

# Bulletin

OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Vol. 2, No. 14

Sept. 8, 1965

10 Cents



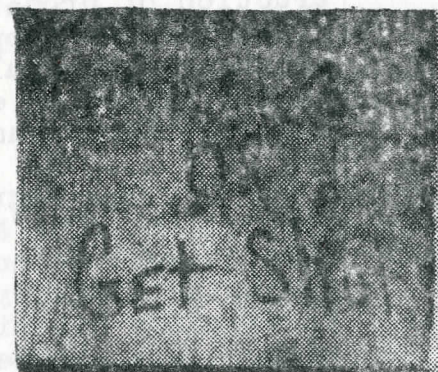
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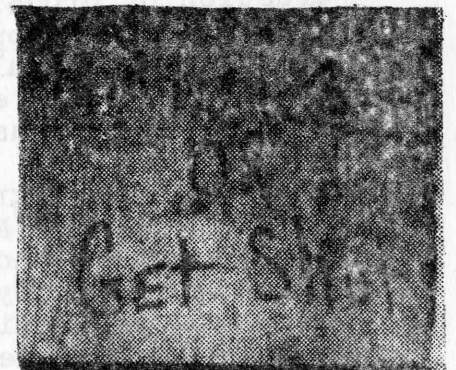
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**EDITORIAL: L.A. and Vietnam...the Common Struggle**

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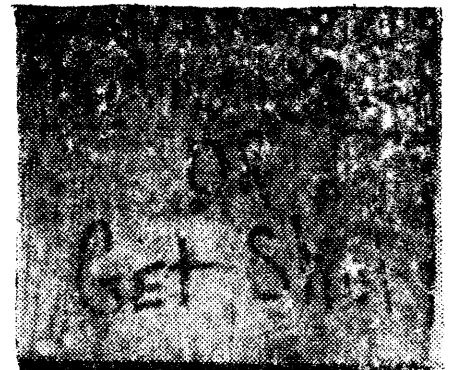
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EDITORIAL:

L.A. AND VIETNAM -- THE COMMON STRUGGLE

Last month an Assembly of Unrepresented People went back to their homes to think and plan. Their primary objective was that of ending the war in Vietnam, and their energies were all directed in that immediate area.

A few days later the energies of huge portions of the Negro populations of Chicago and Los Angeles, undirected by anyone or anything but pent-up emotional stress, dissatisfaction with the status quo and knowledge borne of experience of the myth of the entire governmental structure's feeble attempts at placation, turned to massive outbursts.

Later that week President Johnson had an agonizing decision to make: whether to keep Federal troops in Los Angeles to keep Negroes subdued or to send these men to Vietnam to keep Vietnamese subdued.

Do we have to look far to find a relationship? Or a direction?

College students generally receive student deferments. Men in skilled industries involved in any way with "defense" work or "essential industries" have traditionally generally received deferments. The population grouping with the highest proportion of unemployed males is the Negro population. Who, then, will receive a proportionately higher number of draft calls? And who is conscious of having no reason at all to go off and fight in Vietnam?

The outbreaks in Chicago and Los Angeles were without direction, without leadership, but not without content. The content was unformulated, not concretely expressed, and got lost in the ensuing cry of public outrage about the destruction of property. The Mayor of Los Angeles was criticized for not cooperating with the federal government in a program to hopefully prevent such riots -- but no one seriously talked of eliminating the conditions which provoke them. And that is because no level of the government can do so.

The Negro, as a group, is the poorest section of the population. The Negro, as a group, faces discrimination in jobs as well as housing, etc. The Southern Negro is only now being gingerly allowed -- and only after deep struggle -- to exercise his right to vote. The Negro as a group has the highest unemployment rate. The Negro as a group has few skilled workers and low union membership, therefore, no job protection.

The Negro as a group is becoming increasingly conscious of having no vested interest in stopping South-East Asian "communism" or South-East Asian independence. He has no markets to expand. He has no industries to develop -- or to stop from development by the Vietnamese. He has no trade

interests to protect. And he is currently involved in a struggle on his own, for himself, against the same forces that the people who desire to stop the Vietnamese war are struggling against. He can and must be made more aware, more conscious of how his plight is directly related to ending American intervention (i.e. American imperialism) in places like Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, and be given an additional concrete reason and area in which to join forces with other groups.

The people involved in struggle must recognize the unity of their fight and must strengthen that fight in a combined effort on more than one particular issue: ... on the struggle against poverty, unemployment, for total Negro equality and against the social structure that produces these things. Only combined, carefully directed struggle can provide the ultimate strength to win.

### THE BLACK GHETTO EXPLODES

#### The Significance of the Los Angeles Insurrection

"This was not a riot, this was the beginning of a social revolution," remarked one of the perceptive residents of the Black ghetto of Watts in the shiny modern city of Los Angeles in August 1965. More accurately, the rebellion in Watts was the most dynamic and violent confrontation with the forces of 'law and order' of a whole series of such confrontations that began, if one must find a beginning date, last summer in Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Rochester, N.Y. With the Watts rebellion, we are presented with a glimpse of the awesome power and dynamism of the workers when a mere fraction of a section of the working class as a whole says -- to hell with the 'law and order' of the social system of ghetto misery and hopelessness--the 'law and order' which is enforced every day at the end of a sadistic, racist cop's club.

This breakdown of 'law and order' which required the mobilization of some 15,000 troops, which ravaged a 50 square mile area at a cost of \$200 million and 36 human lives -- this insurrection has certainly struck fear in the hearts of America's rulers who know full well that in order to save their dying system they will have to face and subdue bigger, better organized and more conscious rebellions in the future. Witness Johnson's remarks to the effect that the violence of the rioters is morally on a par with the violence of the Ku Klux Klan. (Johnson, remember, is the 'liberal' who many a 'socialist' voted for and openly supported.) Even though the rebellion was fairly easily contained once the National Guard troops were brought in, America's rulers and all their journalistic apologists and literary prostitutes are all shook up because they, in their own way, along with the man on the ghetto street recognize the revolutionary implications of the rebellion.

### Beyond the Platitudes

All the figures of the 'establishment'--from Johnson to Governor Brown, to Wilkins, Farmer and King--to the liberal and 'not so liberal' press--have poured out a torrent of pious hypocrisy, of empty phrases about the 'search for root causes', the 'need for answers', 'solutions must not be based on pat remedies', etc., etc., ad nauseam. Yet all of them, despite their 'agonizing reapraisals,' citing of statistics of misery in Watts (35% unemployed, over 50% on relief, etc.) and phony platitudes, are very sharp and clear on one point, i.e., the absolute necessity of having to use troops to shoot down the rebels and generally terrorize the community as a whole.

It is no wonder then that when Reverend King, who urges non-violence in Selma and supports the violence of the racist police in Watts (regrettably, to be sure), came to Watts to "offer hope to the ghetto"...his welcome was a mocking jeer from an onlooker: "'I had a dream, I had a dream'--hell, we don't need no damn dreams. We want jobs." King got the cold shoulder from the ultra-conservative Mayor and Police Chief of Los Angeles, but he got literally jeered out of Watts.

The rejection of King and the civil rights leaders by the majority of residents of Watts and other Black ghettos, while distressing to these leaders and to America's rulers, simply represents a reality which should be seized on by revolutionists, both black and white: All the talk about new solutions together with the 'old answers' like war on poverty, job retraining programs, etc.,--in short, all the social work-reformist 'solutions' are congenitally incapable of ending the scourges of unemployment, housing deterioration and rent gouging, increased taxation, and the growing number of permanently impoverished and cast off workers. These conditions are the organic outgrowth of world capitalism in a period of decline and stagnation. In this period, an ever higher rate of unemployment even during boom periods is the most apparent feature.

### The Economic Background

At the same time, the real rulers of world capital, the central bankers and their spokesmen, in journals such as the London Economist and the Federal Reserve Bulletin, have warned of a bust on the order of 1929. All of the economic and monetary conditions preparatory to such a crisis of speculation have become aggravated since the late 1950's. The awareness of the impending crisis and attempts to stave it off are responsible for Kennedy and Johnson's vacillating but increasingly 'hard' international line which is currently at work in Vietnam, among other places. (See Bulletin, Vol.2 #11 and Vol.2 #12)

Domestically, the efforts to stave off the crisis took form in 1958 when the Federal Reserve Bank, in order to combat a dangerous speculation which had broken out in Federal Securities, refused to supply the credit necessary to keep unemployment in boom periods to within a maximum of 3%. This policy together

with the hard line taken by the giant corporations against the industrial unions and the anti-labor Kennedy-Johnson policy represented by the "economic guidelines"--has meant a decline in the rate of industrial expansion domestically and growing unemployment. The growth in unemployment has hit most sharply at working class youth, particularly minority youth like those in the black ghetto of Watts.

### The Negro Middle and Working Classes

The government social-work-reformist program together with the activity of the integration movement dominated by the middle class civil rights leaders has the support largely of the small strata of white collar, professional and otherwise middle class Negroes who are by and large, the sole beneficiaries, in a real material sense, of these programs and activities. Consequently, a thin stratum of Negroes are bought off or boosted into relatively privileged positions. The mass of the black workers on the other hand are outside the scope of these benefits and generally have no illusions regarding promises of more of the same.

The rejection of King and the pacifist accommodation to the system that he represents, the deep alienation of large sections of the ghetto mass, chiefly the unemployed youth, from the reformist attitudes and organizations including the trade unions--leave the ghetto insurrectionist free, as in Watts, to attempt to overcome his alienation from the products of social labor by simple looting or by destroying. ("Burn, Baby, Burn") "The people don't feel bad about what happened... They had nothing to lose. They don't have jobs, decent homes. What else could they do?"

The rejection of the middle class reformist program and organizations by the Watts freedom fighter, while not fully thought out, is nevertheless more conscious and articulated than is any positive acceptance of a revolutionary solution. This is a social revolutionary movement characterized by a primitiveness of organization and ideology. When the man in the street who is perhaps more articulate than his brothers sees the 'riot' as part of a social revolution, he raises the question which is and has been discussed, and will be discussed still more in the ghetto: If this is a social revolution, what is its nature and how can our side win?

Although the action of the Watts rebellion was directed at the palpable (in a sense, comprador) representatives and institutions of the capitalist order within the ghetto--the cops and merchants,--there was a very strong identification of the enemy as "Whitey", the white man in general. Undoubtedly the mass media have overemphasized the racial feelings in the rebellion and reactionaries of all kinds are only too happy to see middle class white suburbia arming itself and talking about the black menace.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that while the rebellion

was a product of class struggle the movement lacked any apparent class perspective which could provide a bridge to other sections of the working class. The movement in the black ghetto is considerably in advance of the organized working class in the development of radical ferment, and therefore much more open to revolutionary conceptions. But this advanced position, which arises from the uneven development of the class struggle, has its negative side in the isolation of the unorganized black workers from the workers, largely white, who are organized within the trade union movement.

This isolation, which at times reaches the level of hostility, is reinforced by the racial concepts, the "go it alone" attitude, and the messianic utopianism represented by much of Black Nationalist thinking. These attitudes make isolation into a virtue by orienting toward imaginary allies in the leadership of the "emerging nations" their proponents dismiss real allies in the American working class with which there is the potential for unity on programs of concrete demands over common interests in areas such as housing and unemployment.

#### Beyond a Program of Isolation

To accept the program of isolation as put forward by black nationalism is to also accept a program of certain defeat for the black workers, the weakening and disorientation of the white workers and a real boost for those forces with a fascist 'solution'.

The victory of the social revolution requires the development of a strategy which is based, first of all on the understanding that this must ultimately mean that the working class as a social entity must take over the forces of production as a whole and use them in the interest of society as a whole. The problem for real and serious socialists then becomes one of translating this abstract understanding based on Marxist science, into the concrete needs and impulses of individual workers. Such a translation from the abstract into the concrete, which Trotskyists call a Transitional Program, is the way in which the isolation and antagonism of different sections of the working class can be replaced by joint action based on a program of common demands.

For instance, revolutionists should propose and actively promote the organization of unemployed workers in Watts, as in Harlem, as in Chicago's South Side, not only on the basis of an increased public works program, but also on the firm basis of support for organized workers' struggles against speed-up and compulsory overtime. At the same time such unemployed associations or other ghetto organizations could urge the organized workers to develop a campaign for jobs for unemployed black workers.

If for example, Black ghetto tenants organized the unemployed and hammered at the construction trade unions for a



program on housing, the unity of material interests which are combined represents a stage in the necessarily uneven development of the united front of all workers. Fusions of workers who under the 'natural' conditions of capitalist society are separated according to race, skill, language, etc., etc., do not arise spontaneously but must be advocated and organized by revolutionaries to develop the unity and power of the working class.

The program of victory for the freedom fighters of Watts who boldly defied the cops' bullets is a program which arms the black men not simply with the means of self-defense, but arms him also with revolutionary theory. Only the working class, basing itself on this theory can finish the job begun in Watts.

#### LETTER OF RESIGNATION FROM PROGRESSIVE LABOR

To the comrades of Progressive Labor,

Pressure exerted by the members of the 3rd Street Lower East Side Club and the leadership of P.L. has left me no choice but to resign from the organization. I am writing this letter of resignation to describe my political development while in P.L. and to explain my present perspective toward the P.L.P. Although many of the conclusions I have reached may differ from those of the majority of comrades, the problems I faced in the organization are scarcely unique.

My first contact with P.L. came during the 1964 Cuba trip. At that time I possessed all the characteristics common to most young people attracted to radical politics. The sterility and hypocrisy of American society nauseated me. It was clear that a social revolution was necessary to replace reactionary capitalism with a rational society. In addition I shared with these young people a profound lack of acquaintance with Marxist theory and no previous experience with organized political activity.

The trip to Cuba offered not only the chance to see "the promised land" but also the opportunity to openly tell the U.S. government to go to hell. The possibility of such a gesture coupled with the chance to see first hand the real state of the Cuban revolution proved irresistible. The Cuban experience was a revelation. Although I was somewhat disturbed by the lack of real political control by the working people and the danger of distortion inherent in government by a small group of decision makers, I returned with an overwhelming faith in the unlimited potential of a revolutionary people. After the exhilarating Cuban air the stench of decaying capitalism was unbearable. No choice remained but to become organizationally involved in revolutionary politics.

P.L. appeared to be the only group really trying to make connection with the working people. It was actually going

out into the streets and attempting to involve itself in struggle. Perhaps it was a trifle adventuristic but it also appeared young, dynamic, open to all sorts of ideas and experiments and absolutely unafraid to openly confront the ruling class. It had a healthy working class orientation and it seemed that its sheer audacity might succeed in electrifying the masses. Essentially I was attracted because the organization had guts. Unfortunately this was all the political agreement necessary for membership.

I literally hurled myself into the activities of the Lower East Side Club. This began a round of ceaseless activity, meetings, protest demonstrations (one even took place in a blizzard), distributing leaflets, selling "Challenge", attempting to make rent strikes, parties and more meetings. Later there were innumerable demonstrations in support of the grand jury victims. I was whisked into membership with a group of other people at least a month before our three month trial period was up. I was appointed to a temporary executive committee because our club president was forced to be absent. In all this time there was almost no political discussion or education. Whenever political discussion did take place the attempt was always made to insist that basically we all agreed. Today I realize that political disagreements cannot be dealt with by locking them in a box marked unity. Organizational maneuvers and attempts to substitute activity for discussion can only avoid political problems temporarily. All political confusion or disagreement must be aired as quickly as possible. The political roots of all problems must be exposed and examined minutely. Unless such political penicillin is administered the symptoms will be ignored and when the disease breaks out no one will understand its origin or treatment. The enormity of such a task made doubly difficult by pressing external work cannot be minimized. Artificial horror sessions of criticism and self-criticism simply will not do. We must seek to understand the Leninist method if we are to deal with these problems. It was Lenin's mastery of the method of dialectical materialism that enabled him to ruthlessly expose the weaknesses of his opposition and to build a revolutionary party.

### No Theory, No Direction

The lack of interest in theoretical clarity was disturbing. The activity merry-go-round was spinning faster and faster. Only a whirling dervish could remain for long on such a ride without becoming dizzy. The organization offered no plan or direction. Consultation with the leadership resulted in the master plan of giving everyone "Challenge" paper routes. If only we sold enough papers the revolution would come closer. But what were we to tell the customers? Even when we did attract workers we were unable to keep them. Dozens of people came around and then disappeared into the woodwork. We had nothing to offer them. No analysis and no program. People who worked with us for a while vanished when they discovered the revolution wasn't coming in 3 months.

The situation was becoming intolerable. We had a leadership that was not providing political and theoretical guidance. The cadres were confused and not developing politically. (It must be emphasized that many were serious people deeply committed to struggle for socialism) The various clubs seemed to be functioning in a virtually autonomous fashion and to make things worse a great infusion of petty-bourgeois elements (myself included) was endangering the working class orientation of the movement. The entrance of petty bourgeois intellectuals can be a fine thing for a movement if it is capable of assimilating them and orienting them towards the working class. This cannot be done by creating various segregated departments and shoving intellectuals into one for theory production, into another for research service, into a third for student work, etc. A revolutionary organization is extremely sick when it must separate the workers from the intellectuals for fear of contamination. Neither can the problem be solved by forcing all the intellectuals to 'proletarianize' themselves by tortuous factory work. (Marx managed to produce "Capital" without working on an assembly line).

"...With a petty bourgeois it is worse. There are, of course, petty bourgeois elements organically linked with the workers, who go over to the proletarian view without an internal revolution. The matter is quite different with the academically trained petty bourgeois. Their theoretical prejudices have already been given a finished form at the school bench. Inasmuch as they have succeeded in gaining a great deal of knowledge both useful and useless without the aid of the dialectic they believe they can continue excellently through life without it. In reality they dispense with the dialectic only to the extent they fail to check, to polish, and to sharpen theoretically their tools of thought, and to the extent they fail to break practically from the narrow circles of their daily relationships. When thrown against great events they are easily lost and relapse again into petit bourgeois ways of thinking."

(Leon Trotsky - In Defense of Marxism)

The vanguard party must be capable of making revolutionaries of its intellectuals. These are the people who will develop the theory necessary to attract the advanced workers to the party. Marx, Engels and Lenin were intellectuals capable of giving revolutionary leadership. Lesser mortals must also seek to transform themselves similarly. The party must enable its petty bourgeois recruits to intellectually assimilate the method of Marxism.

#### The Bulletin of International Socialism

Fortunately during all of this chaos I became acquainted with the Bulletin of International Socialism and attended a series of classes on the history of socialist

struggle in the U.S. given by the American Committee for the Fourth International. I saw a group seriously grappling with the problem of using and developing Marxism to understand the world; seeking to develop theoretically in order to present the program necessary to give leadership to mass struggles. Through the committee I learned of the Socialist Labor League in Britain and its publication, the "Newsletter." Starting with a tiny group the S.L.L. has managed to build a large party with a mass youth group. The process of theoretical development which enabled them to win working class youth to their program can provide valuable lessons for us. These are people who will engage in serious discussion with a group, no matter how small, anywhere in the world if out of that discussion the proper working class perspective can emerge. They know that such groups can grow very quickly when the time is right.

I didn't hide my attendance at these classes or my interest in Trotskyism. I tried to bring up Trotskyist ideas. Soon I was being called a Trotskyite wrecker or a counter-revolutionary Trotskyite. P.L. was only willing to deal with Trotskyism on the level of epithets but not politically. Even when the national convention passed a resolution instructing the National Committee to bring out a statement on revisionism and Trotskyism, no statement was forthcoming (will it take a witchhunt to bring this out?). These are not the actions of serious Marxists. P.L. must seek to cope theoretically with the ideas of Trotskyism. It is not sufficient on the one hand to label ideas counterrevolutionary and on the other to express admiration for these same ideas expressed by Gilly in his articles on Cuba and Guatemala simply because they are not labelled Trotskyist.

### The National Convention

The National Convention was obviously an attempt to deal with what was becoming an increasingly anarchistic situation. Once again organizational solutions were the order of the day. Rosen's article on democratic centralism revealed an inability to understand that discipline cannot be imposed by imperial edict. People do not submit to party discipline simply because it is written in a constitution that they must do so. They only submit on the basis of clear political agreement. Rosen only succeeded in abstracting out the struggle and development so essential to Lenin's concepts of democratic centralism. Factions cannot be banned with a written statement. They must be dealt with in a Leninist manner. Factions are not desirable in themselves but when they arise they indicate political differences which must be exposed and resolved.

For example, on the occasion of the Brest-Litovsk peace controversy those in favor of revolutionary war constituted a faction with its own central organ. Lenin did not bring about a split in the party or attempt to expel them. The Party engaged in a process of discussion and explanation until the political agreement necessary to dissolve the faction

was obtained.

I might add that I first began to see the need for an understanding of Leninism, not in P.L. which constantly proclaims its Leninism, but in discussions with the American Committee. They constantly stress the importance of Lenin's teaching not as a mass of abstractions but as a method of analysis. Trotskyism is stressed as the continuation of Lenin's method after Lenin's death. The same people who invented all the epithets about the counterrevolutionary and even fascist nature of Trotskyism, are the ones who brought the U.S.S.R. to the point P.L. now recognizes as revisionist.

The reliance of P.L. on bureaucratic measures will not save it. Groupings will still form, splits and upheavals will still take place. A dense fog will cover all such formations. The comrades will not obtain the political clarification to withstand the pressures of the bourgeoisie. Potentially good people will become inactive and drift away.

#### International Questions

The convention did not even touch on international questions. P.L. will never develop the program necessary to lead the working class if it bases its line on the latest issue of "Peking Review." The revisionism of the U.S.S.R. will never be understood by laying it at Khrushchev's door. P.L. will have to examine deeply the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism. It is there that the roots of Khrushchevism are to be discovered. The motivations for China's defense of Stalinism will also have to be held up for scrutiny.

It is not enough to say that we are interested in making the revolution here at home. Capitalism is a world system and the struggles of workers all over the world and the quality of their leadership is of direct concern to revolutionists here at home. Of course we are all concerned with the struggle of the N.L.F. in Vietnam. We must seek to understand the reason for U.S. involvement and we must also recognize that the sellout of the Vietnamese revolution engineered at Geneva was also the responsibility of her so called friends. Unless we understand the nature of her "friends" we will be unprepared for future surprises.

Are we interested in Vietnam because U.S. troops are involved and indifferent to Algeria because they are not? Lisa Armand's shameful apologetics (defending China's line on Algeria) in "Challenge" only serve to obscure the truth from the working class. China's opportunism cannot hide the gleeful reports in the business section of the New York Times on the new oil deals signed by France with Boumedienne's government and the new openings now available for U.S. capital. Ben Bella's "socialism" was propped up by Boumedienne's

army, U.S. wheat and French money. It is the duty of all revolutionists to expose this. The defeat of the Algerian working class is also a defeat for us at home. There may be many more Algerian surprises for P.L. Perhaps Indonesia and yes, maybe even Cuba unless it seriously attempts to develop an international perspective. Only by dealing with the most unpleasant of questions will P. L. develop the people capable of going to the working class and explaining the significance of the events affecting their lives and giving leadership to their struggles.

### The Growing Crisis

At this point P. L. is at a very critical juncture. It is no longer recruiting at its former rate. People are becoming demoralized or are withdrawing from political activity. It is reacting to the witchhunts by turning inward and developing its own witchhunts. It is no longer leading struggles but is beginning to tail-end them. The mantle of anti-war work is passing to S. D. S. The sectarian turn in the election campaign (refusing to endorse the S. W. P.) shows not only confusion but also a paranoiac fear of other groups. P. L. cannot afford to withdraw and ignore good elements in other groups. It must seek to intervene, to engage them in dialogue, to find areas of common work in order to turn them in a revolutionary direction or to expose those whose policy is counter to the interests of the working class.

I am deeply concerned that the many fine elements that P.L. has attracted will be lost to the revolutionary movement. I announce my intention to collaborate with the American Committee for the Fourth International while maintaining that I seek readmission at any time. I will seek to aid P. L. in any way I can. At present the Committee has been distributing leaflets for the Epton campaign. I would maintain that P. L. has forced my political course upon me by its inability or unwillingness to deal with political questions. As I was informed that P. L. does not feel it necessary to publish my letter of resignation I am publishing this in the form of an open letter to P. L.

For the Socialist Revolution,

Jeffrey Gato

P.S. Please send any correspondence to:

Gato

c/o Bulletin, Box 721, Ansonia Station, New York, NY 10023

AN APPEAL TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE SWP

To the delegates:

One year ago in July of 1964, the Political Committee of the SWP suspended from membership the group which was to become the nucleus of the American Committee for the Fourth International. This action was taken because we had done no more than circulate to our fellow party members an appeal to the Political Committee to open up a party discussion on the Ceylon crisis. This was the time, the comrades will remember, when the largest section of the international formation the SWP leadership then and now supported deserted the working class in order to get posts in a capitalist government.

In no way did we take our appeal outside the ranks of the party. All we did was appeal within the party for a discussion. The suspension action was taken by the top party committee without even giving us an opportunity to state our case. We found ourselves suspended prior to the next meeting of the branches to which we belonged and we could only distribute outside the doors of the branch meetings our appeal to our fellow branch members. Thus we were also denied our constitutional right to trial before our fellow branch members.

At a subsequent meeting of the National Committee of the SWP our suspensions were transformed into expulsions. We were neither informed that this meeting was to take place, nor invited to present our case, nor to this day ever formally informed by the party itself of the action taken at that meeting. Recently we have written to the SWP leadership requesting the right to appeal our expulsions to the national convention. We have to this date received no answer to this request, a request of a right guaranteed in the party constitution.

These actions taken against us were no isolated events. The group which now publishes the Spartacist was similarly undemocratically expelled a few months before our group. We fully expect that further organizational threats and perhaps even more suspensions and expulsions will be the order of the day at the current national convention.

We appeal to the current national convention for readmission into the SWP. We also demand the readmission of the Spartacist group. It is time that a stop be put to this destructive process of dealing with political problems and political oppositions with organizational measures. In our opinion the organizational steps taken by the SWP leadership are the end result of the political degeneration of the party. Similarly we are convinced that a reversal of this process by the readmission of the expelled comrades would mean the beginning of a reversal of the political degeneration. It would open up the possibility of a return on the part of the SWP to Trotskyism. It is for this reason that we stand ready to rejoin the SWP and we declare beforehand that, once back in the SWP, we will continue to struggle as we did in the past

for a Trotskyist policy.

### Marxists Must Have a History

It is absolutely essential for the SWP membership to seek to get at the roots of the degeneration of their party. It is not enough to feel uneasy about this policy or that, or this failure or that. The SWP rank and file must seek to understand what has led their party to its present impasse-- for impasse it surely is.

The first step to an understanding of the SWP today is to understand its past history. SWP members must demand from their leadership an accounting of this past. They must ask why it is that there exists only James P. Cannon's reminiscences on the first 12 years of the party and the documents related to the 1940 split. Where is the history of the 25 years since 1940? Why are the documents related to the split with the Cochranites and the Pabloites in 1952 and 1953 not reprinted? Could it be that the leadership of the SWP cannot make such an accounting? If this is so then there is no clearer sign of its bankruptcy. A party without a history it can face up to is not a Marxist party.

Elsewhere we have begun our own accounting of the SWP's history for we are deeply convinced that we will be destined to repeat all the mistakes of the present SWP leadership unless we ourselves make an accounting of the past of the organization from which we have emerged. This first installment of this history was printed in the Autumn/Winter 1964/65 issue of the Fourth International. The second installment, which takes the history up to the death of Trotsky appears in the current issue of the Fourth International. All party members have a responsibility to read this history. If our analysis is incorrect then it is your duty to work out an alternative understanding of the SWP's development and lack of development.

In essence it is our position that the essential weakness of the SWP has been with it from its very origins. This is its failure to develop theoretically, its lack of understanding of the Marxist method. During Trotsky's lifetime the SWP was essentially an empirical bloc with Trotsky. Trotsky provided the theory and Cannon built the organization around this theory. But neither Cannon nor anyone else in the organization reached any real understanding of the method which produced the theory. This bloc was already in the process of disintegration near the end of Trotsky's life. During the struggle with Shachtman, Trotsky was forced to push Cannon aside and conduct the struggle by himself. This action of Trotsky's saved the main cadres of the SWP but Trotsky's death soon after the split with Shachtman prevented him from doing much further to develop the SWP theoretically.

Following the war the SWP emerged as the one party in the world Trotskyist movement with the size and authority



to lead the international politically. However it refused to take on this political responsibility, seeking rather to establish the old relationship it had with Trotsky with the new young European Trotskyist intellectuals like Germain and Pablo. These Europeans reacted impressionistically to the social overturns in East Europe (See: Theory of Structural Assimilation by Tim Wohlforth) and began more and more to see the future social transformation taking place without conscious Marxist leadership. The SWP leadership did not resist this revisionism. In fact it supported Pablo and Company when they expelled the majority of the French Section for its support of Trotsky's transitional program.

Only when Pablo began to meddle in the internal affairs of the SWP by giving political solace to the Cochranite minority did the SWP attack his political leadership. For a brief period the SWP leadership led a political struggle in the name of orthodoxy against Pablo, a political struggle which produced the International Committee (though of course the SWP could only give its political support as it was barred by law from affiliation). Soon this polemic was forgotten about and the SWP failed in the fifties to give political leadership to the International Committee just as it had failed in the forties to give political leadership to the Fourth International as a whole.

It was quite natural, then, that in 1960-1961 it began to react in the identical way to Castro and related international events as Pablo had reacted in 1950 to East European and Asian developments. Thus came the head-on stampede to break with the Socialist Labour League in England and the French Section of the IC and return to political support of the old allies of Cochran. It was in this period that our group was born within the SWP.

### The Birth of a Non-Political Party

As we can see the sickness in the SWP has such deep roots and goes so far back that the reaction to this sickness among the older cadres of the party was inevitably weak. Our own tendency was based primarily on younger comrades who came to the movement through Trotsky's teachings and had not had the many years "molding" by Cannon and his supporters. The SWP of 1961 was a non-political party. It was held together by organizational needs and old personal ties. It was capable of a good deal of organizational work but was incapable of political intervention. Any political opposition was considered only an organizational problem and dealt with in that fashion. Internal discussion was a mockery. It was either perfunctory or a thinly veiled guise for factional struggle against dissidents.

It would be wrong to say, however, that the older cadres did not resist the degeneration of the party. It would be more proper to say they did not resist it consciously. Literally hundreds of the older party cadres have left the movement over the last few years finding the party somehow alien to them but not having the energy or understanding to

do more than vote with their feet.

Many of the younger comrades were confused too. This is in part due to the specific form the revisionism took in 1961 and partly to their own backgrounds which were largely petty bourgeois. The revisionism first took the form of all out and uncritical support to and adulation of Castro. Castro had a great appeal to the untheoretical cadres of the SWP precisely because he himself was so untheoretical. This "practical" revolutionary certainly must have warmed the heart of the practical Jim Cannon. But at the same time Castro was hated by the U.S. capitalists. Thus support to Castro was seen as highly anti-capitalist and revolutionary by inexperienced young people and conversely any criticism of Castro even from a Marxist standpoint was seen as capitulating to imperialism.

For the SWP leadership, then, uncritical support and identification with Castro became an ideal form of political existence. Luckily for them, the revolution was in another country--not here. Thus there was little of a revolutionary nature required of the SWP other than to laud Cuba and Castro in its press. Therefore what seemed to be highly revolutionary activity amounted to nothing more hazardous than propaganda activity. And propaganda activity is the safest form of activity for sick radicals. You can sit in your headquarters far removed from any real conflicts and problems and pour out your literary commentary on distant events. It fitted well with the life of an unpolitical party whose sole preoccupation was organizational tasks designed to give the membership a feeling of some need for their organization.

The adulation of Castro was soon followed by the adulation of Ben Bella which was once again a cheap form of ersatz revolutionism. Then came Malcolm X. He was nearer to home and thus the danger loomed that the SWP might have to do something rather than merely comment. Luckily for the SWP leadership Malcolm was black and didn't like whites much and the SWP was primarily white. And thus the SWP came to the brilliant conclusion that the most revolutionary thing it could do was to recognize the blackness of the black movement and the whiteness of its own movement and therefore--do nothing. By seeing the Negro struggle only as a national struggle the Negro people became another nation as far away from 116 University Place (SWP headquarters) as Cuba or Algeria.

So the young members of the SWP felt they were being revolutionary by identifying with those on the outs with the U.S. rulers. But nothing more was required of them than propaganda to that effect. What could suit young middle class students more? By their very nature they are trained for propaganda and feel at home in a propaganda existence. They are not required to really break from this whole way of life and to intervene in uncomfortable struggles. In the SWP these young people could be radical as all Hell in words but safe as can be in actions. The SWPers soon became known among radicals as the safe and respectable "revolutionaries".

### Reality Destroys the Utopia

There was only one hitch in this utopia for tired revolutionaries and young propagandists--the SWP happened to exist in the United States and the United States, contrary to SWP analysis, is anything but a peaceful place. American events of a violent nature began to intrude upon the SWP and in the process it soon became clear exactly who was capitulating to American Imperialism.

First came the Kennedy Assassination--that turning point in current American history. This event, like the Kirov Assassination in the USSR in the 1930s, showed that beneath the surface calm was great tumult, conflict, contradictions, which can easily come violently to surface if at first only in a senseless individual act of terrorism. Terrorism itself is unknown where real stability exists.

The reaction of the SWP to this violent act was one of fear--of fear of the violent future ahead for America. It acted to declare its allegiance to the American rulers by sending its condolences to the widow of the mastermind of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Such is the way the SWP expressed its real "defense" of Cuba!

Then came the upsurge of the Negro struggle in the South. While the Negro people in the course of this struggle were learning the true nature of the United States--the duplicity of the capitalist government in the racist oppression in the South--the SWP directed the eyes of the Negro people elsewhere. It urged them to petition to this very same government to send troops into the South. Rather than relying upon their own arms for self defense--as they were later to do with the Deacons for Defense and in Watts--the SWP urged them to rely upon the government which was oppressing them. In the election campaign last fall the SWP put up stickers in the subways urging that the U.S. take its troops from Vietnam and send them to the South. But would not the troops act in the South just as they acted in Vietnam? Would they not turn their guns against the American Vietcong, the Negro freedom fighters in the South? Today we have a fresh example of this process in the Watts uprising. Why not call for federal troops to Watts, comrades? It is completely consistent with the past SWP line.

The current approach of the party towards the struggle against the Vietnam War exudes the same approach. Essentially the SWP is in an uncritical bloc with liberal elements who oppose the current war only because it is an "insane" and "irrational" way to preserve American world domination. The Gruenings, the Morses, the I.F. Stones seek to destroy the Vietnamese revolution and preserve U.S. world domination through deals and through the U.N. rather than through armed conflict. The SDS leadership reflects at least in part this outlook with its call for U.N. intervention and the like. The SWP reprints the speeches of the liberal

Senators and uncritically supports this SDS leadership.

From Non-Politics to Liberal Politics

It should be clear by now what has happened to the SWP. We must begin with its failure to develop theoretically and its complete lack of understanding the Marxist method. This led it to adapt uncritically to revolutionary leaderships abroad which seemed to offer the hope of social transformations without conscious Marxist development of a working class party --that is offer the hope of transformation by a non-theoretical formation like the SWP. On the surface this stance appeared very "radical" to the party membership because it meant supporting revolutions opposed by the U.S. rulers. In contrast a critique of the limits of this unconscious revolutionary process seemed only carping criticisms in the service of imperialism.

It soon turned out to be the exact opposite. This adaptation to petty bourgeois revolutionaries was soon accompanied by what can only be characterized as the development of a liberal outlook by the SWP leadership on American affairs. This turn of events is natural and understandable. There is no such thing as a complete absence of theory and method, but there is such a thing as a complete absence of conscious theory and method. Contrary to the opinion of Castro and Guevera (wherever he may be), there is no such thing as unconscious Marxism. Marxism can only be developed consciously because the working class is the only class in history which needs this complete consciousness to come to power as it does not have ownership of the means of production prior to coming to power. Lack of conscious Marxist theory simply opens up socialists to acceptance of the dominant theory and method of the environment within which they function. In the United States this means the theory of liberalism and the method of empiricism. And so it has worked out in the case of the SWP.

The SWP leadership has illustrated amply through the last 37 years of operation its incapacity to develop theoretically. This task now falls upon the SWP rank and file, primarily the youth. The only hope for the restoration of the SWP as a Marxist party rests on your shoulders. If you do not carry out this task then the SWP will be dead and you will be entrapped in a liberal formation. This is the fundamental issue for this convention just as it was the fundamental issue before the 1961 and 1963 conventions.

We will be more than happy to join with you in a common struggle for Marxism within the SWP. This is our motivation in appealing at this time for readmission to a party we realize is no longer Trotskyist.

--American Committee for the Fourth International