

February 28, 1966

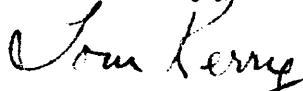
FOR NC MAJORITY ONLY

Dear Comrades:

Attached are copies of recent correspondence between Swabeck, Dreiser, Boulton, Appel (who resigned from the party Jan. 17, in Los Angeles), and Rosemary and Doug Gordon (who resigned in New York Dec. 19 last year).

Because of the nature of the correspondence it is important that this information be made available to all supporters of the majority. Rank and file members of the majority should be made aware of the contents of the enclosed material as well as that sent to the NC majority supporters on Jan. 28 and Feb. 23.

Comradely,



Tom Kerry
For the Majority

February 9, 1966

Dear Arne:

I recently photocopied 50 copies of Al A's statement to the SWP as an assistance to Doug and Rosemary in giving it the broadest possible circulation. D&R have sent me copies of Al's original proposal to the Chinese tendency, your reply and their reply. They did not send me this correspondence until after Al's resignation. Therefore, I assume you will not regard my access to this material as any breach of confidence on the part of D&R. In any event the distinction between the Chinese tendency and that of Fraser-Kaye has been negligible since the convention -- we are all in one boat.

You know that Seattle and their supporters here plan an early exodus. I write to urge you to join the move and in a way to reply to your letter in answer to Al's proposal.

The Political Question:

The SWP leadership has not conducted a serious polemic with an internal opponent since the Pablo dispute in 1953, 13 years ago. Since that time two seriously motivated tendencies have developed and attempted to correct basic errors in line.

Fraser attempted a basic line of inquiry into the Negro question which actually began long before 1953 and has been answered only with abuse. On the surface, a more serious effort was made to answer Swabeck-Liang, but the answer was always doctrine, not inquiry. Each of these two tendencies regarded the party for many years as basically correct on other questions than its own one of special interest, and to this extent, both were short-sighted.

The Chinese question today is what the Russian question was in the '30s, the key international question and the test of all radical parties. On the other hand, the Negro question is the basic and most important domestic question. It is to the American Revolution what the peasant problem was to China. I repeat a thought I wrote to you earlier. A revolution does not proceed in a given country on the basis of the general laws of capitalism, but on concrete and peculiar characteristics. The Negro question is the key peculiarity of US capitalism and will prove its nemesis. A radical party wrong on this question shall not make a revolution here.

It is not correct to say the SWP has degenerated on these two questions; it was never right in the first place and its tendentious wrong views have contributed greatly to its degeneration in other matters where it had a great history and a right to existence.

What are the prospects for the regeneration for which you look?

Very poor, indeed. One ought to set some kind of standard to judge. One cannot demand that the objective situation develop within a certain time span, but one can and ought to demand that a party correct serious errors within a reasonable time, or look twice at the basic character of the organization. The Fraser tendency is over 15 years old. In 1950, would we have been unnecessarily impatient had we said tentatively that some change ought to be expected within 10 to 15 years or else it is hopeless???

The first contact with the outside world that the SWP-YSA has had in years is in the peace movement. The Washington conference was an indication of how they let events act as a corrective. No, they are infected with a Messiah complex always associated with the substitution of immutable doctrine for thinking and sensitivity to events.

Unfortunately, you are probably mistaken that there is no room for the SWP to compete with the SP in the field of safe radicalism. Dried up sects have shown a remarkable capacity for unaccountable longevity. With continued degeneration, they can stay in business for many years to come.

The Organization Question:

My personal view is that the party never observed Bolshevik organizational principles. I always subscribed to Cannon's view of the combat party acting as one and not allowing internal disputes to hamper work, but I think we were wrong in the old days in always regarding any minority view as heresy and dangerous. Of course, the attitude looked better in those days when the party was in fact correct, but the habit of thought tended to make a cult out of the leadership and make it progressively more difficult for the ranks to initiate corrections where necessary.

I believe Cannon did the party a great disservice when he admonished Weiss and others to bury differences in the interest of a unified leadership. That started the demise of the Weiss group. The Dobbs machine was able to use the good faith of Murry and Myra to destroy them when they couldn't find an arena in which to fight. With the Weisses gone, there was no restraining hand in the center to prevent the wholesale suppression of democratic procedure which followed.

By the way, I believe that Murry will "end the comedy" of his lingering membership in the next period.

The Bolsheviks were never as hardnosed as we in matters of internal differences, even in critical days, let alone in the restricted

years of preparation. But even the limited democracy that was our tradition is stone cold dead and is not coming back. There isn't a serious note of protest from the few critics in the majority ranks. It will become more, not less difficult to effect a regeneration.

The Tactical Question

Let us presume that your perspective of a regeneration is possible. How can we best facilitate a change? By staying in and continuing to write unread documents every two years and talk to deaf ears? Dick is right that the SWP hangs together by using you and him as scapegoats. Left to their own devices, further centrifugal tendencies will occur. More people will either break away, which is good, or may revolt and fight. Frankly, I don't think so, but our staying will in any event not help such a process.

If the past two year wave of expulsions is followed by a wave of resignations, then some people may become aware of the crisis around them. The larger the wave the better. If that doesn't shake them up, would it have done any good to stay in???

Arne, I believe it is not instructive, except negatively, to compare our situation with that of the Left Opposition before 1933. The Communist movement differed from the SWP in three rather important respects. 1. It had lead a successful revolution. 2. It held state power thus demanding that its opponents propose a political revolution if they were to build anew, and 3. It had a mass following. The SWP falls somewhat short of meeting these conditions.

A mass movement can make numerous errors before it loses its following, and before it is correct to abandon it. Our view was always that the small vanguard party could afford to make no mistakes. It must be right on all questions at all times. That is its excuse for existence. It must correct ideologically the errors of the degenerated mass organizations. There is no virtue in being small, but if for a time you can't grow, then being right is sort of a minimum requirement.

What can one say of a vanguard party that is dead wrong on the most important international and national questions, has been so for many years, doesn't have a democratic procedure for corrections, has little contact with the mass movement, and can't learn from the little contact it does have???

The Personal Question

All movements are made up of human material. It is time to ask, who represents, not just controls the party. Whose party is it? It is Dobb's party. His only serious competition is not from the minority but from the middle class and ambitious youth leadership. It just isn't the party of your tradition, though it has organizational continuity and some of the same people.

Speaking of people, I was surprised at the off-hand and shoddy way you treat Doug and Rosemary after their carefully considered and painful decision to resign. It is especially cruel to condemn your own cothinkers and supporters at a time when they are operating alone in a hostile branch that is forcing them to support a sell-out line. Ought they to have raised no protest in the branch? To do so demanded a price, expulsion or resignation. Those are the facts of life in the NY branch. You might at least have given them the benefit of the doubt of having to make a decision in the heat of battle. I feel they could judge best what had to be done at the time.

You are part of the original generation of revolutionaries which has preserved the continuity of radical thought and action for over 40 years. It is not easy to abandon the organizational form that continuity has taken for many years, but to continue now is to make the same kind of fetish out of the SWP that the majority does.

It is perhaps too much to expect of history to permit a small cadre organization to exist without decline, correcting itself as needed, through a quarter century of adverse times and no growth. The Bolsheviks never faced that particular problem. From 1905 to 1917 were black years, but there were only 12 of them. In the SWP already a second generation is aging.

It is a tribute to Trotsky's genius that the movement was able to live as long as it did without serious mishap, after his death. The present leadership has expended the capital of that tradition and ruthlessly destroyed it. The pages cannot be turned back.

Comradely regards,

David Dreiser

(Letter by Al Appel - December 11, 1965)

When a worker gives his allegiance to a revolutionary party, he defends that party against all its class enemies. He understands that only through the instrumentality of a Marxist Leninist party is it possible to destroy the old social order and lay the foundation for Socialism.

All of us who have participated in the extremely complex problem of constructing a revolutionary workers party in this fortress of imperialism, treat the problem of the party with the utmost seriousness. The revolutionary party is not an end in itself, but an instrument of social change, surrounded on all sides by enemies. The murderous pressure of imperialism sometimes succeeds in distorting the shape of the party, pushing it from its axis and propelling it in a direction contrary to its original purpose.

The centers of imperialism in Western Europe and North America are strewn with the wreckage of parties, tendencies and groups which were once revolutionary but have now been turned into their opposite.

Our party must be studied in the light of reality to determine whether it is still following a revolutionary course.

Comrade Swabeck's contribution to the discussion of the Eighth Congress of the Fourth International of October 1965, merits the most serious attention from every member of the tendency. He develops the following propositions. 1. Just as the "Russian Question" formed the central axis of world politics in the first half of the twentieth century and drew a sharp dividing line through the labor and Socialist movements of all countries, the Chinese Question has become the central axis of world politics in the second half of the twentieth century. 2. The struggle today between American Imperialism and revolutionary China forms the epicenter in all major developments of international class conflicts. 3. The ideological struggle between Trotskyism and Stalinism viewed as the crux of working class politics has been superceded. Not the ideological struggle between Stalinism and Trotskyism, but the ideological dispute between Peking and Moscow now occupies the central question.

Comrade Swabeck's political characterization of the SWP leadership in this document is devastating and of a qualitative character. He states, "The propensity of the SWP majority leadership for using every possible occasion to hurl political brickbats at China, its regime and its ideological dispute with the Kremlin is only a hairline removed from the danger of giving aid and comfort to the Imperialist enemy."

Now, if the Chinese Question occupies the central axis of the world working class politics and if the epicenter of the international class struggle is the battle between American imperialism and revolutionary China, and if the ideological struggle between Trotskyism and Stalinism has been superceded by the living struggle between Peking and Moscow and if the SWP leadership is only a hair-line removed from the danger of giving aid and comfort to the imperialist enemy, then it no longer follows that the possibility of reforming the party is valid.

It is over seven years since Comrades Swabeck and Liang opened the battle within the SWP to bring the real meaning and importance of the Chinese revolution to the party. Can anyone assert that the party has moved any closer to an understanding of the "central axis of world working class politics?"

On the contrary, after seven years of struggle, the party is practically giving aid and comfort to the imperialist enemy.

What evidence is there to indicate that the SWP has found its revolutionary direction and is developing Marxist theory and applying it to the problems of the class struggle in our country? Comrades Kirk and Kaye in their document submitted to the 21st national convention of the party give the alltoo grim answer. There is no progress, only retrogression and decay. The expulsions, the attempted removal of oppositional comrades on any flimsy pretext, the attack on the Milwaukee branch, the forbidding of discussion on key class struggle questions between conventions have all lead to the deep erosion of democratic centralism in the party.

It is ludicrous to believe, that under such conditions, reform is possible.

Comrades Boulton, Kirk, Kaye, Doug and Rosemary have raised the question of correctly orienting the youth toward the working class and into the factories whenever possible. What response has there been from the leadership for the implementation of such a proletarian policy? Their unhealthy reaction has been to bring college youth having no experience in the working class, right off the campus into the secondary leadership of the party.

The disastrous end results of such a petty-bourgeois cadre policy is obvious.

Another example of the deterioration of the party can be found in Ed Shaw's statement to the New York Times, that we will not violate the draft laws. This is a shameful attempt to gain legal cover and respectibility on the part of the SWP. It is incompatible

with a party that professes to be revolutionary. By breaking ranks and informing the ruling class, they will not violate the draft laws, they appear as strikebreakers to those youth who do support such actions.

The actions of the SWP and YSA toward the Washington Peace March resulted in defacto support of SANE and the social democrats. As evidence I quote the November 25 issue of New America, publication of the Socialist Party. The editor comments ... "even the SWP and its youth group the YSA, formerly most notable for their consistent sectarianism have toned down criticism of SANE and its orientation."

When the party's enemies begin offering praise, it is just further evidence of the advanced decay.

We cannot even look for eternal assistance. The international Trotskyist movement long fragmented and disoriented can provide no corrective influence on the SWP.

Just as a new and powerful force, the Chinese Revolution, arose on the world scene, a new power has appeared here that possesses the promise of regenerating American Communism, the Progressive Labor Party. This young movement, based on its short history, has the most serious attitude toward theory and is struggling to apply Marxism-Leninism to the problems of our country. This is especially evidenced in the Progressive Labor Party Trade Union Program printed in the December issue of PL.

The PLP knows its proletarian international duty and has fulfilled it with honor and courage in its handling of the student Cuba trip. During the Harlem uprising, when all other parties and leaders ran for cover, Bill Epton and Harlem PLP were at their post ready to give leadership and to march forward with the Black Revolutionaries.

The seriousness and will to win exhibited by PLP should be an inspiration and inducement for our tendency to join with them in building a revolutionary party.

I therefore propose that the tendency immediately contact the leadership of the PLP and initiate discussions leading to the joining of their organization.

Revolutionary health demands working within a revolutionary organization. It is impossible to maintain one's revolutionary vitality in the SWP today.

Al Appel
Dec. 11, 1965

12/19/65

TO: Appel, Swabeck, Kirk, Boulton
From: Rosemary & Doug

Al Appel's Memorandum of December 11, 1965

We received Al's letter on Friday, within twenty-four hours after we resigned from the party. Considering our situation, you well imagine that it picked up our spirits considerably. Not only was it well-written but its logic is indisputable. He has generalized from certain particular facts set forth simply and clearly and has reduced the problem to its essentials. We of course would have been expected to agree with it since we had arrived at similar conclusions previously. (Now, of course, we would be even less inclined to disagree!)

As we said in the main body of this letter, we still consider ourselves members of the Chinese tendency. We are not political mavericks. If it is alright with the comrades, we would like to enter into the discussion around Al's proposal, despite the fact that we are outside the party. It of course serves the interest of revolutionary perspective for the Chinese tendency as a whole to leave the SWP rather than individuals dropping out.

We are in a good practical position here with respect to PLP to make any contacts or act as emissaries for any possible fusion proposals in whatever way comrades might want us to be of use. We shall abstain from making any further serious political moves ourselves pending further developments regarding Al's proposal.

To substantiate what Al has said in regard to the impossibility of looking for external assistance from the fragmented and dis-oriented international movement, any careful analysis of the statements emanating from the United Secretariat in the past year or so on the Sino-Soviet dispute and related issues reveals that the United Secretariat has in fact become indistinguishable from the SWP. The statements have become more factional, sectarian and opportunist as time goes on. What is more, the Indonesian events have only hardened the positions in the SWP and the United Secretariat.

Al expressed the crux of why we ourselves left the party and of why his proposal to the tendency is a valid one in the simple statement that "revolutionary health demands working within a revolutionary organization. It is impossible to maintain one's revolutionary vitality in the SWP today." This is a recognition by Al of something we have long felt: that staying too long in a degenerated, non-revolutionary party can eventually seriously

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incapacitate or possibly destroy entirely the capacity of an individual for continued, real revolutionary activity under new circumstances.

To sum up, we reiterate what we said previously in explanation of our resignation, that not only for a period of some two and a half years have we been unable to engage in genuine revolutionary activity, but by being in the SWP we have been automatically a party to the SWP betrayals.

December 31, 1965

Jim Boulton
Dick and Clara Fraser
Al Appel

Dear Comrades:

Comrade Al Appel starts his letter of December 11 with a very serious consideration of relations of the worker to the revolutionary party. Needless to add, the points he adduces shows that in the concrete reality of this relationship the SWP falls short of what the worker expects from his party. The murderous pressure of imperialism tends to distort the shape of the party, pushing it from its axis in a direction contrary to its original purpose. With this we are all familiar.

However, Al's approach to this very fundamental question is one-sided; it falls short of a full and complete consideration of the dialectical interconnections between the party and the objective material framework within which it functions and which, in the final analysis, conditions its development. That is the one important aspect of SWP evolution that we must examine thoroughly before we can arrive at a fully rounded and rational judgement of its present position and its perspectives.

The revolutionary quality of a working class party is not established once and for all; it must be submitted to constant tests and verification. If the revolutionary quality is to be lasting in character, it needs constant renewal; and only through the actual practice and experience in the class struggle can political and theoretical clarity and firmness be maintained. For the SWP, however, it must be admitted that over a period of years living contact with the working class movement has been almost totally absent.

The party's revolutionary origin cannot be disputed. During the early Left Opposition years it concentrated primarily on combatting the constantly increasing Stalinist degeneration. The period of the Minneapolis strikes, culminating in the trial and conviction of the main party and union leaders, marked the party's most advanced stage of living and direct contact with the working class movement. It was also the time of most effective struggle against the internal petty bourgeois notions. The party learned to uphold basic proletarian internationalist principles. It is true that Trotsky was then with us and took the leadership in the struggle but understanding of the issues involved penetrated deeply into party ranks. This was also the period of greatest freedom of expression of conflicting opinions in the party press.

From this high point to the present the party's activities in the working class movement, and even its working class contacts have gradually declined. Up until the recent few months the party's isolation increased progressively.

Separated from the working class and deprived of its correcting influence the party was reduced to a position of routinism: it merely maintained a staff to continue publication of the party press which reflected this routinism. Alongside of this followed the heavy encrustation of conservatism, expressed particularly in the position of the leadership. Its inability to rise above the effects of isolation on home grounds and take its proper place in the unfolding great world developments, as behooves conscious internationalists, demonstrated its theoretical poverty.

As a result the majority leadership defaulted dismally in its obligation to internationalist principles. The Chinese revolution, and the colonial revolution that it catalyzed, elicited little support from the party and less understanding. Its present position on China is the most pronounced manifestation of a growing conservative trend, which has been partly interrupted by a redeeming interlude -- the support for the Cuban revolution.

This is the actual party picture as it has unfolded from its inception, including the seven years since the emergence of the pro-Chinese tendency. Has the party in this period moved any closer to an understanding of the "central axis of world working class politics?" This cannot be answered with an unqualified No.

For most of the seven years, the isolation with all its debilitating consequences prevailed. There was little, if any, compulsion to listen to, let alone undertaking a re-examination of the fundamental issues presented by our tendency. To this can be added: the deep-seated prejudices by which the majority leadership is motivated rather than political consideration of any question concerning China provided its own formidable obstacle. Even the great impact of the black liberation movement has so far by and large passed the party by. Leaving aside here the policy and methodology pursued in this area, the fact is that outside of a couple of forums for Malcolm X the party failed to become an active participant in this movement.

However, party support to the Cuban revolution and attempts to assimilate its lessons, though not without faults, does present a redeeming feature. To a large extent the infusion of a student youth contingent into the party and the YSA grew out of this development. We are well aware of the middle class background and

petty bourgeois make-up of most of the campus youth. But this does not warrant the too rash conclusion that the party has already entered an irreversible process of degeneration.

The practice followed by the majority leadership of bringing this youth directly from college into membership on the National Committee, without any experience in the workers' struggles, is a mistake fraught with serious consequences. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the dynamic sector of the anti-Vietnam war movement is composed predominantly of similar campus youth of middle class background and petty bourgeois make-up. And yet, it is moving constantly leftward.

All signs point toward continued growth of this movement, especially its dynamic sector in which, moreover, radical and revolutionary ideas are sprouting, expanding and proliferating with the growth of the movement. This will be the case even more so as the anti-war and black liberation movements converge in common struggle, as now also seems indicated. We can well imagine the impact of this steady advance on the party youth; they can hardly stand separate and apart for long from the general development of their generation.

For the first time in many years the party has become actively engaged in a mass movement. This begins a new stage in its own development. More important yet, the party will now face its great historic test. The alternatives are: either a turn toward function as a leverage for revolutionary thought and action or else continue the present opportunist trend and sink to the level of simple and pure social reformism. But the question arises, can the party live and grow on the basis of the second alternative? Obviously not! Recruits seeking that kind of political home will rather gravitate to the Socialist Party or the CP where they avoid being committed to the SWP interpretation of Trotskyism. That road would spell certain death to the SWP.

But the anti-war movement is in reality only one part of a larger whole. It is the American reflection of the growing polarization of conflicting world forces. More and more the struggle between American imperialism and revolutionary China occupies the central stage of world politics. The role and the objectives of revolutionary China will command increasingly greater attention. There need be no question that the leftward moving dynamic sector of young radicals in the anti-war movement will be actively on the Chinese side. In face of this, how long can the party maintain its ambivalence? How long can it continue hurling political brickbats at the Chinese and the North Vietnamese? The truth is

that this question forms the fundamental part of the historic test facing the party; and the alternatives remain as previously stated, only they become more sharply accentuated: either the revolutionary road as an independent ally of the Chinese or history passes the party by.

Which alternative will prevail is not yet determined, nor could that be expected. What can now be said for certain is that the party's entry into a mass movement opens up a new stage. A process of development, in whichever direction becomes predominant, lies ahead. This development will be conditioned, in the final analysis, by the changed material framework within which the party now operates. Let us not mistake the beginning of this process for its completion. Any conclusion drawn from such premise would lead us seriously astray.

The greatest obligation and the highest duty of a revolutionary socialist is to his class, to the struggle for its emancipation. One important part of discharging this duty lies in the creation of the instrument of emancipation -- the revolutionary party. That we view also as a historic process in which the conscious participants must constantly intervene and help to renew its revolutionary quality. Related to present concrete circumstances, this means that the greatest obligation of our tendency, now that the party is entering a new stage of development, is not to take leave of our unfinished task but rather to persevere with greater tenacity as long as our intervention is possible. Most certainly the new stage does open up new possibilities of active intervention.

Rosemary and Doug have acted contrarywise. They have left the party on their own accord. Neither this individualistic, undisciplined action nor the motivation for it can be condoned.

Al Appel questions whether or not the possibility of reforming the party still remains valid. Posing the question this way seems to me a bit premature. Let us recall the position of Trotsky. He held fast to the idea and the possibility of reform over a number of years, up until the abysmal debacle in Germany in 1933; and this in spite of the increasing degeneracy of the CPSU and the dismal failure of the Comintern in the face of world shaking revolutionary developments. This is not presented as an analogy to our position, but it is an instructive example from which we can learn a great deal.

Trotsky viewed the continued ideological intervention of the Left Opposition as the indispensable complement to the actual experiences of the living movement. The lesson we can learn from

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this example is not to give up too quickly the task of party regeneration that we have undertaken.

Our recognition and respect for the revolutionary course pursued by Progressive Labor we have clearly stated in our proposal for SWP collaboration with it and exploration of the possibility of fusion with it. We have ample reason to consider this to be still a correct proposal. Therefore, if we as a tendency have anything to say to members of PL at this particular juncture, it should be to urge that they accept the general ideas of this proposal and present it in their own terms to the SWP.

Comradely yours,

S/ Arne

January 24, 1966

TO: Al Appel
Arne Swabeck
Dick Fraser
Jim Boulton

Dear Comrades,

In the cases of individuals or organizations supporting causes no longer historically viable, the arguments advanced in their pursuit usually are found to be the most excellent reasons why such causes are no longer viable. And so it is with Comrade Swabeck and his letter of December 31 in reply to Comrade Al Appel's proposal.

The essence of Comrade Swabeck's reply to this comrade's proposal is contained in Arne's opinion that the reason for our being outside the party -- via resignation -- is due not to the circumstances of the deepening degeneration of the party and the inability to intervene any longer, but to individualism and a lack of discipline on our part. This turns the truth upside down. It is quite irrational.

Let us set the record straight on a few things. Comrade Swabeck, with respect to us, says on page 4 of his letter: "Rosemary and Doug . . . have left the party on their own accord. Neither this individualistic, undisciplined action nor the motivation for it can be condoned."

First, regarding the charge of leaving the party of our own accord in an individualistic and undisciplined action: The Chinese tendency as a tendency limited solely to the Chinese Question ceased to exist when the Chinese question was incorporated into the Kirk-Kaye resolution calling for a change in the position on China and an end to the call for political revolution; at the same time this resolution constituted an all-out opposition to the majority on all political questions relevant to the class struggle in the United States.* a faction was formed on the basis of the Kirk-Kaye resolution. We were part of that faction from the beginning. When the first draft was submitted for consideration we contributed money for the plane fare to engage in a discussion of approximately

* The Chinese question as a separate question in fact never came up at last year's convention, in contrast to the one in 1963. Comrade Swabeck this time was given only limited time and spoke under the international question where the Chinese question was only one aspect. This circumstance also is an example of the deepening degeneration of the party, making impossible any meaningful intervention.

nine hours here in New York. Subsequently, as comrades are aware, we became the only really active members of the faction here in New York and were the reporters for the Kirk-Kaye resolution in the New York branch. Comrade Kirk, the leader of the faction, came to New York a few days prior to the convention. At that time, and during the convention and in an all-day discussion following the convention, we discussed with Comrade Kirk the party situation, and in particular our own situation, in the New York branch. There were no major differences between us on these questions. Regarding our untenability due to the circumstances of the New York branch, he understood the growing difficulty and was in accord with our opinion that it appeared that circumstances might well lead to our having either to resign or be expelled. He left the ultimate decision to us. Prior to our resignation, as the situation in the New York branch and the general party situation regarding the line in the anti-war movement became more involved, difficult and impossible, we had two long telephone discussions with Comrade Dick. After our resignation and receipt of our letter explaining its circumstances, Comrade Dick informed Dan Morgan in a phone conversation that he understood our action and had no criticism of it. Dan relayed this to us when he and his family were here for dinner January 3.

It can be seen plainly from the circumstances that we were guilty of neither individualism or of indiscipline whatever Comrade Arne chooses to think.

Having disposed of that particular point, let us proceed to the other part of the criticism Comrade Swabeck levels at us, that the "motivation" for our action "cannot be condoned." As is already apparent, others do not agree with Comrade Swabeck. The nub of his negative response to Al's proposal lies in his opinion that the "Motivation" (i.e., for either our or Al's action) "cannot be condoned."

It is a simple fact that the motivation for our resignation and the subsequent expulsion of Steve and Barbara is the deepening degeneration of the party as reflected in the New York branch and party center, which made it no longer possible for us and others to intervene.

Proceeding from a historically false position (i.e., party reform and regeneration) which is no longer viable, Comrade Swabeck had no other choice open to him in rejecting Comrade Al's proposal than to slander us and hold us guilty for being outside the party while closing his eyes to the deepening degenerative processes in

the party that created the circumstances leading to both our resignation and to the expulsion of Comrades Steve and Barbara.

Comrade Swabeck in so doing has borrowed a page from the majority revisionists' organizational notebook. It was the common practice of the majority revisionists to hurl charges of hooliganism, indiscipline, being agents of PLP, etc., in order to obscure the fact that they were incapable of dealing with the political issues raised by us and others and with the criticism of majority politics. So likewise Comrade Swabeck closes his eyes and refuses to deal with the circumstances of the deepening degeneration of the party as reflected in the particular situation in the New York branch, and in other episodes before, during and following the convention, and a la the majority revisionists, charges us with individualism and indiscipline. We are quite certain that aside from these few blinded by an unwillingness to face the reality of the party situation anyone who read our first letter explaining the circumstances of our resignation could understand that we were, almost without a doubt, faced with a choice of resigning or being brought up on charges and expelled. That was of course what we were referring to when we said we had made up our minds not to let the majority revisionists have the "initiative" in determining the manner of our separation from the SWP.

Our estimate of the situation was proved to be certainly on or near the mark by the subsequent expulsion of Steve and Barbara as set forth in our last letter. We chose resignation as being politically the more effective and dignified exit. Our political indictment of the majority in our speeches of resignation was not confused and mixed up with drummed up charges connected with expulsion procedures, whereas with Steve and Barbara their political indictment was necessarily somewhat obscured.

The majority (in particular the leadership) hated and feared us and would very much like to have been able to cloud the political issue and cast reflection on our discipline and loyalty, etc. (as they had already begun to attempt) in order to rally their supporters in trying to get rid of us. We did not allow them this pleasure.

Our choice of resignation instead of expulsion in the particular circumstances prevailing in the party center and the New York branch reflecting the deepening degeneration of the party, therefore reflects well on the Chinese tendency as a whole. Only those who are hopelessly confused about the party situation or are deliberately engaged in turning the truth upside down as Comrade Swabeck is doing in order to fit a no longer historically valid notion of regeneration could think otherwise.

Comrade Swabeck, without ever referring by a single word to the actual circumstances leading to our resignation and to Comrade Steve and Barbara's expulsion and to the resignation of Comrade Jim H., says that the motivation cannot be condoned (we have dealt with this) and then goes on to talk about the tendency's responsibility as long as intervention is possible.

Well, we are certainly not going to repeat all the material contained in communications we and others have written on that specific subject. The Kirk-Kaye organization resolution in particular showed that meaningful intervention was all but precluded by party developments. Apparently these communications have all gone in one ear and out the other with Comrade Swabeck.

We will merely cite the most recent developments which prove conclusively that degeneration of the party has deepened so far as to make meaningful intervention no longer possible.

The impossibility of intervening is clearly revealed by the following circumstances in the party center, all of which we reported in detail and will merely enumerate here:

- # refusal of a minority report
- # censuring of objections to such procedure and referral for further disciplinary action
- # our resignation
- # expulsion of Steve and Barbara

It was our attempts to intervene that led respectively to our resignation and to Steve and Barbara's expulsion (and what undoubtedly would have been our expulsion if we had not resigned). Lynn and Carol are still in the party precisely because in conformity with their role as agents of the Healyites they did not intervene. They haven't said a word since the pre-convention discussion and missed most of the meetings. It is a reflection on the ludicrous nature of the degenerated state of the SWP that agents of an opponent organization week after week, from the safety of writing their polemics against the SWP in the Wohlforth Bulletin, remain in the party, while those who were loyal to the party to the last and attempted to intervene were forced to resign or were expelled!

All the circumstances we have cited add up to a situation wherein there is no possibility for intervention by comrades actively engaged in anti-war work without ultimately facing resignation, expulsion or capitulation to the majority. Furthermore, this situation was brought about by a change in line at the party convention (which was in reality, as Comrade Kirk observed, a

workers' conference) toward the student movement in the anti-war movement without even a formal resolution and then the subsequent alteration of this line (as it related to strategy in the anti-war movement and its connection with other issues and social forces) without membership discussion and approval. In fact, all the strategy and actions that both Comrades Swabeck and Kirk are writing protests about for the next plenary session were carried through without proper procedure and membership discussion and approval and have all along been a fait accompli.

Comrade Arne's approach to the party situation is like the eternal virgin who refuses to admit that she's been raped.

Comrade Dick's non-conciliatory and uncompromising document of indictment of the party will not effect a change. It will in fact bring to a critical confrontation the unresolvable (within the limits of the party) conflict between the Seattle branch and the party. Of course Comrade Kirk, as a principled revolutionist, had no other course.

The coming plenary session will rubber stamp all the fait-accomplis undemocratic changes of line shoved through by the apparatus (the Secretariat to be exact) and in so doing the consolidation of the gross and betraying opportunist line in the anti-war movement will only deepen the opportunist degeneration of the party, and close completely what little cracks for intervention appeared to be left in the bureaucratic majority revisionists' armor.

Since the party situation is such that only three choices appear to be open on the question of anti-war movement work -- capitulation, resignation, or expulsion -- what advice does Comrade Swabeck have to offer the Seattle branch which is "not" carrying out the party line and so states in the document written by Comrade Kirk?

It should be obvious that a confrontation with Seattle on the question of the party line is inevitable, and that Seattle is faced with capitulation, resignation or expulsion. The New York episode was just the first stage of the development.

It is not likely that the majority revisionists will allow themselves to be thus challenged by the indiscipline of an entire branch. It is possible that a little sensible apprehension might develop over the prospect of losing so many comrades' fund and dues money to be followed in all likelihood by the loss of other comrades and more money. However, even if the majority backs down

from the confrontation temporarily, the internal logic of the situation and of the party's degenerative development over a whole period decree that sooner or later, if not at this plenary session then the next, it must resolve the contradiction between itself and Seattle one way or another or it ceases to be a leadership. The majority revisionists are not going to bend in that direction of self-liquidation by a long shot. Since the nature of the party's degeneration over a whole historic period determines that they will not change their line in the anti-war movement, then it is perfectly obvious that the conflict between Seattle and the party is unresolvable within the limits of the party short of capitulation from one or the other side.

Essentially the situation in Seattle is no different from that in New York which led to the resignations and expulsions or in Detroit * -- except that Seattle involves an entire branch in the conflict which makes the situation if anything deeper and more comprehensive.

All of this has been obvious to us and to others for some time. Comrade Swabek's reply to Al Appel reveals that he has no comprehension whatsoever of what has been happening and what is happening although it is all taking place right under his nose.

In a letter to Dan Morgan November 3, 1965, we said: "Rather than attend tonight's fraction meeting and tomorrow's general assembly of the citywide anti-war representatives and risk having to break discipline (emphasis added) by refusing to vote the party's line, we are staying away. But it is obvious that we cannot continue to function very long in this situation. (cmph,added) Doug, who is already active in the professional and artists' committee, will eventually be confronted with having to commit himself either with or against his party on some issue of paramount importance to the movement."

All of the above was clearly indicated in our letter to the tendency. Apparently such a situation meant nothing to Comrade Swabek since he himself is far removed from such an actual concrete situation. Since we began our analysis of the party situation two years ago and thus entered into a continuing dispute with Comrade Swabek, events have confirmed our analysis at each new

 * We do not know the particular merits (we might have some doubts about them) of Comrade Artie and Edie's union perspectives, but it is perfectly obvious that it was the party's whole approach to the mass movement including the unions and the anti-war movement which led to a contradiction in Detroit that was unresolvable without capitulation of one side or the other.

turn, and the whole process has been an enigma of Comrade Swabeck, leaving him tail-ending developments at each turn. He has not applied a Marxist method of analysis. He has not proceeded from the particular to the general but the other way around. Onto party reality he has superimposed generalization and academic abstractions and all of this he has torn out of the context of the party's history where roots of the present degeneration can now be seen to have existed 30 years ago.

Nothing so reveals the incorrectness of Comrade Swabeck's position as the fact that he has been reduced to turning the truth upside down and hurling brickbats from the sidelines at comrades faced with difficult and impossible situations that he himself by virtue of not being actually involved in the class struggle and not having to carry out the line and perform party tasks is not faced with. He is indulging in the same bad habits that have brought so much disgrace to the Trotskyist movement as a whole. One of the major blemishes on the record of the Trotskyist movement is that it produced so many radical journalists, sideline commentators and armchair quarterbacks. Comrade Swabeck very well knows this. He has no business being in such company.

Conversely, nothing so reveals the correctness of our original analysis of the degeneration of the party and the periodic accompanying prognoses we made of things to come, such as the developments during and after the convention, as do current developments in the party and the situation that now exists. We said that the past convention would be a historic juncture for the party. Our foregoing remarks about what has happened show how correct we were. One variation took place, however. We expected the majority to move slowly with the organizational document and possibly use the second-class citizenship status -- which no revolutionary would accept -- against oppositionals. The fact of the matter is that the political degeneration was so deep and far-reaching that it produced a situation of unresolvable conflict between the party regime and those who would not and could not as revolutionists follow its line of opportunism and were thus forced into a position of breaking party discipline. The political line of gross opportunism and betrayal set into motion by unprecedented flouting of normal democratic procedures thus deepened the organizational degeneration at the same time.

The unresolvable (within the party limits) conflict grew out of the social phenomenon of a mass anti-war movement, and the radicalization of student youth and a sector of the black oppressed that are a part of the anti-war movement. Comrade Swabeck views this general phenomenon as opening up opportunities for intervention in the party's affairs by the pro-Chinese tendency and a

possible party regeneration and says that we must not mistake the beginning of a process for the end. Comrade Swabeck is in serious error. It is precisely the social phenomenon of the anti-war movement, with its particular social ingredients that produced the unresolvable conflicts in the party leading to resignations and expulsions and to be followed by more of the same that has provided the majority revisionists with the socially necessary condition in the class struggle to consolidate its revisionist and opportunist policies and to turn the SWP into a respectable radical party. However, this is going into another aspect of Comrade Swabeck's reply to Comrade Al's proposal, which we will deal with in the second half of our answer to Comrade Swabeck at a later date. At that time we will also take up the questions and problems concerning the implementation of Comrade Al's proposal.

We have accrued a certain amount of information about Progressive Labor and Workers World which should figure in future perspectives. To that end we have enclosed copies of a "letter to the American people," a news release issued by Partisan (Youth Against War and Fascism, the WW youth organization) which includes an excerpt from a New York Times article referring to Deirdre Griswold. Deirdre incidentally was the only other speaker on the platform at the huge rally * -- over 4,000 -- to hear the reports of Herbert Aptheker, Thomas Hayden and Staughton Lynd from North Vietnam, China, etc. A. J. Maste chaired the meeting. We are (within obvious limits) attempting to assess both PLP and Workers World. Both PLP and WW intervened in the Transit Workers strike by the way. Needless to say, the SWP-YSA did not.

Regarding party developments in the center, we were informed by Vince H. that a dispute arose over the playing of the tape of Cannon's speech on the anti-war movement. It seems the NO decided not to play it. Objections were raised and they decided to review the decision. However, they still have not played it as of last Thursday's meeting, January 20. Vince spoke to Harry Ring about it and Harry said he didn't see anything the matter with what Cannon said.

At a branch meeting two weeks ago there was a report on the recent meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam. (See Militant, Jan. 17) Vince

* Deirdre had cemented relations with the NLF in Prague and, with some pressure from YAWF, was allowed to give the collection speech.

said that the majority reported that there was a definite hostility to them, they were pretty well isolated at the conference, couldn't get the floor, couldn't sell their literature and that the Stalinists had gained control and rigged the procedures by packing the meeting. The line goes on, that they (SWP-YSA) are the only ones with a correct line, Stalinists are against them. Just like in the old days, etc. Arthur Maglin, who voted against our censure, asked a question, but Vince said he seemed to be satisfied with the answer.

The majority has been for some time systematically mis-educating the cadres meeting after meeting in these distortions, half-truths and falsifications of the real situation, the result being the cadres have no conception of what the real issues and disputes are about. As far as packing the meeting, well, if true, the majority revisionists just got a dose of their own medicine.

What is bad in all this is that while the majority holds to its left cover of withdrawal of American troops, it has so discredited itself and created so much justified prejudice, both by its gross opportunism and its factional maneuvers, that it is quite possible that were the opponents of the SWP-YSA not so bent on keeping them isolated in revenge for past abuses and conduct, a stronger vote for withdrawal might have been forthcoming. While pursuing their opportunistic line of betrayal with its left cover of withdrawal of American troops, in their factional, crude and unprincipled manner, they in all probability created unnecessary prejudice against the withdrawal of troops slogan.

The equation to the old days and the party's struggle against the Stalinists placed in the context of today's world not only is a gross distortion of what the conflicts going on actually are, but shows how deeply rooted and irradicable was the Stalinophobic poison with its base in opportunism that dismayed and angered Trotsky 25 years ago.

The SWP-YSA is viewing the anti-war movement through the wrong end of a telescope. It, however, admirably suits the opportunistic perspective of the majority revisionists.

We received Comrade Al's letter of resignation last Thursday (after most of this letter was drafted). With our resignation from the center (due to the particular circumstances posed) and Comrade Al's, the pro-Chinese tendency inside the SWP has begun its decline. The Chinese question per se reached its zenith at the 1963 convention. The general opposition faction, inclusive of the Chinese question (Kirk-Kaye resolutions) reached its zenith at the convention last

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September. In both cases the decline has set in. There are no viable elements in the majority to win adherents from, and the position of Comrade Swabek that outside events will cause a change in the party is of course sheer illusion.

With respect to Comrade Al's statement that "revolutionary health demands working within a revolutionary organization, it is impossible to maintain one's revolutionary vitality in the SWP today" we said, "this is a recognition by Al of something that we have long felt: that staying too long in a degenerated, non-revolutionary party can eventually seriously incapacitate or possibly destroy entirely the capacity of an individual for continued, real revolutionary activity under new circumstances." Those who remain in the SWP face either expulsion or the course of capitulation and conciliationism to the majority. (We do not expect Seattle comrades to capitulate in any way.) The dangers of remaining in the degenerated SWP too long have already manifested themselves in a tendency to conciliatory attitudes to the majority revisionists which are the first steps on the way to the loss of revolutionary politics.

Per Comrade Al's request we are sending copies of his resignation statement to comrades in Chicago and Milwaukee, Dan Morgan in Connecticut, and will distribute copies outside the next branch meeting of the SWP. His statement was very fine and certainly will have some effect.

We attended a PLP rally for Bill Epton Friday night. In tone and approach it was in marked contrast to the kind of rally the SWP would hold under similar circumstances. Despite the adverse situation for PL the meeting was characterized by a fighting spirit with a straight revolutionary line, no holds barred. What was interesting to us was that PLP in the New York area appears to be larger than the SWP. Approximately 400 at the meeting, 80% young people.

Comradely yours,

Rosemary and Doug

P.S. In a Militant article, "What Castro Really Offered Peking," January 24, Harry Ring refers to unnamed persons that Castro criticized. The following is a quote from a CDN news service item in the New York Post (1/19): "Castro's speech included a harsh denunciation of Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, a guerilla at war for years with the government in Guatamala. Trotsky denounced him as a

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'Trotskyite' and traitor to the revolution." We haven't the vaguest idea whether this is accurate or not or whether the unnamed person that Harry Ring refers to was Sosa. We always wondered whether Gilly was reading into his information about the guerrilla movement in Guatemala. It appeared to be a Trotskyist line because the leader was a Trotskyist. Does anybody know any more about this?