanguard actions, which class will change

society, coalition governments, the nature of Stalinism, and more.

The issues now being discussed in the Trotskyist movement are manifold. They include armed struggle, mass actions versus vanguard actions, which class will change society, coalition governments, the nature of Stalinism, and more. We are discussing issues that touch directly the very heart of our movement: the nature of the state, the permanent revolution, the transitional program, and the need for revolutionary Marxist parties.

Every one of these issues touches Vietnam. In addition, the MMF tendency's inability to understand the *de-tente* stems, in my opinion, from their erroneous positions on Vietnam. The centrality of Vietnam to all this means that we are probably going to be discussing it for some time to come. It also seems to me that this discussion will generate a considerable amount of light for us theoretically. It also seems likely to generate some heat, too, in comparison with the Eastern Europe discussion.

The Fourth International will come out of this discussion armed for the great battles it faces. Trotskyists will have a better understanding of the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism, once we have come to grips fully with the reasons for the lease on life granted it at the end of World War Two by the weakness of imperialism, and with its response to the attempts of imperialism to reassert its control in the cold war.

As the brief historical period closes that saw this exceptional and unexpected performance by Stalinist parties at the end of World War Two, we can draw a balance sheet on all those parties. Not one of them has our proletarian program, practice, or theory. Not one of them is capable of carrying out our program for workers democracy. They are opponents of revolution, functioning within the workers' and peasants' movements.

The struggle of the Vietnamese people for national independence and social justice has lasted the longest of all the upsurges at the end of the war that were headed by Stalinist parties. The practice and program of the VCP have time and again *stood in the way* of national liberation and socialism, and still do so.

That is not our program. We stand for a socialist Indochina. The VCP does not. That is why we pose against this party the Trotskyist program, and why we think this requires our movement to pose, as it has done in the past, a Trotskyist organization to carry out this program against the VCP.

July 15, 1973

ON THE QUESTION OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMITTEE

by Oscar G. Coover, Los Angeles Branch

The problems of transition in the party's leadership are ones that have been matters of concern for more than ten years now. Substantial progress has been made in a process that no other proletarian revolutionary party has faced, to my knowledge. However, that process is by no means completed and problems have now arisen that were at another stage a necessary step in the solution, i.e., the advisory status of the National Committee. In addition the problems of the transition were pointed up by the fact of so little change in the composition of the N. C. at the 1971 convention. This applied particularly to what Comrade Dobbs correctly categorizes the "middle" layer.

The preconvention discussion, along with steps already taken voluntarily by Dobbs and Novack, must prepare the party to instruct the convention to further the process in a fundamental sense so that the real (active) leadership of the party is represented fully on the National Committee. My contribution to this discussion has two central points: 1) my own personal role and a proposal to resolve it. 2) The abolition of the "advisory" status on the National Committee.

Let me start by discussing the second point. The "advisory" status was created for the primary purpose of moving off of the National Committee a layer of older comrades, some of whom were of the founding cadre, who for reasons of health and age were no longer able to fulfill the criteria of National Committee membership in that they were no longer able to contribute to either the thinking or activity demanded of those who assume the responsibility of NC membership. An essential part of that creation was to enable younger comrades who were playing an increasing role to be elevated to full committee status. If my memory serves me well, that coupled with vacancies created for other reasons resulted in ten new members being elected to the N. C. full membership at that time. The decision to create the advisory status was a correct one to solve the critical problem of providing succession at the same time maintaining continuity.

There was, however, a problem, created at the same time, that anyone thinking seriously about the matter would have to recognize. It is that such a form created for immediate and temporary purpose could become an ongoing institution or form that would extend itself permanently. One might ask what would be wrong with that?

The wrong lies not in a real or immediate problem but one that exists potentially. At certain junctures in our party's history, i.e., prior to the 1940 split and again at the time of the dispute around the meaning and implications of the Chinese Communes, a duality and polarization developed in the central leadership that impeded the functioning of the active central leadership.

In both cases cited the difficulties were overcome with difficulty but they were overcome. However, should the advisory status be continued, one can visualize a situation where such a polarization could occur between those who are in an advisory status and those who have the primary responsibility both in the formal and real sense of keeping the party on course and carrying out that

policy. Therefore, in my opinion it would be better that status of advisory to the National Committee be abolished and those comrades presently in that status continue to make their contributions as any other member of the party, without special formal status. The political authority accumulated through many years of devoted and substantial contribution would still give whatever their further contribution—more than adequate weight in the deliberations of the party on all levels.

As to my own role; for valid historical reasons with which those who are familiar with the party's history the middle layer referred to previously, were representative in large measure of those who took leadership responsibility among a very thin layer of comrades in the late forties and fifties. They were of that general age bracket that is very thin in our party as a result of the isolation of the Cold War period when the party was cut off from recruitment and the attrition of the cadre was accelerated by the pressures of affluence and isolation—the hallmarks of that period for the party.

While this category of comrades served well, they were elected to the National Committee because there were virtually no alternatives. Some of them are no longer available, at the direction of the party, to assume full time central leadership responsibility and at the present time they present the greatest formal barrier to the proper succession of new younger layers moving onto the National Committee and assuming the formal responsibilities they are presently carrying out in reality. This category is also represented heavily on the alternates list. This was the central problem that the 1971 convention failed to come to grips with.

The above reasoning applies to me and also I believe to some others in this category on the committee as well as on its alternates list. I think through the process of the preconvention discussion this problem should be resolved in two ways: first by the voluntary action of myself and others, and secondly to prepare the convention to deal with this problem decisively in those cases where necessary and where no voluntary action is forthcoming.

As for myself, I believe it is no longer necessary nor desirable that I continue as a member of the NC or on its alternate list. Further, even should the advisory status be continued in the post convention period, I request of the party that I not be placed in that category. In fact, at the 1971 convention I requested of the Los Angeles delegation that they not submit my name in nomination. However, they overruled my wishes and I mistakenly left it at that.

This time I am making the request that I not be nominated, in any category, for consideration to the National Committee.

Finally, should such comrades who no longer properly belong on the committee fail to take voluntary action, the convention must make room on the committee and its alternates list for the testing of younger leading comrades many of whom will have to carry central leadership responsibilities as the years go by and the party develops.

July 19, 1973

by Derrick Morrison

[The following is the major portion of a report I gave on the European document as a supporter of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency in the Upper West Side branch. Comrade Jon Rothschild, detaching the European document from the discussion on Latin America, reported on the European document as a supporter of its line.]

The document entitled "The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe" represents the beginning of the discussion on revolutionary strategy and tactics for Europe. It is an attempt to point up the new openings and opportunities for building sections of the Fourth International in Europe.

But the European document cannot be isolated and separated from the discussion on Latin America. The European document cannot be viewed other than within the context and framework of the debate and discussion on Latin America.

This is because the same mistakes and errors that characterized the line of the 9th World Congress on Latin America are now finding their reflection in the line proposed for Europe.

The test of events and the class struggle over the last four years have proven disastrous to the strategy of rural guerrilla warfare adopted at the 9th World Congress in 1969.

And the same key leaders who were responsible for formulating the guerrilla line—Mandel, Maitan, and Frank—are not calling for its reversal. No, these comrades are calling for its reaffirmation at the next world congress of the Fourth International.

These same comrades now bring us the European document. For this reason, it is instructive to review briefly their reasoning for adopting a guerrilla line on Latin America at the last world congress.

One explanation for adopting guerrillaism appears in a contribution by Jebrac. Comrade Jebrac is a leading member of the former French Communist League and his contribution is printed in our Internal Information Bulletin, No. 3 of this year. It is entitled, "The Axes of the International Debate."

He writes, on page 21, "The adoption of a resolution on Latin America involving an orientation of armed struggle marked a decided turning point in the International toward the struggling vanguards that empirically arose in the wake of Castroism. Such an orientation is justified from an objective viewpoint by an analysis of the form of domination that imperialism holds over the continent. But it is also justified by the subjective need to re-root the Trotskyist movement in the real vanguards of the struggle, following the heavy liability bequeathed by Posadas and Latin American Trotskyism."

So for Comrade Jebrac it was necessary to adopt guerrillaism to enable the Trotskyists to work in the "vanguard," which was permeated with Castroism. It was not a question of recruiting elements of the "vanguard" to a Trotskyist program and organization, but of making concessions, making adaptations to the Castroist line of rural guerrilla warfare.

What was to come out of making these concessions and

adaptations to Castroism? To get a sense of that you have to go back to 1969 and pick up on a contribution by Comrade Maitan. It is in the International Information Bulletin, Discussion on Latin America (1968-1971). It is entitled "An Insufficient Document," referring to the Latin American resolution. Comrade Maitan writes, and remember comrades, this is in 1969 before the 9th World Congress, "But it is only by successes or revolutionary struggles at the head of a mass movement in one or several countries that we will be able to surmount our difficulties and present contradictions. What is expected from us from now on is that we demonstrate in practice the historical value of our movement and we will be judged essentially on this basis. This can appear, at bottom, to be an elementary truth, but it is a question of inspiring our whole activity with this recognition. It is a question more precisely of determining in what countries we have the best chance of a breakthrough and subordinating everything to the elementary necessity for a success in these countries, and even, if necessary, in a single country. The rest will come later.

"There are, in fact, several countries where we at present have possibilities for an important breakthrough (youth movement in France, antiwar movement and youth movement in the United States, South Africa with a certain time) and we must unquestionably make an effort in the direction of India, but we must place everything above all on a sector of Latin America and you know very well which one. We must exploit the preparatory period of the congress to convince the entire movement to operate in practice, every day, with this perspective. Permit me to express myself a little paradoxically: it is necessary to understand and to explain that at the present stage the International will be built around Bolivia."

So the expectation among the comrades who adopted the guerrilla line at the last world congress was that a big breakthrough would occur. Bolivia would be the place. In Comrade Maitan's intoxicated mind, the whole International had to stake itself on this breakthrough in Bolivia. In this way we would "prove" ourselves to radicalizing layers.

Comrades, this whole approach reeks of voluntarism, of idealism. That is, that just through sheer will power we can overcome objective circumstances and reality and pave a shortcut to the building of a mass communist international.

The big breakthrough was staked on the application of a single tactic, guerrilla warfare. No other tactic was possible. Conversely, the bourgeoisie and imperialism had no other alternative than to prop up ruthless military dictatorships. This tactic of rural guerrilla warfare was not just prescribed for Bolivia and Argentina, but for all of Latin America.

This adaptation to guerrillaism and ultraleftism seriously disoriented the sections in Bolivia and Argentina, blinded them to the living class struggle, and as a result disastrous defeats were suffered.

The Bolivian section lies in prostration and little has been heard from it. The Argentine section, the PRT-Com-

batiente, has suffered several splits, with some of the comrades going over to Peronism, while others have blindly continued on the path of guerrilla warfare despite the election of a civilian government.

However, the orientation of the Argentine PST, the sympathizing section of the International, has thrown this whole disastrous course of guerrilla warfare into sharp relief. The PST has made impressive gains by following and intervening in the living class struggle. Against the backdrop of a prerevolutionary situation, the PST has achieved the deepest penetration of the workers movement than any other section of the International.

Despite this clear test of two lines—one line being that of elevating the tactic of guerrilla warfare to a strategy, and the other line being that of applying the Transitional Program and method—Mandel, Maitan, and Frank still cling to the ultraleft error of guerrillism. They claim that nothing was wrong with the line, it was just the way it was carried out.

So rather than reverse this error, Mandel, Maitan, and Frank deepen the error. They reject the PST and try to turn Lenin into a partisan of the strategy of guerrilla warfare. In this respect, I urge comrades to read Comrade Camejo's contribution entitled "Lenin vs. Germain." It appears in a recent issue of the International Internal Discussion Bulletin.

The same authors of the disasters in Bolivia and Argentina now propose a course for Europe, capitalist Europe that is.

I should say at the outset that the activities of the European sections of the Fourth International are better than the line proposed by this document. The line of the document, through omission and commission, reflects the mistakes and errors of the European sections.

The former Communist League was engaged in a united front struggle against the abortion laws in France. But in the European document there is not one mention of the struggle breaking out for women's right to control their bodies.

The sections in Europe have been involved over the past period in antiwar activity. Yet the document does not draw a balance sheet on this activity. The document does not mention the impact or probable impact of the detente on the crisis of the European Stalinist parties. There is no analysis of the student movement except to say that there has been an "irreversible turn" and that for the "vanguard" workers' struggles have supplanted student struggles. Yet, the biggest student struggle since May '68 just shook France a couple of months ago. And our comrades played a leading role there.

The European document doesn't mention immigrant workers, their problems and growing weight in the workforce of different countries. For example, in France immigrant workers are 8 percent of the population and 15 percent of the workforce. And the struggle of these workers detonated a series of workers' struggles in France last spring.

The document doesn't deal with elections and how we approach them. Big elections just occurred in West Germany and France. In West Germany the comrades abstained, and in France our comrades supported the Union of the Left, an electoral bloc of the Communist Party, Socialist Party, and a bourgeois party called the Left Radicals. Moreover, at the convention of the former French

Communist League last December the convention refused to characterize the Socialist Party as a working-class party with a bourgeois-reformist program. As was stated in the political resolution passed by the convention, the SP is neither a bourgeois party nor a reformist workers party. This position reflects serious problems, comrades. We in the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency characterize the French SP as a working-class party with a bourgeois reformist program, not as something in between.

In addition, the British International Marxist Group has had serious problems in relation to the Labour Party.

The Irish struggle got a reference but there was no analysis of its impact upon the class struggle in Britain and the continent. In addition, no analysis was made of the national question in relation to the class struggle in Europe. Just a couple of years ago our comrades led mass demonstrations in solidarity with the Basques, an oppressed nationality in Spain.

The document did not mention the continuing impact of the colonial revolution on the class struggle in Europe. This is not only in relation to Vietnam, but in relation to struggles in the Middle East, Southern Africa, and Latin America.

Nor does the document deal with how we are faring in the effort to build class-struggle left wings within the unions. Through the articles in *The Militant* on the election campaign of the Argentine PST, we got some picture of how the comrades are doing, how they are carrying on work in the unions. But no picture emerges from the European document as to what our comrades are doing in the unions in France or elsewhere. There are many other social struggles going on that could be mentioned and that we find absent from the document.

Just to deal with all of the struggles and questions mentioned would require quite a big document. The length of such a document, stretching into books, simply points up the absurdity of trying to write a "line document" for capitalist Europe, an area composed of more than 15 countries as different from one another as Finland from Sweden, or Norway from Portugal, or Spain from Greece.

It is just like trying to write a document that maps out strategy and tactics for sections in all of Latin America as was done at the last world congress. And it would be similar to trying to write a document on strategy and tactics for North America, which includes simply the United States and Canada. As it is, the European document doesn't deal with the real world, with the class struggle as it is unfolding now. And just as the Latin American resolution of the last world congress revealed intoxication with just one form of armed struggle, that is, guerrilla warfare, so too the European document is hung up upon two elements from the Transitional Program: dual power and workers control.

Dual power is mentioned I don't know how many times in the document. And the first central political task for our sections is outlined as follows on page 17, "Systematic intervention in all agitation among workers, in all strikes and campaigns around economic demands, striving to link up these actions to the general approach outlined in the Transitional Program—that is, to propagandize for a series of demands (essentially around the axis of the demand for workers' control) that objectively lead the workers to challenge the authority of the bosses and

of the bourgeois state and to create organs of dual power."

And then, on page 15, under the heading, "Dual Power and Revolutionary Victory," the document states, "In the industrialized capitalist countries, the main conditions for transforming a revolutionary situation, where organs of dual power have sprung up, into a revolutionary victory are the following:" I won't deal with the following, but this quote gives a further flavor for the theme running throughout the document.

The document says on the same page, "It flows from this that the main task of revolutionists in case of an explosion of tumultuous mass struggles consists of preparing for and ensuring the appearance of organs of dual power that can prevent the rapid absorption of the upsurge by bourgeois state and economic relations, and, as a result, give the class struggle the form of a series of general confrontations, thereby creating the best conditions for a rapid growth of class consciousness and for a rapid strengthening of the revolutionary party.

"The organs of dual power do not necessarily have to grow out of strike committees and take the form of soviet councils from the very start—although that remains the most probable variant. They can grow out of spreading experience of workers' control, or—as during the Spanish civil war—an experience of a large-scale arming of the workers. The essential thing is that such bodies be oriented toward forming a centralized structure that would begin to assume real state-type powers."

All this is true, but how does it relate to the concrete tasks facing the former French Communist League, how does it relate to the less than fifty comrades in Ireland, how does it relate to the sections in Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Spain, and West Germany, with no more than several hundred comrades in each section? How do the Swedish comrades prepare and ensure the appearance of organs of dual power?

To pose these questions is to pose the unreality of the European document. In fact, we have to ask, what type of period does the European document suggest. Does it suggest a period of general radicalization? Yes, but dual power situations are not the characteristic phenomena of a radicalization. In fact if we look back at capitalist Russia, we find that dual power situations arose two times, in 1905 and in 1917. In both these years soviets of the workers, and in 1917, of the soldiers and peasants, arose. These were prerevolutionary and revolutionary periods, which is a great deal more than a period of radicalization.

Thus, the constant reference in the document to organs of dual power and dual power situations suggests much more than radicalization. It implies that Europe is about to or has already entered a prerevolutionary situation.

This raises again the real similarity between the Latin America resolution of the last world congress and the European document. The Latin American resolution explicitly laid out a perspective of "prolonged civil war with rural guerrilla warfare as its principal axis." This was to take advantage of "increasing and mounting social and political tensions tending toward the outbreak of revolutionary situations."

This was the schema from which political strategy for a whole continent flowed. Now we get a schema for dual power and workers control for Europe.

Comparatively, the Latin American resolution is more

concrete than the European document. The class struggle in Latin America is on a much higher level than that of Europe. A revolution occurred in Cuba with guerrilla warfare as its axis. And prerevolutionary situations have occurred in countries like Trinidad, the Dominican Republic, and are occurring in Chile and Argentina. For the account on Trinidad I refer comrades to the pamphlet "Black Power in the Caribbean."

And within the context of the Latin American class struggle, there have been experiments at guerrilla warfare in total isolation from the mass movement. These experiments have cost the lives of many courageous militants, the most tragic example being Che Guevara. As a result guerrillism represents a real problem and an obstacle to the building of Leninist parties in Latin America. But in Europe, where the class struggle is on a much lower level, to talk of schemas of dual power and workers control is not even to begin to deal with the problems and obstacles standing in the way of building Leninist parties. In this way the European document is rendered even more abstract, even more, as in a description supplied by Comrade Mary-Alice Waters, "surreal."

The detachment of the European document leads it to describe situations which seem to fall out of daydreams, not arise out of the real class struggle. For example the last paragraph on page 15 starts, "The revolutionary Marxist organization's revolutionary education of its own cadres and activists, its revolutionary propaganda in the vanguard, and its occasional exemplary agitation among broader masses must aim at preventing the onset of any such pause after the mass movement reaches its first peak, taking the adversary by surprise and paralyzing him, that would give the latter time to regroup his forces and prepare his countermove. Forming organs of dual power, which are compelled to arm for the purposes of self-defense, and taking over by the masses and their representative bodies of as many decisive material 'hostages' as possible (means of communication, infrastructure, banks, industrial plants) constitute the most effective means of limiting the cost of the revolutionary victory, in both material and in human terms."

Again, this passage has no relation to the present period in Europe and to the problems that the sections face.

What spices up these surrealistic schemas is one, a doomsday projection, two, the vague and undefined concept of the "vanguard," and three, terrorism.

First, on the doomsday projection. The document indicates that there are but four to five years before the outbreak of revolution over all of capitalist Europe. On page 11 at the bottom of the first column it says, "But the fact that we are only at the beginning of the deepening social crisis, that neither the extent of unemployment nor the political level of the workers' struggles yet confronts the bourgeoisie with an immediate question of life or death, allows us to envisage a period spread out in most cases over four or five years before the decisive battles are fought." And on the bottom of page 14 the document says, "If a new revolutionary leadership is not built in the time remaining to us, after successive waves of mass struggle, the European proletariat will experience new and terrible defeats of historic scope."

Comrades, this projection of four to five years, virtually nullifying any new twists and turns in the class struggle, is dangerous. It stands to mean that before



or around 1978, it will be all over for Europe, the rest of the world be damned. What this does is blind the sections in Europe to the development of the day-to-day class struggle. It blinds them to present possibilities and openings. Because, you see, if civil war is to break out around 1978, to hell with the women's movement, to hell with the youth movement, to hell with the workers movement, we have to start preparing for armed struggle. This is the straitjacket you tie yourself in with this projection.

It is similar to the guerrilla line on Latin America. That is, there will be no other form of bourgeois rule other than ruthless military dictatorships, allowing for the development of no mass struggles in the urban areas, and therefore ruling out the development of Leninist parties tied to the mass movement. The only possible action in these circumstances is in the hills, in the countryside, in the form of guerrilla warfare. The interesting thing about this schematic and static projection is that it fell foul right after it was passed. According to Comrade Jebrac, in his contribution in the Internal Information Bulletin, the PRT (Combatiente) had laid out plans for rural guerrilla warfare in Argentina before the last world congress. But right after the congress the first Cordobazo occurred, that is, an insurrectional strike by the workers. Under the impact of this action, the Combatiente group switched over to urban guerrilla warfare rather than rural. The same flawed method is now being applied to Europe.

The method of doomsday politics outlined in the European document is not only found in the Latin America guerrilla resolution, it can also be found in the writing of Michel Pablo back in 1951 at the Third World Congress. Comrades can now read about Pablo's doomsday politics in the Education for Socialists bulletin entitled "Towards a History of the Fourth International, Part 1: Three Contributions on Postwar Developments." Contributors include Cliff Conner, Les Evans, and Tom Kerry.

Pablo predicted back in 1951 that the third world war would break out in June of 1953. He used this type of doomsday politics to justify the tactic of entryism *sui generis*, or entryism of a unique type. And it was entryism of a new type, unlike that ever before practiced by the revolutionary socialist movement. And as a result, for almost two decades, up and until 1969, the European sections were buried in Stalinist and Social-Democratic parties. This was long after June 1953 when the war between the Soviet Union and the United States was to have broken out. A bit more on entryism *sui generis* later.

The doomsday politics of the European document is very much connected with the "vanguard." According to the document, as outlined in Part 6 on page 13, "the central task for revolutionary Marxists in the stage that opened in 1967-8 is to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard in order to build qualitatively stronger revolutionary organizations than in the preceding state, to make the transition from revolutionary propaganda groups to revolutionary political organizations beginning to sink roots into the proletariat." Then the document says on page 14 under Part 6, "Unless the revolutionary left achieves such hegemony, there is a danger that the strength of the mass vanguard will be dissipated. Unless this mass vanguard is crystallized out into a serious and powerful revolutionary Marxist organization, the potential for influencing broader masses is in danger of being neutralized and lost. Unless this potential of the vanguard to in-

fluence greater masses makes itself felt with increasing forcefulness, the upsurge in workers' struggles will arrive at a dead-end, which in the long run will facilitate a decisive counteroffensive by the bourgeoisie." Then the document adds a few sentences down that this vanguard must be made into "an adequate instrument for regenerating the organized workers' movement."

So this "vanguard" is of primary importance. Yet, for all of that this "vanguard" is never defined. And in the way the term is used the vanguard is something above and beyond the organized workers movement, something that even seems to be above and beyond objective reality. For everything depends upon what the vanguard will or won't do. If the vanguard doesn't act right then the workers movement won't be regenerated and the bourgeoisie will launch a counteroffensive.

This is not materialism comrades, it approximates idealism. Reality is placed on its head and the subjective factor or factor of will is assigned first place. The vanguard concept becomes all the more ludicrous when the document lists some of the far-left groups composing it. Here is how the political currents are listed: classical ultraleftist currents (of a third-period Stalinist or Bordigist type); ultra-left Maoist currents; originally ultraleft currents evolving toward centrism; purified and orthodox Maoist currents evolving toward neo-Stalinism; and currents that might be called sophisticated Maoists or half-Trotskyistic Maoists.

It is these Maoist groups of varying variety that make up the "vanguard," and according to the document on the bottom of page 24 in the first column, the way to win revolutionary workers and students to the banner of the Fourth International is to organize "national political campaigns on carefully chosen issues that correspond to the concerns of the vanguard, do not run against the current of mass struggles, and offer a chance for demonstrating a capacity for effective initiative. . . ."

It is this sentence that captures the essence of the mistakes and errors of many of the sections in Europe. It takes those mistakes and errors and elevates them into a line.

For what if we, in the course of our antiwar work, had put the concerns of the vanguard rather than the concerns of the masses in first place. If we had adapted to the changing moods of SDS, to the concerns of the Labor Committee, Workers League, Spartacist, the Attica Brigade, the Yippies, RYM II, the Weatherpeople, the *Guardian*, the Black Panther Party, Black Workers Congress, Revolutionary Union, the October League, and various other grouplets, where would the antiwar movement be today? Quite simply, comrades, there would be no antiwar movement. We would have found ourselves chasing after the vanguard, reflecting its impressionistic moods and concerns.

It is the Marxist method embodied in the Transitional Program by which we participated in the antiwar movement, the women's liberation movement, and the student movement. Comrade Waters, in her criticism of the European document, demonstrates how this adaptation to the concerns of the vanguard affected our antiwar and Irish work in Europe. The ultraleft and maximalist slogans of "Victory to the NLF" and "Victory to the IRA" flowed from this method. These were mistakes comrades; the

document calls for elevating them into a line.

The document also takes the mistakes of the sections on building independent youth organizations and elevates these mistakes and errors into a line. That is, the document rejects orienting toward building independent Trotskyist youth organizations. A couple of years ago there were independent Trotskyist youth organizations in Britain, Belgium, West Germany, and the French comrades were discussing the building of a youth organization. Out of an incorrect orientation, these youth groups were liquidated. The European document proposes that this incorrect orientation become the general rule.

And in proposing this general line on youth work, the document provides very inadequate and sketchy reasoning. On page 19 in the second column the document says, "After May 1968 and, more generally, after the revival of workers' struggles throughout Europe, an irreversible turn has taken place in this milieu everywhere in the world. This turn is being imposed today primarily by intervening in workers' struggles and by the perspectives of these struggles."

The document doesn't explain this "irreversible turn." What it seems to imply is that student struggles have become unimportant since the rise of the workers movement. And this probably stems from the reasoning that since the "vanguard" is not concerned about students anymore but about workers, we have to follow that mood.

What this leads to is an economist position, a counterposing of the organized workers movement to the student movement. Because there is no analysis of the student movement, the line the document advances amounts to tailending or chasing after the "vanguard," not leading it.

But on the other hand, on page 23 in the first column, the document indicates that it is not opposed in principle to building youth organizations. It says "The possibility for taking a turn to form (or rebuild) such a youth organization thus depends strictly on the relationship of forces, that is, the influence that the adult organization has already acquired in the vanguard, its base in the working class, and the number of cadres that can be put at the disposal of the youth organization. As long as it has not reached the critical threshold in forces and roots in the working class necessary to attempting such a project, the adult revolutionary organization will strive to organize sympathizer groupings specifically adapted to the youth, such as were mentioned above."

But the document never defines the critical threshold at which an adult organization can initiate a youth organization. The former French Communist League had over a couple thousand members, and yet it had not initiated a youth organization. What is this threshold — 2,000, 3,000, or 5,000 members? The document doesn't say.

And if the former French League was the biggest section of the world movement, what does their orientation say for the SWP and the YSA. Since the document judges no European section strong enough to initiate a youth organization, does that mean then that groups like the YSA and the Canadian YS/LJS should be liquidated?

The youth radicalization is a worldwide phenomenon, continuing to spread and deepen. Yet the European document does not seriously outline tasks for intervention in this radicalization.

Now we come to that part of the document that opens

the door to terrorism, acts of violence in total isolation from the mass movement. This is how it starts off under Part 19 on page 25 of the document: "The danger of extralegal repression at the hands of hired gangsters acting as supplementary police, private security forces of employers, and armed semifascists. The weapon, already used extensively by the Brazilian, Uruguayan, Argentine, and Mexican bourgeoisies, has been imported to Europe via Franco Spain and the Greece of the colonels, and its use is spreading today in France and Italy. The danger of this method of terror being introduced into most capitalist European countries cannot be underestimated."

"The most effective response to this danger is to revive the reflexes of self-defense and to lay the basis for workers' militias arising out of worker and student strike pickets. But it has already proved indispensable in Spain and France for the revolutionary organizations themselves to take initiatives in self-defense. This may be the case tomorrow in other European countries. Such initiatives must be conceived and executed in such a way that they will be understood and endorsed by the workers, link up with the workers' organizations' tradition of self-defense against the fascists, and serve as exemplary strongpoints to encourage more massive forms of self-defense on the part of the working class."

Further on the document begins to spell out a little more of what it means to "take initiatives in self-defense." On page 26 at the top of the first column it says, "The spirit in which our sections will have to educate the entire mass vanguard, moreover, is this: to show the bourgeoisie in practice that the price it will have to pay for any attempt to establish an open dictatorship will be civil war in which both camps will use arms. History has shown that from any point of view, such an eventuality is preferable to an institutionalized civil war in the form of a bloodthirsty dictatorship where the bourgeois camp murders and tortures at will, while the proletariat and the worker militants, disarmed and disoriented, stand by helplessly and watch the massacre of their own."

What does it mean to "show the bourgeoisie in practice that the price it will have to pay for any attempt to establish an open dictatorship will be a civil war in which both camps will use arms"? Is the threat of the use of arms by the "vanguard" supposed to frighten the bourgeoisie of its attempts to establish an "open dictatorship"? I don't think it will. If the bourgeoisie is at the point of establishing an "open dictatorship," and all that stands in the way is the "vanguard," then I don't think the bourgeoisie will have too much of a problem of realizing its goal. But if the organized might of the working class stood in the way, then the bourgeoisie would have some problems. And this is precisely the force that is left out when the document takes up the problem of repression. The document has this voluntarist conception of violence. It pins all of its hopes, including staving off the outbreak of civil war, upon this "vanguard."

The way the document comes off sounding is like some tract from the Weatherpeople or the Black Panther Party in its ultraleftist days. The Weatherpeople put forth the conception of "kicking the ass of the ruling class." And the Panther strategy was "offing the pigs," "moving in twos and threes," and "revolutionary suicide."



Again, this opening of the door to terrorism can be found in the Latin American resolution passed at the last world congress. The rural guerrilla warfare begun by the PRT(Combatiente) degenerated into an urban campaign of terrorism, assassination, kidnapping. Despite this degeneration, Mandel, Maitan, and Frank refused to call it by its right name. In their mind, up until the elections, the PRT was waging "armed struggle." Their inability to recognize the Sallustro kidnapping and other acts of terror for what they are, is now beginning to find reflection in the European document. Not only that, but the whole Latin American line is beginning to warp and hamper our activities in Europe. What I am referring to here is the acts of terror in France that the former Communist League extended its support to.

These actions were described by Comrade Waters in her criticism of the European document. Both actions occurred last year and involved unknown militants throwing molotov cocktails at the offices of Honeywell-Bull over Indochina and at the Argentine embassy over the Trelew massacre. Both these actions were hailed in the pages of *Rouge*.

These actions substitute for the work of building the mass movement. They relegate the workers and their allies to the position of spectators and not actors. They grow out of the spark theory, the theory that exemplary acts of violence can spark the masses into motion. And at bottom, support to these acts of terror grow out of frustration with the tempo of the development of the class struggle. For if civil war is to break out by 1978, you have got to find some way to short-circuit the development of the class struggle, some way around the objective problems of today. This attempt to find shortcuts marked the evolution of the PRT(Combatiente) in Argentina. The PRT(Combatiente) has traveled the road the European document would set our sections on. For these and previously stated reasons the line of the European document must be rejected.

The European document talks about the "three tactics" of party building. One tactic calls for winning hegemony in the "mass vanguard." Another calls for "massive or-

ganic growth." And the third is entryism *sui generis*. I don't know when "massive organic growth" became a tactic. That's what the revolutionary party always strives for. As Comrade Waters writes, when do we not strive for "massive organic growth." The same goes for trying to win hegemony in the "mass vanguard." Leaving aside what "mass vanguard" stands for, the revolutionary party always strives to win hegemony in the radical movement. Yet, the tactic of winning hegemony is prescribed for the next period. The method is similar to the Latin American resolution of the last congress. There the tactic of guerrilla warfare was elevated to a strategic orientation. In similar fashion the tactic of entryism *sui generis* was advanced, entryism of a unique type in which the revolutionary Marxist party buries itself in reformist workers parties not just for a few years, but over a decade.

Despite the great difference of opinion over entryism *sui generis* within the International, the European document, in just one sentence, gives sweeping approval of this whole period from 1952 to 1969. And not only is this sweeping approval contained within one sentence, but it is even in parentheses!

As Comrade Waters points out those comrades who agree with the line of the European document yet disagree with entryism *sui generis* would have to reject the document on that basis alone.

The discussion on the European document is not some type of nebulous debate. It is not a question of well, the European document says this but the European sections do this. No, this discussion is on the line proposed by the document. And the discussion on this line is not an abstract affair. It is intimately connected to the fact that there is a struggle between two tendencies over the line of the International. What happened in Argentina and Bolivia was quite serious. And so for this reason, it is impossible to agree with the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency on Argentina and Bolivia and the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency on Europe. As I have tried to point out, the methodology of the MMF tendency on Europe springs from the Latin American resolution passed at the last world congress.

July 19, 1973

By George Novack

Comrade Garrett wrote in his first contribution that "the basic philosophical foundations of Marxism must be reinvestigated." My reply specified numerous points where he departed from or rejects these foundations.

It would be profitless to go over the same ground a second time or be drawn into side issues. My rejoinder to his rejoinder will therefore concentrate on two of the main points.

The principal philosophic questions in dispute revolve around the materialist theory of being (ontology) and its theory of knowledge (epistemology). These are the fundamental elements of any philosophy and the one should be in accord with the other. That is certainly the case in the theoretical system of Marxism.

The materialist ontology maintains that the external world exists before and apart from humankind which is its unique evolutionary offspring. Everything distinctive of our species, from laboring activity to art, science and philosophy, is ultimately derived from material reality and inseparable from it.

Anyone who doubts or denies that nature exists before ourselves or that the objective takes precedence over the subjective may be many things in the field of philosophy from a skeptic and eclectic to a subjectivist and idealist. But such a thinker does not adhere to materialism.

Where does Comrade Garrett stand on this all-important question? As is his habit, he does not offer a clear-cut, straightforward answer. He skates all around the main point without coming to grips with it and tries to cover up his evasiveness with irrelevancies.

Here is how he goes about this obfuscation. He rejects what he calls "ontological materialism." Since materialism is above all a theory of being with a definite view of what existence is and what it is not, and what its relation is to our species, the addition of the adjective to the noun appears superfluous and unwarranted.

However, this tricky terminology serves a purpose. It helps Garrett put a question mark over the basic principle of the materialist conception of the world and try to replace its real content with something else foreign to it—and to Marxism. If we ask what kind of materialism there is other than "ontological materialism," he can only refer us to his theory of mediation which he offers in place of historical materialism and its "incorrect, outdated and indefensible presuppositions."

To extract a semblance of support from the Marxist tradition for this operation he claims that, whereas Engels, Plekhanov, the younger Lenin, Trotsky, John G. Wright and Novack all uphold the false standpoint of "ontological materialism," he, along with the young Marx and the older Lenin, share a different position. He challenges me to prove that Marx ever held that "the universe is independent of individual and social consciousness."

He might as well have asked for a demonstration that Marx was literate. Marx's collected works show that he was both literate and well-versed in philosophy. He knew the ABC's of materialism as well as the ABC's of German.

To nail down this point, let me quote from the article

Lenin wrote on Marx's teachings for the Granat Encyclopedia between July and November, 1914, when he was also intensively studying Hegel. "In his *Ludwig Feuerbach*—in which Engels expounds his own and Marx's views on Feuerbach's philosophy, and which Engels sent to the press after re-reading an old manuscript, written by Marx and himself in 1844-45, on Hegel, Feuerbach, and the materialist conception of history—Engels writes:

"The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being . . . spirit to nature . . . which is primary, spirit or nature. . . . The answers which the philosophers give to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other . . . comprised the camp of idealism . . . The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism."

Lenin comments: "Any other use (in a philosophic sense of the terms idealism and materialism leads only to confusion."

Feuerbach, the young Marx, Engels and the older Lenin are so closely linked together in this one passage that Garrett cannot pry them apart. They agree that "nature is primary." So do I and all other genuine materialists.

This proposition is too simple, too unambiguous and unmistakable for Garrett to accept. He sails off on a different tack. "Temporal priority, prior historical occurrence" must give way before "logical priority, or priority in terms of the actual evidence," he says. He disregards the fact that in this case temporal priority is also causal priority; nature produced humanity, not the other way around.

According to his method of mediation, it is impermissible to proceed from the objective given, real relations between nature and ourselves. We must go from the subjective to the objective.

We must start from the interaction between our consciousness and our activities in the present to evidences derived from the past. "From all such pale survivals or sedimentations of the past we partially verify our hypothesis that social and natural evolution went on prior to our existence and even that of humanity itself. If we eventually conclude this fact, it is still a *conclusion*, and not an article of faith, i.e., an axiom on the basis of which we start out," he writes.

From his subjectivist starting point Garrett makes the grudging concession to materialism that its "hypothesis" about the priority of nature is very likely "partially" verified. But, he cautions, don't be too certain about this. "If" that turns out to be the case, it is still no more than a tentative deduction. Don't take or mistake it for "an article of faith."

Anyone familiar with the literature of the contemporary philosophical schools will at once recognize that this kind of skeptical reasoning about the independent reality and existential priority of the external world is proper to empiricists and positivists—and those revisionists of Marx-

ism who echo their line of argumentation. They decline to state that matter in motion is the primordial reality, as Marxism does. The unambiguously affirmative position of dialectical materialism to that effect is dogmatic, an unwarranted hangover from metaphysical or religious sources, they say.

That is why Garrett finds the views expressed by the early Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* so congenial. Lukács there condemned Engels for insisting on the primacy of nature and the dialectical character of nature. Lukács asserted that "nature was a societal category," not a self-subsistent reality. The dialectic could not be extended to nature, he said, because it contains no subject, no human praxis. He reduced dialectical materialism to a historical materialism which deals solely with the interaction of subject and object in human development.

This narrow anthropocentric version of Marxism has nowadays become popular among diverse thinkers on the Left. Garrett is adapting his ideas to these tendencies.

Let us see how. Is the prime tenet of materialism that nature came before individual or historical existence no more than a "partially" verified hypothesis or, at best, a provisional conclusion about the nature of the universe that requires much more evidence before we can be certain of its truth, as Garrett argues?

No. First, it is an objective fact, a fact of life, as birth and death daily confirm.

Second, it is a truth validated by the evidence provided by the natural sciences from A to Z, from astrophysics to zoology.

Third, it is the essence of the theory of universal evolution which is the unshakeable foundation of the modern scientific outlook.

Fourth, this proposition about the relation between nature and labor lies at the basis of all the social sciences from economics and sociology to history and politics.

Fifth, it is the primordial *principle* of dialectical materialism which is based upon all these sources of proof.

If, at the dawn of philosophy and science when religion and magic still held sway, it might be objected that the priority of nature was only a "partially" verified hypothesis, this is no longer the case two and a half thousand years later. This fact is not now an assumption but a truth. The "naive realism" rooted in the experiences of everyday life has been so thoroughly and unequivocally confirmed by the findings of the natural and social sciences and by the outcome of the development and disputations of philosophy that for Marxists the last remnant of speculativeness has been removed from this assertion.

The progress of knowledge about nature, society and the thought process has converted that proposition about their interconnections into the elementary and indispensable basis of any correct approach to the understanding of reality. That is why it is the bedrock of Marxism.

Garrett disregards this dialectical aspect of the growth of human knowledge whereby what was once a conclusion from the evidence at hand has been transformed into a first principle, an axiom, if you please, from which modern materialism now starts out and on which it rests. This is a particular case of the qualitative change of a tentative hypothesis about the nature of things into a general law of being.

By casting doubt upon this principle Garrett is trying to erase one of the chief conquests of civilized thought. His skeptical agnosticism about whether science and philosophy have actually come to positive conclusions about the essential nature of reality and humanity's relations with it strikes at the foundations of Marxism and spreads confusion about its teachings.

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Comrade Garrett rejects the Marxist theory of knowledge along with its materialist theory of being. He discards its conception of truth that genuine knowledge correctly reflects, i.e., corresponds to the content, of objective reality.

The truth of the proposition that the earth is round and the falseness of the statement that it is flat is determined by the shape of the earth itself which existed long before humanity emerged from its creatures. This knowledge correctly reflects the facts about the geometry of its object. Even an abstract and symbolic chemical formula such as H<sub>2</sub>O signifies that each molecule of ordinary water actually consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen.

Garrett explicitly stated that he does not subscribe to the theory that ideas are mental reflections of the material world. And he sticks to this position in his reply. Here, too, he seeks to invoke support from Marx. "I believe . . . [my theory of knowledge] is very close, if not identical, to Marx's implicit position," he says.

The nonrepresentative conception of knowledge he adheres to is thoroughly unrepresentative of Marx's view. Marx explicitly defined his theory of the relation between the process of cognition and the surrounding world in the postscript to the second German edition of the first volume of *Capital*. "The ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought."

This summary statement literally sets forth a theory of reflection, does it not? And this is what Garrett flings overboard in his objections to the correspondence conception of knowledge and truth.

Correct ideas correspond with their objects in reference to social as well as natural phenomena. The categories and laws, the forms of thought, in *Capital* reflect the realities of that system. They are objectively true results of scientific thought in history and economics.

Garrett's sketch of his alternative theory of mediation in sections 3 and 4 of his reply contains no clear indication whether or not he thinks the content of ideas records objective reality. If it does not, then what distinguishes truth from error? If it does, then what's wrong with the correspondence theory? It will not help him to refer to practice since practice does not create and determine the truth but tests and verifies it.

Garrett resorts to a well-worn maneuver to screen his withdrawal from the philosophic premises of Marxism. He attributes to dialectical materialism the faults of earlier materialist thinkers. Just as he previously identified the dialectical determinism of historical materialism with the one-sided determinism of the mechanists who make the economic basis the direct and immediate cause of all superstructural social phenomena, so he tries to pin on

the Marxist theory of knowledge the notion that the reflections of external objects are simply passively imprinted on our minds.

Dialectical materialism eliminated this error made by the empiricists and pre-Marxist materialists. Our theory of cognition proceeds from the activities of people in transforming nature and society, their theoretical activities included. The unity and interaction of practice and theory in the progressive development of human knowledge was one of Marxism's revolutionary innovations in epistemology.

At the same time Marxism teaches that all the steps in the process of knowledge from sensation and perception to abstraction and logic have their source and base in objective reality. That is why the objective takes precedence over the subjective in reality and in reasoning.

\* \* \*

Garrett complains that "Novackian philosophy" fails to "show how the universal necessarily expresses itself in the individual, though in each from a certain point of view." So let me show how the dialectic of the individual and the general works out in his case.

His personal deviations from the fundamental principles of dialectical and historical materialism have a broader connection and significance, however complicated it would be to analyze their "necessity." In intellectual circles throughout the Western world and even in Eastern Europe a strong current of thought has emerged that doubts or denies that matter in motion is the basic reality, that nature has a dialectical character, that it can be conceived of apart from humanity, that its essential reality and inner structure can be truly known, or that ideas reflect the nature of things.

Many variant tendencies exist in this covey of anthropocentric socialists and semi-Marxists. Its diverse adherents do not abandon the principal doctrines of dialectical materialism to the same extent and in the same way. But they have one point in common. All argue that the relation between subject and object in the historical process is not only the starting point but the be-all and end-all of Marxism. This attachment to the subjective over the objective accounts for their hostility to Engels whom they blame for distorting Marx by extending dialectics to nature.

As a disciple of this trend of thought, Garrett is pressing to introduce its misinterpretations of Marxism into our movement. Garrett protests that we are systematically discouraging "creativity on the level of theory," and his efforts in particular. Forty years ago, in reply to three American comrades, Trotsky wrote that the party cannot act as though all questions in the field of philosophy have already been resolved for it or that it has nothing to expect from the further development of scientific thought.

At the same time he warned: "The party must be especially vigilant toward those 'innovators' who only warm up stale critical dishes, or towards those who are still in the process of investigating, with uncertain results." (*Problems of Everyday Life*, p. 321.)

If Comrade Garrett had a worthwhile contribution to make toward our understanding of philosophical and scientific method, we would appreciate learning something new from him. Unfortunately, he belongs in the category of those who serve up "stale critical dishes," as I have sought to demonstrate. This is the gist of the controversy between us.

July 17, 1973

## THE SWP'S POSITION ON A WOMEN'S PARTY

by Betsey Stone

As anyone knows who has read the political counter-resolution of the Internationalist Tendency, it is filled with misrepresentations of the party's positions. One example of this is the distortion of our position on a women's party. The document says:

"The formation of independent parties by Blacks, Chicanos, women is seen not as a lesser evil to complete passivity, but as a superior form of organization. Separate transitional programs stressing the autonomy of each 'sector' are put forward to encourage the formation of these parties.

"A caricature of the logic of this position was unwittingly put forth by the often glib Comrade Camejo, at the December 1970 YSA convention in New York. Speaking at the major rally of the convention, he asserted that some sectarians were worried about the seemingly endless series of new parties that the SWP was calling for: a labor

party, a Black party, a Chicano party, a women's party. This, he added, was not a danger, but on the contrary, a valuable asset. Taking the example of a Black woman who could belong to at least three of these parties, he stated that she would have a guarantee that in case one of them degenerated, she could always be active in the next. This kind of logic is not confined to only a few comrades.

A large number of comrades have seriously discussed the possibility of drafting a transitional program for women, and others have discussed one for gays. They were told that this would be premature because the party could not yet know exactly what demands women and gays would raise. The call for a women's party and for self-determination for women was never fully refuted by the SWP leadership. It was opposed for tactical reasons, because the single-issue abortion campaign was on the

agenda."

The absurdity of these assertions about our views on the women's party and other questions is obvious to any SWPer who is familiar with our program. The fact that the Internationalist Tendency is not embarrassed to print such distortions is a reflection of their disdain for the membership of the party as well as their lack of interest in making a serious evaluation of the party's work.

The comrades of the Internationalist Tendency are well aware of the fact that the party does not see the building of a women's party as a "superior form of organization." This was made clear to the leader of that tendency, Bill Massey, at the time of the 1970 speech by Peter Camejo referred to in the document, when Massey wrote the national office inquiring about the speech. (See appended letters.)

At the party's 1971 convention, not only was the idea of calling for a women's party rejected, but a whole portion of the women's liberation report, given by myself, was devoted to explaining why we opposed calling for such a party. Needless to say, the reason given for this bore no resemblance to the Internationalist Tendency's assertion that this was done "for tactical reasons because the single-issue abortion campaign was on the agenda."

For the benefit of comrades who are interested in the reasons we did give at that time, the section of the presentation dealing with the women's party question is reprinted below.

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We have never in the past advocated the building of a women's party, and we should not advocate it now. To understand the reason for this, we should start with a consideration of just what a political party is. As Lynn Henderson points out in his document, a political party is a qualitatively different kind of organization than any of the other organizations we build, support and participate in. A political party is an instrument whose purpose or goal is the exercising of governmental power. It is a vehicle through which a group attempts to take over and rule a country.

Our ultimate goal is to build a revolutionary socialist party, made up of masses of workers, which can take power from the hands of the ruling class. Under certain instances we have supported the building of a labor party as a step in the direction of breaking the ruling-class monopoly in the political arena, and a step toward building a mass socialist party. In addition, we support the building of a Black or Chicano party through which masses of Afro-Americans and Chicanos can become organized independently of the Republican and Democratic parties.

Within this country, there is no other group besides the working class which can actually take state power. That is, take the state—the military, the police, the government apparatus—out of the hands of the capitalists. No other force is strong enough. Although they cannot actually take state power—except as part of a broader working-class revolution—Blacks and Chicanos can take a certain amount of political control, even today in predominantly Chicano and Black communities. This is what has happened in Crystal City and what the Lowndes County Free-

dom Party was fighting for. Moreover, our demand for self-determination for Blacks and Chicanos includes the right to set up and run a separate state, if these oppressed nationalities so desire.

Unlike the case with workers, or Blacks and Chicanos, it is not possible for women, as women, to take control of a nation or a state. There is no such thing as a women's nation, there is no such thing as a women's government, and there is no such thing as a women's community.

This becomes a little clearer if we consider the question of Black women, or Chicanas, who are among those working-class women most likely to break from the control of the capitalist parties at this time. How would Chicanas be likely to move if they broke from the capitalist parties at this time? They would move through a Chicano party which could deal with the national and class aspects of their oppression as well as their oppression as women, because a political party must deal with every issue facing the community or nation.

The question of state power and the nature of political parties are class questions. That is, there are only two possible classes that can rule—the capitalist class and the working class. Every political party which comes into being—including nationalist parties—takes a class stand. Either it supports the rule of the capitalist class or is a step in the direction of power for the workers.

We decide whether it is principled to support such parties on this class basis. This is true even when we weigh whether we will or will not support the formation of a party of an oppressed nationality. We do not advocate that all oppressed nationalities form parties. We advocate the forming of mass Black and Chicano political parties at this time because such parties would represent a step forward toward independent political action on the part of the most oppressed sectors of the working class. Nor do we support all parties of oppressed nationalities. The Parti Quebecois is an example of such a party we do not support. We advocate the *right* of self-determination—unconditionally—for all oppressed nationalities. But we do not *advocate* the formation of parties by oppressed nationalities unless this represents a step forward in their own independent mobilization and in the independent mobilization of the working class.

Because women are a multiclass sex, whenever they enter the electoral arena or begin to help form or support one party or another, they will be forced to make a basic class choice. They will not be able to abstract themselves from the class struggle. They will either have to work as a caucus within the capitalist parties—as the National Women's Political Caucus is doing—or they must align themselves with a party of the working class. There is no in-between. Just as there is no independent long-run perspective for a petty-bourgeois party such as the Peace and Freedom Party, or for a party of students, or gay people, or youth, or any other specific oppressed group.

This does not negate the need for women to organize separately as women to define their goals and to fight for liberation. We expect that as we move toward the revolution, not only will the independent feminist movement grow, but large women's organizations will be formed, and women will exercise tremendous power as an organized part of the struggle against capitalism.

APPENDIX

CORRESPONDENCE WITH BILL MASSEY

Undated

14 Charles Lane  
New York, New York 10014  
May 1, 1971

Dear Farrell,

At the recent YSA Convention, Peter Camejo gave a public talk in which he called for a women's party. He did this in the context of calling for a Black party and a Chicano party and therefore it might have been that he got carried away with himself and blurted out the women's party without conscious intention. However, he did not correct himself, which might have seemed too embarrassing a thing for him to do.

However, is it possible that he did not blurt it out in error but intended to call for it as well as the Black and Chicano parties? If such is the case, it seems quite inappropriate for a comrade speaking for the party to call for a formation which the party has yet to discuss. I restrict my comments to that question even though there is more in his talk that I would disagree with and intend to write him about. I would like to know what the party procedure is concerning our public spokesmen calling for things which the party has not discussed or reached a collective decision on. Thanking you in advance, I am comradely yours,

Signed,  
Bill Massey

cc: Peter Camejo

OAKLAND-BERKELEY

Bill Massey

Dear Bill,

Farrell asked me to answer your letter on Peter Camejo's speech to the YSA convention. I'm sorry for the long delay. Peter was unreachable for a lengthy period following the convention.

Peter confirms your guess that he "got carried away with himself and blurted out the Women's Party without conscious intention." The reason he didn't correct himself was he didn't realize what he had said until many comrades came up to him afterwards and told him of the slip.

I am sure you noticed that when *The Militant* in its March 26 issue ran major excerpts from Peter's speech the women's party slip was dropped.

It is the responsibility of party spokespersons to advance the party's position on the political questions they are presenting to an audience. Of course there are many questions on which the party has not formally adopted a position. In these cases comrades can present their own views as long as they stay within the bounds of materialism and fundamental Marxist principles.

Comrades may not use a public platform to present a political position in fundamental opposition to that adopted by the party convention, national committee plenum or political committee, or developed editorially in the official organs of the party.

Comradely,  
Jack Barnes

cc: Peter Camejo



THREE POINTS CONCERNING OUR COUNTERRESOLUTION  
"FOR AN INTERVENTION INTO THE GAY LIBERATION  
STRUGGLE"

by David Thorstad and Kendall Green,  
Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

As signers of the document "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle," which we have submitted as a counterresolution in opposition to the NC Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement, we would like to make the following points:

1) We agree with the general line of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency in the world movement and of the Draft Political Resolution, submitted by the Political Committee, and consider ourselves part of the majority caucus that will be formed.

2) When it comes to the voting for delegates in the branches, we call on supporters of "For an Intervention

Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" to submit for a vote the following amendment to the Political Resolution (replacing its statement on gay liberation at the bottom of column one, page 20):

"We should continue to support the struggle for gay liberation, along the line of 'For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle,' by David Thorstad and Kendall Green."

3) We urge supporters of "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" to vote for the general line of the Political Resolution whether or not the above amendment is adopted.

July 18, 1973