



Discussion Bulletin

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

Published by

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Vol. 31 No. 32
July, 1973

CONTENTS

	Page
AN ANSWER TO COMRADE STERNE ON INDO-CHINA , by Don Gurewitz, Boston Branch	3
WHEN YOU CUT POLITICAL CORNERS YOU CUT A PARTY'S THROAT , by Russell Block, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local; and Michael Smith, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	10
SOME REMARKS ON AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES , by Tom Quinn, Washington, D. C. Branch	16
WHERE THE THORSTAD-GREEN COUNTER-MEMORANDUM GOES WRONG ON THE ROLE OF GAY OPPRESSION IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY , by Mimi Harary, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local	23
THE COMING SHORTAGES AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM , by Mary F. Walter, Denver Branch	24
HOW THE INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY ORIENTS TO THE AMERICAN "NEW MASS VANGUARD," by Brian Williams, Oakland-Berkeley Branch	25
IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM ON THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT , by Wayne Hieber, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local	28
IS THE DETENTE SERIOUS? IS THE MINORITY SERIOUS? by Bob Schwarz, San Francisco Branch	31
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON IRELAND , by Peter Archer, Chicago Branch	34
IS THE NUCLEAR FAMILY ETERNAL? An Answer to Comrade Vernon , by Evelyn Reed, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local	40
A REPORT AND COMMENTS ON THE DISCUSSION WITH THE MASSEY-SHAFFER-SMITH TENDENCY IN BLOOMINGTON , by Lee Artz, Detroit Branch	46

Page 2 :

was blank in the
original bulletin

- Marty Jan 2014

AN ANSWER TO COMRADE STERNE ON INDOCHINA

by Don Gurewitz, Boston Branch

Comrade Sterne, a leading spokesperson for the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency, has written a contribution to the International Internal Discussion Bulletin entitled "The Debate on Indochina" (Vol. 10 No. 7). In it he brings together and further develops a whole number of arguments which he and other key leaders of the MMF tendency have put forward over the past years in relation to the nature of the Vietnamese CP and the nature and tasks of the international antiwar movement. The article contains serious historical errors and serious departures from the positions of revolutionary Marxism on the nature of the Vietnamese CP(VCP) and, more generally, on the nature of Stalinism.

On page 11 of his document, Comrade Sterne speaks of "the rediscovery of the strategic principles of permanent revolution" by the VCP. On page 9 he tells us that in "the basic programmatic documents published by the Vietnam Workers Party [VCP] . . . an analysis is developed that is largely one of permanent revolution." To prove his point, he offers a quote from Le Duan, secretary of the VWP (VCP). Comrade Sterne tells us that this quote is only one "out of dozens" (emphasis in original). There is no reason to doubt him. Unfortunately, however, the quote proves absolutely nothing. It is true that it is not an open expression of the "classical" Stalinist (Menshevik) concept of the "two-stage" revolution. But it is also certainly not a clear expression of the Trotskyist concept of the theory of permanent revolution. The truth is it is ambiguous. Here is the quote:

". . . the national liberation movement is developing not only on a large scale but also in greater depth, acquiring a new content. While national and democratic in its content, the national liberation revolution no longer fits into the framework of bourgeois revolution but is becoming an integral part of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale. This celebrated thesis of Lenin not only retains all its validity but has been confirmed still more clearly in our time by revolutionary practice. As a result, the offensive power of the national liberation movement grows more and more powerful, its role greater and greater; and it gravely threatens the home front of imperialism, creating conditions for propagating the socialist revolution worldwide. . . .

"Today a whole series of former colonies have won varying degrees of independence. For such nations, two roads open up—the road of capitalist development or an advance to socialism skipping the stage of capitalist development. The general tendency of our epoch, just as the internal situation in these countries, does not permit them to retravel the historic route of independent capitalist development in order then to wind up in the imperialist rut in the image of the Western countries. If they follow the path of capitalist development, they ultimately fall under the neocolonialist yoke of the imperialist countries." (Le Duan, "Forward Under the Glorious Banner of the October Revolution", quoted in Sterne, p. 9.)

Comrade Sterne chooses to place the emphasis on the phrases about "skipping the stage of capitalist develop-

ment" and "becoming an integral part of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat." From these he concludes that the VCP leaders no longer hold to the two-stage theory but have instead adopted the theory of permanent revolution. This is a dubious method—and it leads him to dubious results.

To begin with, Comrade Sterne simply overlooks the existence of many quotes—"dozens" if you please—from the VCP which make clear that it *does* support the two-stage theory. He admits on p. 9 that "the program assigned to the Vietminh and the NLF fronts by the VCP appears [??] to be a program for a *bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution*" (emphasis in original), but in so doing he implies that, unlike the "fronts," the party itself has a different program, a program of permanent revolution. How then would he explain the following quote from the "political theses" adopted by the VCP Central Committee in October 1930, and quoted approvingly in a party history published in 1970?:

"The Vietnamese revolution must pass through two stages. In the first stage, the bourgeois democratic revolution is carried out under the leadership of the working class, to overthrow the imperialist and feudal rulers, achieve national independence, and give land to the tillers. . . .

"After the above-mentioned tasks have been basically fulfilled, the revolution will move to the second stage when Viet Nam is led straight to socialism, without passing through the stage of capitalist development." (Quoted in Johnson and Feldman, July-August 1973 *International Socialist Review*, "On the Nature of the Vietnamese CP," p. 64.)

There are many similar quotes from the literature of the VCP, from the period of the second world war right through today. It is simply dishonest to ignore the existence of such quotes.

Even more importantly, however, there is *another interpretation* to the quote from Le Duan other than the one Comrade Sterne holds. This other interpretation runs something like this: "The national liberation struggle can no longer follow the classical route of capitalist development. It is more and more becoming part of the world proletarian struggle. But it is not the *same* as the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is something new. It represents a third course, a course which is not capitalist but also not socialist." That this is the actual interpretation which should be given to Sterne's quote from Le Duan becomes perfectly clear if one reads the entire section from which Comrade Sterne has carefully chosen his quote. In the part Comrade Sterne neglected to give us, Le Duan explains that there are "three major revolutionary movements—the building of socialism and communism in our camp [N. Vietnam, etc.], *non-capitalist* development of the national liberation revolution and in the newly-independent countries [S. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, etc.] and socialist revolution in the imperialist-capitalist countries. . . ." (quoted in Johnson and Feldman, pp. 82-83, my emphasis). There is no way to misinterpret this: Le Duan believes that the road for the na-

tional liberation movements in the "third world" is a "non-capitalist" one which he is very careful to distinguish from the *socialist* one he sees for the advanced capitalist countries. This is hardly the theory of permanent revolution. In fact, it is its opposite. As George Johnson and Fred Feldman pointed out in their already cited article, "What later became known as the theory of 'uninterrupted revolution' originated as the Stalinist answer to the theory of permanent revolution. . . . 'The leading role of the working class' and rhetoric about 'skipping over' the stage of capitalist development were tacked on to this two-stage theory in an attempt to fend off the criticisms made by the Trotskyist Left Opposition of the disastrous Comintern policy of subordinating the Chinese CP to the Kuomintang. The term 'uninterrupted revolution' came into vogue, particularly among Asian Stalinists, as a more palatable and left-sounding title for the 'two-stage revolution'. It arose as a left cover for this theory. . . ." (p. 765).

Comrade Sterne should be well aware of the dangers of the "theory" of a "noncapitalist" road for national development in the colonial and semicolonial countries. It has been the theoretical foundation for virtually every defeat suffered by the colonial revolution since the days of Stalin. We all know, for example, about the bloody defeat suffered by the Indonesian CP and the Indonesian masses in 1965. Here is a quote from D. N. Aidit, the head of the Indonesian CP. It appears in a pamphlet published in Peking in 1965 and quoted by the United Secretariat in a March 1966 resolution on Indonesia (see *The Catastrophe in Indonesia* published by Merit Publishers, p. 28). We wonder how Comrade Sterne would distinguish this quote from the one he cited from Le Duan.

"The Indonesian revolution is at the present stage bourgeois-democratic in character and not socialist and proletarian. But the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Indonesia no longer belongs to the old type, and is no longer part of the bourgeois-democratic world revolution, which belongs to the past; it is a revolution of a new type, which is part of the proletarian socialist world revolution, firmly opposed to imperialism. . . . Given the fact that the Indonesian revolution is a bourgeois-democratic revolution of a new type, it is the historical duty of the proletariat to struggle to conquer its leadership."

All over the "third world" the Stalinists have adapted to the desire of the masses for a break with capitalism. Quotes such as the one Sterne cited abound in the literature of the Indonesian CP, the Ceylonese CP, the Chinese CP, etc. In fact, one can even find very similar quotes in the works of Stalin himself — "dozens" of them.

The concept of the "noncapitalist" road for the underdeveloped countries is not only the rallying cry of the Stalinists — it has been picked up by many petty-bourgeois nationalists as well. The June 25, 1973, *Intercontinental Press* carries the text of an interview granted by former Bolivian President Torres to the Argentine weekly *Panorama*. In it Torres says:

"History has shown that a semicolony like Bolivia can only liberate itself through a front between the classes oppressed by imperialism. The proletariat must play the preponderant role in this front, but if it is to accomplish its aims, it must raise national and democratic banners that will make it possible for it also to lead the other oppressed classes, which are numerically larger. Only

in this way will we build a qualitatively different society, by pursuing a noncapitalist path of development."

Nasser's "Arab socialism," Nkrumah's "African socialism," Allende's "Chilean road to socialism" — all are attempts to chart a "noncapitalist" line of development, and all are simply formulas for providing left cover for class collaboration and continued bourgeois rule. Comrade Sterne would do better to expose the dangers inherent in the VCP's concept of a "noncapitalist," nonsocialist road rather than to apologize for it and provide it with a left cover.

Why does Comrade Sterne bend over backwards (and then some) to apologize for the VCP's thoroughly discredited "left" two-stage theory? It is because he can not see the VCP for what it is: a Stalinist party. On page 11 of his document, after conceding that the VCP is not a Trotskyist party, he goes on to explain "But it is not a Stalinist party either, not in its program or its practice." It *may* have been in its early day, he explains, but since 1939 it has "reoriented" its policy "in accordance with the needs of the struggle for national and social liberation in Vietnam."

From the point of view of a protagonist of "rural guerrilla warfare" as a "strategy" "for a whole period" this last statement might be true, but not from the point of view of a protagonist of the theory of permanent revolution. It *is* true that the VCP organized, led and still leads armed struggle in Indochina, not only beginning with the World War II period but even before (although even that was on an on-again-off-again basis — as in 1945-46 and 1954-60 — in line with Moscow's needs as opposed to the needs of the Vietnamese class struggle). Perhaps that satisfies the guerrilla in Comrade Sterne. But what about the proletarian revolutionist in him? Was working in close alliance with the imperialist "democracies" during World War II "in accordance with the needs of the struggle for national and social liberation in Vietnam"? How about the VCP's willingness to remain in the French (imperialist) Union after the war? How about agreeing to welcome the British army into Saigon and organizing mass demonstrations to greet them in 1945? How about killing the Trotskyists and other class-struggle militants who opposed disarming the masses and welcoming the imperialists back into Indochina at the end of the war? How about signing the 1954 Geneva Accords and hailing them as a great victory rather than explaining to the Vietnamese and world masses that the Accords represented a tactical retreat made under intense pressure from Moscow and Peking as well as imperialism? How about opposing the armed resistance of the South Vietnamese masses against Diem for five years (until 1960)? *These were the critical turning points of the decades-long struggle for national liberation.* They cannot be dismissed as separate, isolated incidents apart from the armed struggle — in fact, they were the critical turning points *in* the armed struggle. Does Comrade Sterne tell us that they were "in accordance with the needs of the struggle for national and social liberation in Vietnam"? If so, we beg to differ. They were disastrous *mistakes* made virtually inevitable by the VCP's *Stalinist*, class-collaborationist program. Politics is the key here, not armed struggle. Vietnamese history is proof that even the most ferocious armed struggle can be frustrated if guided by the wrong political concepts. As with the Chinese revolution, Trotskyists believe that the Stalinist policies of the

Vietnamese leadership have made the road to victory for the revolution much longer and more tortuous than necessary. At critical turning points, the Stalinist politics of the leadership have prevented the revolution from taking important steps forward that were entirely possible given the correct political orientation.

Merely pointing out that the struggle in Indochina is still going on is not an adequate answer to the argument that it could have triumphed long ago were it not for the political mistakes made by its leadership. This attitude of Trotskyists contrasts sharply with Comrade Sterne's. He tends to take for good coin the "theories" which the Stalinists have developed to explain away the setbacks their false policies have inflicted on the Vietnamese revolution. On page 11, for example, Comrade Sterne lauds the concept of "prolonged revolutionary war" calling it one of "the most essential lessons of the Indochinese revolution." But the war has been a prolonged one because the policies of the leadership of the VCP have forced it to be. Elsewhere Comrade Sterne lauds the "theory" of "people's war." What is this "theory"? As Comrades Johnson and Feldman point out in their article, the concepts of "prolonged," "people's war" "stem from the Third period, when peasant armies and soviets were prescribed for the Asian Stalinists by the Comintern . . . the initial concepts of what later became 'people's war' were developed by the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern in response to Trotskyist criticisms of its failure in China. It originated as, and remains, a *substitute* for a program of proletarian revolution based on the theory of permanent revolution. . . . It is a peasant war, under a bourgeois-reformist program, that bypasses the working class. . . . Trotskyists do not accept the political framework of 'people's war,' which says in essence that the proletariat will be liberated from its oppression by another class fighting under a bourgeois program." Comrade Sterne is treading on dangerous ground when he accepts the theory of prolonged people's war. It was this theory, among other things, that led him and other leaders of his tendency to find common ground for so long with the thoroughly non-Trotskyist PRT (Combatiente).

The key to Comrade Sterne's argument is that "a Stalinist CP cannot, against the orders of the Kremlin, take the lead of a revolutionary struggle without *beginning to break* with Stalinism in practice and at least partially in theory" (p. 10, emphasis in original). This is a dangerous argument. It led some comrades with whom Comrade Sterne is now aligned (Mandel, Maitan, Frank, *et al.*) to wait twenty years after Mao took power before calling for political revolution in China. They reasoned: Stalinism is counterrevolutionary. It is against the establishment of any more workers' states. Mao organized and led "prolonged" armed struggle. Mao took state power and established a workers' state. Therefore the CP cannot possibly be a Stalinist party. If it is not a Stalinist party, how can we call for a political revolution in China? There might have been a certain amount of intellectual honesty in that position—figuring out how a party that Trotsky and our movement had called Stalinist for decades could take state power and establish a workers' state was no small problem. However, it left Comrade Mandel and the others without a clear political perspective for our movement toward the Chinese regime for 20 years. Finally, at the last world congress of the Fourth

International in 1969 these comrades decided to adopt the call for a political revolution in China even though they still refused to label the CCP "Stalinist." This confused us somewhat: "political revolution" was a concept that Trotsky developed to deal with Stalinism, the rise of a hardened, bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union which had usurped power from the workers in order to protect its own privileged position. Why did these comrades decide to call for a political revolution in China if they did not believe that the regime was Stalinist? How *did* they characterize the Chinese regime? This was never made clear, but they seemed to feel that the "radical" rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution meant that Maoism was more "left" in its domestic and international policy than Stalinism. (In this respect they were not unlike Comrade Sterne on Vietnam: they focused on isolated rhetoric—"dozens" of carefully chosen quotes—and Chinese aid to guerrilla groups engaged in armed struggle to prove their point.) They even argued, like Sterne does on Vietnam, that the Chinese CP used some formulations that were not the same as the "classical" Stalinist two-stage theory and that—supposedly—could be interpreted as being in consonance with the theory of permanent revolution. They tended to characterize the Chinese CP as "centrist." They pointed out that Trotsky had at times characterized the Stalin regime as "centrist." We replied by explaining that Trotsky had used the term "centrism" to apply to the Stalin regime during the period when our movement was still calling for reform of the Soviet regime (late 1920s, early 1930s). The term "centrism" was appropriate then because it was consistent with our position that it was still possible to reform the Soviet regime. Once our position changed to one of calling for a political revolution to overthrow the Stalin regime because it was no longer possible to reform it, the term "centrism" was abandoned in favor of terms such as "bureaucratic Bonapartism," "Soviet Bonapartism" or just plain "Stalinism." These new terms were used to characterize a hardened, privileged bureaucratic caste which could only be removed through a political revolution. (See Joseph Hansen, SWP Discussion Bulletin, Volume 27, No. 4, July 1969 for more on this question.) For this reason we felt that there was a contradiction in the call by Comrade Mandel and the others for a political revolution in China while at the same time refusing to call it "Stalinist."

Events since the 9th World Congress (Ceylon, Bangladesh, Vietnam, the Washington-Peking detente, etc.) have caused Mandel and the other comrades to drop the theory about the "leftism" of the Chinese CP like a hot potato. The writing of many of these comrades, including Comrade Sterne, leads me to believe that today there is agreement in the Fourth International that China not only needs a political revolution but needs it because it is saddled with a counterrevolutionary bureaucracy which, even though it led a successful revolution, nonetheless pursues a bureaucratic domestic and foreign policy designed to protect its own privileged position in opposition to the interests of the Chinese and world masses. To us, this is "classical" Stalinism. Comrades Mandel, Maitan, Frank, Sterne, *et al.*, still do not seem to agree. If the disagreement is terminological then the subject can be dropped—as long as we all agree on what the nature of the Chinese regime is and on what must be done to

overthrow it—and as long as Comrades Mandel, Sterne and the others don't make the same mistake again. Unfortunately, this is where we are forced to return to the question of Vietnam.

In changing their position on China purely empirically, these comrades failed to provide an answer to the crucial question: what is the nature of the Chinese CP as a *social force* and does it differ qualitatively *in this respect* from the Moscow bureaucracy? Without an adequate answer to this question they are today making the same mistake in relation to the VCP: if it organizes a "prolonged" guerrilla war, takes state power (in the north) and fights arms in hand (in the south), then it cannot be Stalinist.

Comrades: you acknowledge (now) that in China a party which you delicately call "Stalinist-trained" organized a guerrilla army, fought for long years and finally took state power. While you won't call it Stalinist, you acknowledge that it acts like a Stalinist bureaucracy in its stifling of workers democracy and in its subordinating the needs and interests of the masses in China and around the world to its own privileged bureaucratic needs. You acknowledge that it acts so much like a Stalinist bureaucracy that it needs to be overthrown by a political revolution. How is the Vietnamese CP *qualitatively* different? Even if it makes you wince to call it "Stalinist" (what would the "new mass vanguard" say?), isn't it of the same type as the Chinese CP (and the Yugoslav CP, which some of you also flirted with at one point)? That is, isn't it a "Stalinist-trained" party that retains its essentially bureaucratic nature even though it leads a revolutionary upsurge and takes state power?

You must show us (a little more clearly than you tried — unsuccessfully—to do with China, please) how the VCP and the N. Vietnamese regime *as a social force* differ qualitatively from both the Moscow Stalinists and the bureaucrats in Peking.

Comrade Sterne hints at only three explanations of why the VCP cannot be properly labeled "Stalinist."

1) It broke with Stalin. On page 11 of his document, Comrade Sterne tells us "Like the Chinese and Yugoslav parties, it [the VCP] has known how to refuse to subordinate its policy to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy and it broke away empirically from the Stalinized CI around the second world war." "In 1945, it took power and formed the DRV *against* the orders of the Kremlin." It is not true that the VCP "refused" "to subordinate its policy to the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy" during the period of the second world war. In fact, they slavishly followed Moscow's line. They abandoned the demand for national independence. They called on the Vietnamese people to support "the Allies." They dissolved their party to prove their democratic intentions to Stalin's allies. They projected a Vietnam as part of the French Union after the war. The list goes on and on.

Perhaps where Comrade Sterne goes wrong is in his apparent belief that the mere initiation and engagement in armed struggle represents a *de facto* break with Stalinism. This is a mistaken notion. The experience of the CP-led Resistance in his own country of France should prove that to him. But even in Indochina the armed struggle led by the CP was perfectly in harmony with Stalin's policy. It is true that Stalin had promised to leave Indochina within the "sphere of influence" of the imperialist

powers. But that does not mean that Stalin opposed armed struggle there. After all, there was an "Allied" enemy to beat—Japan. What is more, it is not even true that Stalin opposed armed struggle against his "Allies." He did for a while, and while he did the VCP studiously refrained from even hinting that it intended to struggle against France. It was only in 1947 that the VCP proclaimed its intention to struggle against France. Why 1947? Because the Stalinists *around the world* were engaged in a "left" turn, directed by Stalin, aimed at countering the Cold War unleashed by imperialism by putting pressure on the Western powers. It was exactly in this period that armed insurrections were launched, not only in Indochina, but in India, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma and the Philippines. The unleashing of the armed struggle against the French was more a function of the diplomatic needs of the Kremlin than of the needs of the Vietnamese class struggle. (For more on this period of Vietnamese history, as well as a thorough overview of the entire history of the Vietnamese CP, see the article by Johnson and Feldman.) As was indicated earlier, the entire history of armed struggle in Indochina is not, as Sterne implies, simply a matter of the needs of the class struggle in Vietnam. At every stage, the policy of the VCP leaders was much more in step with the needs of the Kremlin bureaucracy than the Vietnamese masses (putting faith in the "Allies," willingness to stay in the French Union, welcoming the British troops into Saigon, opposing armed struggle against Diem for many years, downplaying the struggle of the working class in favor of peasant war, etc.).

What about Comrade Sterne's contention that the very establishment of the DRV constituted a break with Stalin and Stalinism? It simply isn't true. To begin with, the actual taking of state power by the VCP was much more a product of an unprecedented upsurge of the masses combined with the collapse of Japanese imperialism and an inability of the western imperialists to intervene decisively and immediately than it was of the policy of the VCP itself. Even more importantly, a revolutionary socialist should note that what the VCP established was not a "Soviet Socialist Republic" but "the Democratic Republic of Vietnam." And they meant it. Here is how a leading Vietnamese Stalinist, Nguyen Van Tao, put it at the time:

"All those who have instigated [!!] the peasants to seize the landowners property will be severely and pitilessly punished. . . . We have not yet made the Communist revolution which will solve the agrarian problem. This government is only a democratic government. That is why such a task does not devolve upon it. Our government, I repeat, is a bourgeois-democratic government, even though the Communists are now in power." (Quoted in Johnson and Feldman, p. 69.) Not only did the VCP make such *statements*—they carried them out. They killed the "instigators" of the peasants and workers—including the Trotskyists. They organized the masses to welcome the "democratic" British army into Saigon. And even after the British army staged a *coup* to return the French to power in Saigon, the VCP continued to try and find some way to maintain a "democratic" republic acceptable to the western powers. On March 6, 1946, they signed an agreement with the French government recognizing the DRV as a bourgeois-democratic republic within the French Union. As part of the French "community," of course, they were bound to let the French military reenter the north. They did. For

their part, the VCP leaders cannot be accused of not doing their part to see that the Vietnamese revolution remained within bourgeois-democratic bounds. They can hardly be blamed if the ungrateful French decided that they preferred to have a "democratic" Vietnam ruled by someone other than the VCP and so launched a brutal attack on Hanoi in November 1946, thus forcing the Vietnamese leadership to resume the struggle. It is hard to see how such a history can be described as a break with Stalinism. It strikes me as rather like applauding the union bureaucrats who "break" with reformism when an offensive of the bosses and the militancy of the workers forces them to take the lead of a militant strike. (For more on how a Stalinist party can take state power without thereby ceasing to be Stalinist see Tom Kerry's article in the Sept.-Oct. 1969 *International Socialist Review*, "A Mao-Stalin Rift?: Myth or Fact".)

2) Comrade Sterne's second explanation of why it is incorrect to call the VCP "Stalinist" is that its struggle has been a long one, too long to simply be a result of the pressure of the masses. The length of the fight must mean that they are fighting consciously, because they want to, not because they are being forced to. On page 10 he tells us "The argument claiming that for thirty years the CP has led a revolution out of an instinct for self-preservation is obviously worthless. A nonrevolutionary party generally chooses nonrevolutionary means to defend itself—even if this signifies its fall. . . . The Vietnamese revolution goes beyond any spontaneous insurrection that might carry reformist workers parties to power in spite of themselves. It represents more than three decades of an extremely difficult struggle . . . How can anyone believe that such a process could develop without throwing up a single revolutionary leadership *in opposition* to the existing organizations?" (emphasis in original). This line of argument leaves something to be desired. First of all, it "neglects" to mention the fact that an opposition *was* produced: a Trotskyist current with considerable mass influence. Unfortunately, however, they were murdered and outlawed by the VCP. The supposed lack of opposition seems to say more about the thoroughly Stalinist, dictatorial and undemocratic regime imposed by the VCP than anything else.

Even more importantly, it is not the *length* of the struggle that is key but *how* it is fought and under what *political program*. Violence is not a revolutionary means in and of itself. It depends on what political aims it is serving. The Chinese armed struggle was very long too, yet today Comrade Sterne calls for a political revolution to overthrow the regime there. It is a lesson worth learning: armed struggle—even "prolonged" armed struggle—does not a revolutionary make. In fact, revolutionists prefer the struggle to be as *short* as possible, not as long. Unlike Comrade Sterne, we do not think that the fact that one has been fighting at the head of a mass movement for a long time makes one a revolutionary socialist. In fact, we tend to ask: Why has it taken so long? Have you really been doing the right thing? What is the basis on which you have been conducting your struggle? No one questions the fact that the VCP has been in this struggle to win. But the question is: What are they out to win? A bourgeois-democratic republic? That is utopian—and hardly what we advocate. A workers state modeled after the Soviet Union and China? That may not be quite so

utopian, but it's not exactly what *we* have in mind. And if the Vietnamese leaders *don't* have that in mind, why have they chosen, for thirty long years, to fight under a program designed to bring such a deformed workers state into existence? That, after all, is what the strategy of "people's war" is all about: taking state power on the backs of the struggle of the atomized, petty-bourgeois peasantry as a substitute for the independent organization of the working class creates the most favorable conditions possible for preventing any rise of genuine workers democracy and for consolidating a bureaucratic regime which can monopolize state power to guarantee itself a privileged position in society.

Once again, we feel constrained to remind Comrade Sterne that it is politics that is primary. Trotskyists completely oppose the false, reformist nostrums under which the VCP has conducted its decades-long struggle. We believe that these false concepts have led to many unnecessary setbacks and defeats for the Vietnamese revolution.

3) Comrade Sterne's third explanation of why the VCP is not Stalinist is that it is independent of Moscow and Peking. On page 9 he lays especially heavy emphasis on this when he says, "For the majority [the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency], a Stalinist party is a party that *subordinates* the interests of the socialist revolution in its country to those of a bureaucracy in a degenerated workers state. This is certainly not the case of the VCP which has had to carry on the struggle *against* the orientation set by the Kremlin and today by the Kremlin and Peking" (emphasis in original).

It is, of course, true that the Vietnamese *masses* have had to carry out their struggle against the orientation set by Moscow and Peking, but it is equally true that it has been *the VCP* which has served as the concrete instrument through which Moscow and Peking have introduced their class-collaborationist orientation into the Vietnamese class struggle. It is wrong for Comrade Sterne to equate the VCP with the Indochinese masses. As we have shown, throughout virtually all of its history the VCP's line has been completely in step with that of Moscow, even after the VCP took state power. In fact, it was so much in step that after having taken state power, they limited themselves to proclaiming a bourgeois-democratic republic so as not to "alienate" Stalin's "ally," France. It was their very hueing the Kremlin line that put them in a position where they had to abandon their own capitol and resume the guerrilla war for another seven years.

One only wishes that revolutionists could be as clear about the role of the VCP as the imperialists are. Comrade Sterne should read the Pentagon Papers to see how the American ruling class estimated the intentions of the VCP in planning its strategy in Indochina. For instance, here is how a "National Intelligence Estimate" dated July 17, 1956, put it:

"We believe that the DRV is firmly committed to the policies of the Sino-Soviet Bloc, even to the extent of subordinating or postponing the pursuit of its local or regional objectives in the overall Bloc tactics and strategy . . . (quoted in the June 2, 1972 *Militant*). The point they were trying to make was that the U. S. should encourage Diem to continue to subvert the Geneva Accords because Moscow would go along and therefore so would Hanoi. As we know, it was not until 1960 that the DRV began its support to the struggle in the south. In fact, they actually

opposed that struggle when it began. It should also be noted that such memoranda as the one quoted above are not propaganda designed to fool the masses but secret internal circulars of the ruling class designed to allow it to plan its policy as soberly as possible.

Comrade Sterne is caught in a kind of circular logic which he himself has established as a result of not understanding the mistakes the leaders of his tendency made on the nature of the Chinese CP. Let's look again at what happened in relation to the question of China. They began with the premise that if a party takes state power it cannot be Stalinist. Mao took state power. Therefore the Chinese CP could not be Stalinist and China could not be a deformed workers state. The only sense in which it could be called Stalinist was in the sense that it subordinated its interests to those of the Soviet Union which *was* a degenerated workers state. As China broke with Moscow, and used left verbiage in the process, Mandel and the other comrades were at a loss. It wasn't Stalinist in its own right, and now it wasn't even subordinated to Moscow. Since they had made the Chinese CP a non-Stalinist party *by definition* they were left completely out in the cold when China broke with Moscow. In fact, they *still* don't know how to characterize the Chinese CP, even though they do call for a political revolution.

The fault, of course, was, and is, with the original definition, the original premise. It is not true that if a Stalinist party takes state power and establishes a workers state it can no longer be called Stalinist. Peculiar historical circumstances following the second world war allowed for the establishment of workers states without genuine revolutionary parties. China, N. Vietnam, Yugoslavia, the Eastern European countries and Cuba are all examples. Nonetheless, the Chinese and Vietnamese CPs remain Stalinist parties. This is so not only because of their histories but because the regimes they established were, and are, thoroughly undemocratic, bureaucratic regimes whose purpose is to protect the interests of the ruling privileged caste as opposed to the interests of the masses in their own countries and around the world.

It was wrong for the comrades to look for the Stalinism of the Chinese CP in its subordination to Moscow. That was only a temporary phenomenon. The Chinese CP was Stalinist in its own right. In fact, it was precisely because the Chinese CP *was* a Stalinist party that it eventually had to break with Moscow: having conquered state power they had their *own* bureaucratic interests to protect. That is the inevitable logic of the Stalinist concept of "socialism in one country": each national bureaucracy is driven to place *its own* interests first.

This is equally true of Vietnam. Even if it were correct that the VCP was completely independent of Moscow and Peking it would not prove that it is not a Stalinist party. What the Hanoi leaders are doing is attempting to put *their own* bureaucratic needs first. Once a Stalinist party has state power it has something even more important than Moscow's interests to worry about: namely, securing its own state apparatus to protect its own privileges.

The question of how a Stalinist party can take state power despite its counterrevolutionary nature is an important one. But Comrade Sterne's attempt to answer it by saying "it can't; if it takes state power it is no longer Stalinist" is a dangerous business. Denying the Stalinist nature of the CCP on much the same grounds led Com-

rades Mandel, Maitan and Frank to oppose calling for a political revolution in China for twenty years. On page 11 of his document, Comrade Sterne tells us that "we [presumably the MMF tendency] think our movement still [!!!] has a role of its own to play in Indochina." When some comrades thought that Tito must be a revolutionary because he led a revolution, they opposed building a Trotskyist party in Yugoslavia with formulations much like Comrade Sterne's. Today (or, at least yesterday) our Argentine section feels that Mao is a real revolutionary because he led a revolution and they oppose building a Trotskyist party in China—although they acknowledge that Trotskyism "still has a role of its own to play."

On page 10 of his document, Comrade Sterne says that the Vietnamese leadership deserves "the title of revolutionary." He then asks, "Does this mean that we are uncritical tail-enders of the Vietnamese leadership? No." But Comrade Sterne: being a *critical* tailender is really no better than being an uncritical one. We have already seen a certain whitewashing of the history of the VCP and an attempt to provide a kind of left cover for its reformist theoretical concepts. You must tell us exactly what "role of its own" our movement has to play in relation to Vietnam. Given your completely uncritical repeating of the Vietnamese leadership's applause for the cease-fire which was signed last January, you will forgive us if we are somewhat apprehensive. The duty of a revolutionist is to mercilessly expose every concession wrung from the struggling oppressed masses by imperialism and its Stalinist collaborators. Instead, you hail the accords as "a victory." We are very anxious to hear exactly what "role of its own" you see for Trotskyism in Southeast Asia.

There is a thread that runs through Comrade Sterne's entire argument. Everywhere, Comrade Sterne seeks to place the question of armed struggle, of "revolutionary action," at the center of the debate. One gets the distinct impression that Comrade Sterne believes that what a party is *doing* is much more important than what its *political conceptions* are. We recognize, of course, that political groupings can often be carrying out the correct actions without fully understanding why they are correct. We usually regard such formations as healthy and seek to intervene in them or work with them in order to help them bring their theoretical understanding in line with their practice. We know that, over time, if they are unable to do this they will degenerate. Similarly, we know that it is often possible for a political grouping to seem to have the correct program and yet fail to apply it correctly. However, Comrade Sterne seems to be talking about something else altogether. On pp. 10-11 of his document, he tells us "Founded in 1930, the VCP was caught in a contradiction between its belonging to the Stalinized C. I. and its very real involvement in the Vietnamese class struggle." The whole weight and tone of his remarks seem to imply that the mere involvement of the VCP in the Vietnamese class struggle, that is, the mere *activity* of the VCP, was sufficient to impel it in the direction of a break with Stalinism. What is missing here is an appreciation of Stalinism as an essentially contradictory phenomenon. It is *not* true that the involvement of Stalinist parties in the class struggle in their countries is sufficient to impel them to break with Stalinism. In fact, the very nature of Stalinism drives *every* Stalinized CP to be active in the class struggle precisely in order to control and contain the masses.

When a Stalinist CP assumes the leadership of a mass struggle it is time to double our guard, not drop it. To us, the most important thing is what political conceptions guide the activity of a particular political formation. If the concepts are Stalinist concepts, then we know the mass movements it leads are due for numerous unnecessary defeats regardless of whether or not the party involved is willing to employ violence as a tactic at any given time, or even over an extended period of time. The Chinese CP led an organized guerrilla army while Trotsky was alive. That did not stop him from labeling them as Stalinists and exposing their reformist political concepts (some of the very same concepts which Comrade Sterne so strenuously defends today in Vietnam), explaining that it was the *political program* for which their army was fighting that was key. When Comrade Sterne defines the VCP as non-Stalinist simply because it has engaged in armed struggle for a long time, he actually does nothing but open the door to conciliation with Stalinism. This is all too clear in his grossly distorted picture of the VCP's history, which amounts to a whitewash of its numerous critical errors. It is also apparent in his embracing of the theoretical concepts of the VCP which are actually concepts that were developed by Stalinism precisely to combat genuine Marxism and the Trotskyist concept of the theory of the permanent revolution (the "uninterrupted" revolution which projects a "noncapitalist" road for the underdeveloped countries and is actually simply a "left version of the two-stage theory"; "protracted," "people's" war which is actually a substitution of the peasantry, mobilized around a bourgeois-democratic program, for the independent organization and mobilization of the proletariat, at the head of its allies, around a program of national and socialist demands).

This is not just a matter of historical and theoretical questions. Under the sanction of the erroneous concepts embraced by Comrades Sterne, Mandel, and the other leaders of the MMF tendency, sections of the Fourth International which accept these concepts have propagandized in Europe in support of the PRG's "7-point peace plan" and the Vietnam Accords. All other questions aside, it must be noted that these documents openly call for the establishment of a coalition government in South Vietnam. At least up until now, it has been a matter of *principle* in our movement that Trotskyists do not lend their political support in any way whatsoever to the concept that there can be "national reconciliation" between the classes in the colonial and neocolonial countries or that it is in any way whatsoever in the interests of the oppressed masses that coalition governments be established. Today, leading Trotskyists and whole sections of our movement in Europe have been educating the masses in their countries to believe that documents that openly call for class collaboration represent "victories" and the way forward in the struggle of the Indochinese people for national liberation and socialism. What is even worse, these comrades seek to justify their miseducation of the masses on this key problem of revolutionary strategy by explaining that the VCP leadership only *says* it is for class collaboration: once the Americans get out, the VCP intends to break the Accords and resume the struggle for a workers state in South Vietnam. Even if this were true, of course, it would not justify miseducating the masses. It is the *masses* in Vietnam and around the world

who must guarantee the victory of the Indochinese people's struggle. Miseducating them only serves to weaken the struggle in the long run, no matter what short-term gains may seem to be made. Trotskyists have been the firmest upholders of the principle that there is absolutely no substitute for the conscious action of the masses themselves. No "gain" in the class struggle is a gain at all if, instead of arming the masses with a correct understanding, it disorients and miseducates them about what the real state of affairs is and about what to expect next. That is exactly why our movement traces its origins to Trotsky's refusal to rely on the Red Army (armed struggle) to settle the differences within the Bolshevik Party and his insistence that the struggle must be a *political* one first and foremost. It is a dangerous concession to Stalinism in and of itself to believe that the class struggle can be advanced in any way by allowing supposed "tactical" considerations to justify not telling the truth to the masses and urging them to support documents which encourage illusions about class peace through "national reconciliation," "peaceful reunification," etc.

The argument that the VCP is only saying one thing while planning another is wrong on another count. There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that it is true. In fact, the whole weight of its history, contrary to Comrade Sterne, indicates that this is not the case. In the past, the VCP *has* honored its agreements with the imperialists, waiting to act until it was forced to by the fact that the *imperialists* broke the agreements. And while holding back themselves, they have urged the masses to put their faith in the agreements with the imperialists. This has put them in a *weakened* position when the struggle finally, and inevitably, resumed. Sihanouk's recent statements that Peking *and Hanoi* have cut off his supplies in order to keep their bargain under the Accords is an ominous sign. While these statements cannot automatically be taken for good coin, they are completely consistent with the VCP's history (*e.g.*, refusal to support the armed struggle against Diem until 1960). What must be remembered at all times is that the VCP remains committed to the establishment of "noncapitalist," non-socialist governments in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The fact that the PRG itself includes practically no real bourgeois forces does not change this fact. The inclusion of *any* bourgeois forces in the PRG, the limiting of the PRG's *program* to one of radical bourgeois democracy, and the emphasis the VCP places on the importance of "neutralists" in any future Saigon government, constitute confirmations of the VCP's real and oft-stated orientation toward a "neutralist" solution *and constitute bids to the bourgeoisie to reach some kind of accommodation with them*. This is not the kind of political program Trotskyists should be lending their support to or apologizing for. It is our obligation to criticize it and expose it for the reformist dead-end it really is.

How far afield this tendency to conciliate with the Stalinist concepts of the VCP can take one was brought home in a discussion some members of the SWP had with Comrade Sterne last December. At the time the Accords had been made public but not yet signed and we were discussing the question of whether or not Trotskyists should focus their antiwar work around trying to put pressure on the U.S. to sign them. Everyone agreed that if we were to demand that the imperialists sign the Accords,

it would follow that we then demand that they respect them. In this context, it was pointed out to Comrade Sterne that one of the provisions of the Accords was that, through the so-called International Control Commission, Canada and Indonesia, along with Poland and Hungary, were to send troops to Vietnam. Should the Canadian section "demand" that Canada respect the Accords and send its (imperialist) troops to Vietnam? I think the question was asked rhetorically. No one expected that a Trotskyist, and one of our international leaders at that, would hesitate for a moment about whether or not revolutionists should support the sending of imperialist troops to a colonial country no matter what the pretext. But that's just what Comrade Sterne did. He explained that he really wasn't sure and he would have to think about it! In his document Comrade Sterne indicates that he is now clear on this question — and his position is exactly what it should be. But the very fact that he felt that this was something he would "have to think about" seems to me to indicate how disoriented Trotskyists can become when they begin adapting themselves to the Stalinist leadership of the VCP and to Stalinist concepts in general.

The conciliation with Stalinist concepts is not only relevant to the Vietnam debate within our movement. It bears, as well, on the Latin American debate. The concept of "rural guerrilla warfare" "for a prolonged period," which was the axis of the Latin American resolution at the last world congress, was, from a theoretical point of view, a concession to the Stalinist concept of "people's war." The PRT(C)'s ideological evolution is in no small part attributable to the fact that they have embraced the "theory" of "people's war" even more thoroughly and consistently than Comrade Sterne. This is not to imply that the Latin American document at the last world congress was not also a concession to the ultraleft guerrillaist sympathies of the "new mass vanguard." It was both. It is another illustration that ultraleftism and opportunism are two sides of the same coin. In fact, Comrade Sterne really makes the same mistake as the "new mass vanguard" in his adaptation to the Stalinism of the VCP. Rather than begin with a *social* analysis of the VCP and an objective

examination of its political program and what social interests that program is designed to serve, many newly radicalized youth tend to view the VCP subjectively: if it is fighting U.S. imperialism arms in hand it *must* be revolutionary, especially if it uses a lot of militant sounding rhetoric. The fact that Comrade Sterne uses "Trotskyist" rhetoric does not change the fact that he essentially holds this same subjective point of view, albeit in a somewhat more sophisticated form. Comrade Sterne is picking up where Comrades Mandel, Maitan and Frank left off on China. And with his support to the PRG 7-point peace plan and the Vietnam Accords, he is taking the logic of their position one step further. It has gone too far already.

Conciliation with Stalinism, even if it is the vogue among the "new mass vanguard," spells nothing but disaster for the Trotskyist movement. The SWP and the entire Fourth International must reject the line put forward by Comrade Sterne, and apparently supported by the MMF tendency internationally, and reaffirm the Trotskyist position on the questions he raises. Stalinism is the political program, and the practice which is derived from it, that serves the needs of a privileged bureaucracy in a deformed or degenerated workers state. This bureaucracy monopolizes state power in order to protect its own interests as against those of the workers and their allies in its own country and around the world. Stalinist parties are perfectly capable of using armed struggle — if the needs of the bureaucracy they serve demand it. Under exceptional circumstances they are even capable of taking state power. This does not mean that they cease to be Stalinist but rather that the bureaucratic interests they serve shift — from the orbit of whatever ruling bureaucracy they *were* serving to defense of *their own* state apparatus designed to protect *their own* privileged position. The VCP is a Stalinist party of exactly this type. Trotskyists place absolutely no political confidence whatsoever in it. We expose its phony "leftism" and counterpose to its reformist theories of "two-stage" revolution and "socialism in one country" the concepts of permanent revolution and world revolution.

July 23, 1973

WHEN YOU CUT POLITICAL CORNERS YOU CUT A PARTY'S THROAT

by Russell Block, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local
and Michael Smith, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

One can't tell precisely what the meaning of "the new mass vanguard" is by examining what is written within the four corners of the document "Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe." One must look outside of it. Tony Thomas, speaking as a member of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency, viewed the term as including Maoists, semi-Maoists, semi-Trotskyists, anarcho-spontaneists, and others. In opposition to this characterization Bob Langston, a supporter of the European document, used the phrase in such a way as to make "the new mass vanguard" tantamount to "the new radicalization." What does

the document really mean by the new mass vanguard? And what should our orientation be towards it? Our experience with the Students for a Democratic Society answers both these questions. Further, we believe an understanding of this experience would be helpful in reversing an erroneous political course undertaken by the European leaderships.

The SDS phenomena is not dissimilar to the European situation. Both have their roots in the post WWII needs of neocapitalism and the alienation of youth in these societies — as Mandel has so well articulated.

What was the American Trotskyist attitude towards SDS? We viewed them as their politics unfolded and their organization grew in numbers and influence in the late 1960's as an *opponent formation*. We viewed them as an obstacle to the development of radicalizing youth along Marxist lines.

SDS was made up of a rainbow of political tendencies, as is the European "vanguard." In SDS one could find Maoists, semi-Maoists, new leftists, and even anarchists.

The only right thing this melange did, and this was before their politics spread out, was call the April 1965 antiwar march on Washington. After that until their demise in 1969 they *never* on their national leadership level supported antiwar mobilizations on a nonexclusive basis demanding immediate withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Indeed, Paul Booth, an SDS leader, said in his speech to the 20,000 demonstrators in Washington in 1965 that the American people would never relate to an antiwar movement and SDS should do other things.

His method was different than ours. We're not impressionists. And we don't sway under the pressure of the surface appearance of things—or other political groups. We understood that it was objectively in the interests of American workers and their allies that American imperialism be defeated in Vietnam. We proceed from there to organize towards that objective. We remained unfazed by the pressures of this new vanguard.

While SDS wasn't the only game in town, it certainly was the biggest. At one point they could get more people to a single meeting on campus than the YSA had in its entire membership. But SDS was not synonymous with "the new radicalization." The "new radicalization" was, and *is*, much broader, both in the U. S. and Europe. The "new mass vanguard" in Europe is not identical to the youth radicalization, but just one variegated expression of it.

Besides being wrong on the centrality of the antiwar movement for the U. S. and world politics, SDS suffered other infirmities. It was at one point antinationalist, it was anti-Marxist, and then it turned into a caricature, a Maoist caricature, of Marxism. It was also a bureaucratic organization, in spite of its name.

So we viewed SDS, when it had become large but nevertheless heterogeneous politically, encompassing various tendencies, as an opponent and an obstacle. Our task was to reverse their political influence and, of course, win the best of their adherents (they did not lack for talent) to Trotskyism. That is, to the YSA.

We did this. How? It is well worth examining our experience because it illuminates the errors—both political and organizational—which we believe are occurring now in Europe. The European comrades unfortunately misunderstood our orientation towards SDS just as they now have taken as incorrect orientation towards what they define as "the new mass vanguard."

We did not try to *transform* SDS, participating in it as members and taking political responsibility for its decisions. The then Maoist Progressive Labor Party tried this tactic and drowned in the swamp. We stayed organizationally apart—and politically apart. Our focus of activity was in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. We helped organize, staff, and build the Student Mobilization Committee. SDS abdicated the antiwar field and the SMC received wide support. It became the left wing of the anti-

war movement and gave us a lot of leverage in the antiwar movement vis-a-vis the Stalinists and ultralefts of all varieties.

The YSA propagandized for revolutionary socialism—and that for us means Trotskyism, nothing else. We educated people on imperialism, the permanent revolution in Vietnam, and the need for a socialist transformation of America. In doing so we built the YSA and the SWP *without giving an inch politically*. We found that we didn't have to join SDS, or more importantly, orient towards their concerns, to influence their membership. Rather, we oriented towards the objective needs and concerns of the American people, including the youth. Because of our principled political activity, many youths who went through the SDS experience were attracted to Trotskyism.

If we read the European leadership's document as defining the "new mass vanguard" as the various "semi-Maoist," "semi-Trotskyist," etc., groups and sympathetic individuals, then the correct view is classifying them as developing radicals, at best, opponents at worst.

Our goal should be to defeat them politically and in the process win those we can to the politics of Trotskyism. One would think that a Trotskyist youth organization would be an absolutely necessary organizational vehicle to facilitate this. Trotsky and Lenin did. Every generation, Trotsky wrote, must find its own way to socialism. What better way is there than a socialist youth organization where young people can test their mettle, and in turn be tested by the professional revolutionary party. Moreover, the leverage such a youth group can assert against our opponents has been demonstrated by the activity of the YSA in the antiwar movement, where its political influence far exceeded the number of its cadre. Unhappily the Trotskyist youth organizations have been consciously liquidated by most of the European sections. Thus they have given up a powerful ally in the fight against our opponents while at the same time foresaking a recruiting arena which has proven demonstratively rich. Study circles are no substitute for a serious, self-organized youth group.

The French comrades have expressed the view that in effect a Trotskyist youth group would be *too* successful, too large, and too demanding in its requirements on the cadre of the League. They further argue that to confront the Stalinists at the workplace is the thing that has to be done and that's where the cadre ought to be. Without disparaging the work that goes on in the plants by our comrades one must ask: Indeed, couldn't the Stalinists be dealt heavy blows with the leverage a youth group provides? The struggle over the Debré laws and Fontaine decree proves this. This was a manifestation of the broad youth radicalization. Had the French comrades anticipated the possibility of such a struggle breaking out, which they did not (they predicted a downturn in the youth radicalization and dissolved their youth group,) it is hard not to conclude that they would have made greater gains out of the struggle. We would have had an organization to which to recruit and consolidate cadre.

But the European leadership has a different and dangerous conception. Rather than painstakingly building a party of Leninist cadre they tell us that the exigencies of the moment preclude this, and instead they must go about constructing an *adequate instrument*. This we think has led willy-nilly to unsupportable political positions and

a vast miseducation of the cadre of the European sections. We will cite Irish work (a prerevolutionary situation in Europe which, to our bewilderment, gets short shrift in their document) and their position on how to best support the Vietnamese.

The citations are from *Rood*, the Flemish weekly of the Belgian section. The articles illustrate where the orientation toward "the new mass vanguard" leads politically. We should point out that these articles, while particularly pointed, are also quite typical, i.e., they are not political aberrations or editorial oversights. Numerous other examples could have been provided.

The first article is by Harry Mol in the December 21, 1972 issue of *Rood*. We cite the part devoted to an evaluation of the Official and Provisional wings of the IRA.

The Provos

The program of the Provos certainly does not go beyond "bourgeois nationalism." The demands are those of the bourgeois revolution. But here we are in the midst of a process of *permanent revolution*. For who is willing to fight for demands like national unity and economic independence? Certainly not the Irish bourgeoisie that fought its national struggle half a century ago and only strengthened its ties with British imperialism. Result: The Provos are forced to rely solely on the workers and poor farmers, and themselves come into conflict with the Irish bourgeoisie. Even though they have fostered the illusion that they can have this bourgeoisie as an ally, the latest anti-IRA laws make it immediately clear which side the bourgeoisie is on.

The whole problem is then whether the Provos will succeed in transforming their program in accordance with the interests of the masses. The juxtaposition between their program and class relations creates a stimulus for an evolution to the left, although this evolution is not certain, and now as before the influence of right-wing anti-communist elements is not to be underestimated. Yet there is already a noticeable evolution: a year ago the Provo's paper repeatedly spoke contemptuously about Marxism, now a whole different approach is being carried out by the responsible editors who make no secret of the fact that the Provos most important political support comes from the revolutionary groups. . . .

The Officials

Before the split in the Republican movement in 1971, the "Marxist wing" already had the leadership of the Sinn Fein. They were the ones who stimulated the campaign for Civil Rights in the North and brought the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association into being. They counterposed the mass movement to the failure of the previous bombing campaign (1956-1962). But according to their conception the mass movement must be pitched to immediate demands (civil rights). The activism of the Provos has obliged them to place importance on military questions as well. But at the first convenient opportunity they called for a cease fire, which they continue to honor to the present time. In actuality they counterpose mass action to military action, but it is for this reason that they have not been able to supply answers to the offensive of British imperialism and that the Provos could dispute the leadership with them. It is, perhaps, for this reason

that their position on the Provos has much in common with a psychosis.

The article also seeks to define a revolutionary attitude toward terrorism: "Revolutionaries do not condemn terrorism as a technique. They do condemn the kind of terrorism that is divorced from the masses and thus increases the gap between the militants and the masses."

What then is the relationship between "the bombs and the masses" as far as the Provisional wing of the IRA is concerned?

"Through attacks on the occupation army the IRA was in a position to take the leadership of the Catholic ghettos out of the hands of the compromisers. The IRA had two clear objectives with its bombing campaign: 1) Striking at trade in the major centers thereby putting pressure on the British regime. . . ." 2) Defending the ghettos . . . against the brutality of the occupying troops." But the article continues: "There are also negative aspects to this campaign, negative sides that to a great extent are to be attributed to *numerous accidents caused by insufficient familiarity with explosives*" (!) (emphasis added).

There are a number of revealing aspects to this article. First of all as Mol correctly points out the juxtaposition of a bourgeois nationalist program and the real class relations in Ireland does provide an impetus for an evolution to the left. But isn't this precisely what happened to the IRA as a whole during the Sixties? Wasn't it the realization that the Irish revolutionaries would have to look to Irish workers and small farmers as their sole base of support, etc., wasn't it these correct conclusions drawn from the struggle under the conditions of permanent revolution that brought the Marxists into the leadership of the IRA before the split? And who then are the Provisionals? Precisely those who *rejected* the lessons of permanent revolution, who split from the official IRA and mounted a red-baiting campaign against it for pointing out the simple facts of the revolutionary process in the modern epoch.

Will the Provisionals learn from further experience? Let's hope so. But it is by no means a foregone conclusion. What is Mol's cautious optimism based on? Apparently in the last year certain leaders of the Provisionals have toned down their attacks on Marxism because they remember that "the Provos most important political support comes from the revolutionary [i.e. Marxist] groups."

This says more about Mol's approach than it does about what is going on among the Provisionals. If we read this in the light of the letter to the PRT by Ernest, Livio, et al. (*IIDB*, Vol. 10 No. 7, June 1973) a clear methodology emerges. The idea is to find the real militants as defined by their military rather than political armaments. Then you give them praise and support, refrain from criticizing their mistakes, win their confidence by bending to their errors, and when they're convinced that you're not so bad, you can talk some politics to them, explain about anticommunism in the revolutionary movement or the *unlikelihood* of a fifth International with Albania and China. We have already seen the futility of such tactics by the fate of the "revolutionary" groups that tried to orient toward the interests of the "vanguard" in SDS.

Interestingly enough, in a later section of the article (not reproduced here) Mol has many criticisms of the mistakes made by the Officials. But he does not point up the

pressure of "permanent revolution" as a possible corrective influence. Why not? Because "at the first convenient opportunity [the Officials] called for a cease fire," while the Provos continue to relate "bombs" to the "masses."

The comments on this relationship between "bombs and the masses" seem to be a conscious attempt to confuse the armed self-defense of the Catholic ghetto against the British occupying troops and the bombing of department stores, Protestant pubs, and other public places, "terrorism that is divorced from the masses," which can have no other effect than to "increase the gap between the militants and the masses."

Mol correctly exposes the cynical hypocrisy of the bourgeois press, which tries to portray the Provos as "mindless terrorists." He points out that most of the casualties are caused by the actions of the British occupying troops, etc. But the only criticism he raises of the bombing tactic itself is a technical one—"the negative sides . . . to a great extent are to be attributed to numerous accidents caused by insufficient familiarity with explosives."

In the long run, insufficient familiarity with politics can have much more baneful effects. The Russian SR's, who proved their mettle by their willingness to shoot Czarist officials before the revolution, also shot Lenin after the revolution because (among other reasons) he arranged a cease fire with the Germans "at the first convenient opportunity."

Ho Chi Minh

The effort to "get close to the new mass vanguard" by adapting to its prejudices is exemplified in an article in the August 20, 1970, issue of *Rood* commenting on the death of Ho Chi Minh. We quote the text in full:

Ho Chi Minh — A Great Revolutionary

Revolutionaries all over the world are in mourning over the death of president Ho Chi Minh, the man affectionately referred to as "uncle" by millions of people in Asia. In him they are honoring the tireless fighter for the emancipation of the colonial peoples, the founder of the "League of Colonial Countries" and its journal "Le Paria."

They also honor him as a founder of the Communist Party of France—Nguyen Ai Quoc, who took part in the Tours congress in 1920 and continuously reminded revolutionaries in the imperialist mother land that it was their duty to show solidarity with the colonial revolution.

Ho Chi Minh was also the man who in 1930 united three communist groups into a single Vietnamese CP (among them his own group that had held that the formation of a Communist party was premature a year earlier). For many years as a Communist he was the man most hounded by all the political police agencies of Asia.

After the Second World War he became the symbol of the resistance of the Vietnamese people to the will of the government and the French colonialists who had ceded Indochina to Japan in 1940 and were then attempting to reestablish their rule. At the head of the resistance, during the long war he proved capable of skillfully exploiting the differences among his opponents.

At first, Stalin and the French CP urged the Vietnamese Communists to follow a cautious political line that was determined by the concern of Soviet diplomacy to prevent

the installation of American imperialism in Indochina. Real independence was considered an illusion and the Kremlin chose the domination of French imperialism, which was weaker, above that of American imperialism. For this reason Ho Chi Minh dissolved his party toward the end of 1945. But in actual fact it remained in existence under the name of "Marxist Study Group." For the same reason, the Vietnamese Communists excluded other revolutionaries, among them the Trotskyists with whom they had concluded a united front agreement in the years 1933-1937. The expeditionary force sent out by de Gaulle under the command of Admiral d'Argenlieu in order to attempt to completely reestablish French sovereignty regarded the March 1946 accords that had been concluded with Ho Chi Minh as completely void.

Despite lack of support from the French CP (at no time did the Communist ministers in the government refuse to vote war credits. Ministerial solidarity!) Ho Chi Minh was able to lead his comrades and his people to victory. At that time the United States was too preoccupied with "consolidating" the power of Chiang Kai-shek and enslaving Japan to aid France directly in its attempt to conquer Indochina. And when the U.S. actively intervened, it was too late.

Later Ho Chi Minh symbolized the resistance of his people, the vanguard of the world revolution, against American imperialism.

His silence over the conflict between the "great" socialist countries was a reproach directed against them because they refused to set aside their differences and unite in defense of Vietnam, the outpost of socialist revolution. And it was clearly felt as such both in Moscow and Peking.

Ho Chi Minh will continue to be honored as the man who brought Lenin's message to the peoples of Asia. [Excerpts from Ho Chi Minh's testament follow]

The bending to Stalinism in this article is so obvious that it hardly requires comment. What is important to note is that it is capitulation by a round about route—by adapting to the illusions of those in the "new mass vanguard" who substitute hero-worship for politics. They are the ones who honor Ho Chi Minh as "the tireless fighter for the emancipation of the colonial peoples," the symbol of "the resistance of his people . . . against American imperialism," etc. They are also the ones who honor Mao as the leader of the Great Chinese Revolution in a similarly uncritical fashion.

"Victory to the NLF"

Another example of the technique of educating the vanguard by adapting to its political mistakes is exemplified by the policy of raising the slogan "Victory to the NLF" in antiwar activities alongside the transitional program type demands on the U.S. government, such as "Out Now," "Bring the Troops Home Now," and the like. No one either here or in Europe has suggested that "Victory to the NLF" should have been the principal slogan. Such a course of action would have made it impossible to build an effective antiwar movement in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. The idea is to adopt the slogan "Victory to the NLF" in order to get close to the members of the new mass vanguard who raise this slogan themselves so that we can talk politics to them. Let us pass over for a mo-

ment the fact that this slogan is politically unprincipled — i.e., we support the victory of the Vietnamese revolution, not the Stalinist leadership of the NLF, and, in fact, we have grave doubts about the willingness and ability of the Vietnamese Stalinists to lead the revolution to a successful conclusion. Let us concentrate for the moment on the tactical question.

If we adopted this two-level approach and marched under a banner with the slogan "Victory to the NLF," and if fact ultralefts came around our banner and we had the chance to talk politics to them—we would be faced with an immediate contradiction—i.e., the first thing we would have to explain to them is that they were marching under the wrong banner. We would have to tell them that they should be marching under the "Out Now" banner. We would have to explain about the Transitional Program, mass extra-parliamentary action as a class struggle method of building and manifesting antiwar sentiment among the American people, etc.

In order to overcome this contradiction, the comrades in Europe and their American supporters are forced to invent an independent justification for this slogan outside the Transitional Program. This justification is succinctly stated by Comrades Mintoff and Sonja of the GIM who characterize Victory to the NLF as "a slogan that . . . is not a demand directed towards anyone, but rather a declaration of solidarity aimed at raising the consciousness of the masses participating in the solidarity actions beyond the level of mere moral protest." (*Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 3 in 1973, p. 10)

Let us note in passing the depreciation of "mere moral protest." In our opinion a generalized unwillingness to kill or die in capitalist wars is a very important positive development, especially when compared to the generalized social-patriotism of WWI and WWII, and the almost total lack of concern for the Koreans as victims of U.S. aggression during the unpopular Korean War. The implication is that *real* anticapitalist sentiment is something esoteric rooted in a high level of "anti-imperialist" consciousness rather than in a gut reaction against the unpleasant reality that capitalism is out to kill you or someone you care about. This idealist conception leads to a similar depreciation of national oppression, sexual oppression, ecology, and "consumerism." It counterposes the consciousness of the "vanguard" to the consciousness of the masses who are beginning to see that capitalism thwarts them at every turn, ruins their lives, and crushes their hopes and ambitions. Our task is to intervene whenever possible in the movements growing up around this basic protest and give them political direction by applying the method of the Transitional Program, not to treat them with the self-satisfied sneers of those who have passed beyond "mere moral protest."

But there is another question involved. The comrades claim that introducing the slogan "Victory to the NLF" has a consciousness raising effect on the masses. This is otherwise characterized as "bringing politics to the masses while they are in motion." Mintoff and Sonja compare the size of the European demonstrations against South Vietnamese President Thieu—"tens of thousands in Italy and more than 6,000 in Bonn!"—to those in the U.S., "sorry crowds of only a few hundred anti-imperialist demonstra-

tors." (Ibid.) The sole reason stated for this disparity is that the sections of the F. I. in Europe "in contrast to the SWP, did not neglect to introduce into the spontaneous movement an element that was not present at first—the consciousness of *unconditional solidarity with the Indochinese revolutionists*. . . ." (original emphasis).

How well does this contention stand up under examination? True enough the SWP did not introduce the "consciousness raising" slogan "Victory to the NLF" into the mass movement. But there were many among the "new mass vanguard" who did. These young "anti-imperialist" militants came to the demonstrations with their banners, NLF flags, and chants. They distributed their leaflets, sold their press, and were even invited to speak at the rallies when they agreed not to attempt to break them up. Why didn't the slogans "Victory to the NLF" or "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is going to win" exercise their miracle-working effects in the U.S.? Could it be that the Moscow and Peking summits convinced the war weary American people that peace was at hand, or that at least it was out of their hands, being worked out at the summit in China and the Soviet Union? Could it be that the Vietnamese leadership's declaration that the accords meant a settlement to the war rather than a necessary tactical retreat by revolutionaries under fire had something to do with the demoralization of the American antiwar movement? Perhaps the general atmosphere of militancy in Italy and Germany around many issues had something to do with the ability to mobilize around Thieu's visit as well.

We should ask too, just what kind of consciousness does the slogan "Victory to the NLF" bring to the masses in motion? First of all we are obliged to admit a certain practical equivalency between "Victory to the NLF" and "Out Now"—i.e., if the U.S. government were forced to withdraw all of its forces, the NLF would in fact *win*. (and under conditions highly favorable for the completion of the Vietnamese revolution). The difference between the two slogans is that it is possible to build mass antiwar movement around immediate withdrawal demands and force the U.S. government out of Vietnam, while it is impossible to build any effective movement around a "declaration of solidarity." Why then should certain tendencies in the new mass vanguard choose a slogan that has no possibility of bringing about the desired result over one that has at least a good possibility of success? The answer lies in differing estimations of the possibilities for a mass movement. The Victory to the NLF contingents did not believe that the masses could be convinced and mobilized so they made no efforts to do so. Instead they substituted sentimental identification with the Vietnamese revolutionaries for appeals to the American masses. For them the slogan "Victory to the NLF" was an expression of rage and defiance against the American people as a whole, whom they mistakenly held responsible for the aggression against the Vietnamese.

Did we turn our backs on these young militants as the International Tendency charges? Quite the contrary. By participating in discussions, meetings, and demonstrations with them and clearly counterposing our positive political line to their expressions of desperation, we were able to win many of these militants away from existentialism to rev-

olutionary socialism. Many of these people identified with SDS. If we had not posed a clear alternative, we would have not only made fewer gains in this respect, but would have ended recruiting ourselves to their line, as happened in Europe (see below).

"Anti-imperialist" Consciousness

What about the claim that, despite their shortcomings, these militants of the new mass vanguard possess a higher "anti-imperialist" consciousness that will be decisive in the further development of the radicalization? We must reject this claim as well. When the cease fire accords were signed in January 1973, the public in general was skeptical and unenthusiastic. The only people who celebrated and declared a great victory for the Vietnamese were those very elements of the "new mass vanguard" who had been calling for Victory to the NLF. They based their position on the statements of the Vietnamese leadership rather than any analysis of the real situation. In this respect their consciousness was well below that of the average non-anti-imperialist antiwar activist.

It was the SWP that vigorously propagandized against the idea that peace terms imposed by U. S. military might on the Vietnamese revolutionaries could be a basis of a settlement in Indochina. This stands out in sharp contrast to the practice of some of the European sections of the F. I., which went part of the way with the "new mass vanguard" and raised the demand "Sign the Accords."

Back to the Maximalist-minimalist Program

The most disturbing aspect of the orientation toward the "new mass vanguard" is the accompanying tendency to abandon the Transitional Program in favor of maximal-minimal approaches. The dicotomy emerges around mass demands versus vanguard demands. "Out Now" for the masses, "Victory to the NLF" for the vanguard. As indicated by the evolution of the IMG the "mass demands" are left further and further behind as the revolutionary party concentrates on the vanguard. Thus, the IMG does not raise demands on two levels for the Irish struggle. They concentrate on "Victory to the IRA" and leave "Bring the Troops Home Now" for the "reformists." Theoretical justification for this approach is given in the IMG-Spartacus fusion document (appendix 2) where we are told that the revolutionary party does not attempt to mobilize the masses outside of a prerevolutionary situation.

This is the rationale for bringing up so-called "class demands" or *real* transitional demands rather than democratic demands that can mobilize the masses. The insistence on introducing the idea of taking power into all our propaganda, the glorification of armed struggle—the final stage in the revolutionary process—even where it appears as a caricature of real revolutionary armed struggle (Provos, PRT) are further examples of this maximalist approach, as is the exclusive identification of "nationalist sentiment" with its final stage—the desire for a separate state.

Generally, in discussing the Social Democratic program we concentrate our attention on the minimal reform part which displaced the maximal program (for seizure of power and socialist reconstruction of society) in the day-to-day practice of Social Democracy. But the other side

of the coin, which showed its face in the years immediately following WWI, is important too. At that time many honest revolutionaries who were disgusted by the reformist bankruptcy of the Social Democracy concluded *not* that a transitional program was necessary to bridge the gap between reform and revolution, but that the wrong half of the polar maximal-minimal program had been emphasized. They became maximalist. Lenin polemicized against this conception in his pamphlet *Left-wing Communism — an Infantile Disorder*.

The Source of Maximalism

Maximalism grew out of the aura of impending revolution following the Bolshevik revolution and the revolutionary upheavals in Germany, Italy, and Central Europe at the end of WWI. It seemed as if the issue of taking power was on the agenda and such things as elections and democratic reforms were mere diversions. Lenin and Trotsky considered the ultraleft tendency to be a "childhood illness" (*detskaya bol'ezn*) of the young Third International and sought to bring about a cure.

The May-June events in France in 1968 created a similar aura of impending revolution. The largest general strike in history, repleat with factory occupations, partial workers' control over production, transport, and communications failed to develop into a full-blown revolution because of the treachery of the minimalist minded Stalinist and Social Democratic leadership. Affected by this taste of revolution, the Communist League later ran an election campaign around the necessity for taking power and the fraud of bourgeois electoralism. Mandel, Maitan and Frank's prediction of *la lutte finale* within four to six years, and frenzied efforts to collect cadre from the already politicalized mass vanguard are a result of the F. I.'s bout with the childhood illness of ultraleftism. It is easy to see how the disease could spread to other young and inexperienced sections of the F. I. in Europe. But what about the situation in the U. S.?

Maximalism in Capitalist America

The situation in the U. S. is quite different. We greeted May-June as a striking and long-awaited confirmation of our arguments against the New Left theoreticians who denied the revolutionary potential of the working class in the advanced industrial countries. But nevertheless the American working class has remained relatively quiescent (with the notable exception of the Farm Workers) and politically backward. What then is the impetus for such absurd suggestions as—we should make the necessity of the workers' taking power through armed struggle a central focus of our election campaigns? This in a country where the workers in general do not even understand the need for their own political party!

Certainly no one in the SWP will take this suggestion seriously anymore than we will take seriously the claim that the SWP calls for a women's party or any other of the numerous slanders and distortions of the party's positions contained in the document, "based on the European method," as its authors state, entitled *Building a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America*. It is likely that the Internationalist Tendency does not take this document seriously either. It pretends to be a counterproposal for

orienting the SWP's practical work for the next two years, but it is written for international, not local, consumption.

Cothinkers in Europe, Japan, and Latin America who are unfamiliar with the SWP's real positions and have little first-hand knowledge of the political climate in "capitalist America" may be taken in. This document is nothing more than an attempt to feed the factional dispute in the Inter-

national and the international disagreements as a club against the party and its leadership.

In discussing the issues with international cothinkers we must make a distinction between their sincere if mistaken views and the factional opportunism of our own "International Tendency."

July 23, 1973

SOME REMARKS ON AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

by Tom Quinn, Washington, D. C., Branch

The following is an excerpt from a report given by myself to the D. C. branch on the document, *The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America*, the political counterresolution submitted by the Internationalist Tendency. I have revised by remarks somewhat for publication in the Discussion Bulletin.

Any analysis of the present situation in the U. S. and the tasks that it poses for our party must be placed within the context of an overall assessment of the crisis of world capitalism and the unfolding of the class struggle on an international scale. This is fundamental for us as internationalists as both the capitalist system and the class struggle are international in character necessitating a unified world conception and an international organization based on that analysis from which to build the movement in each country. While certain national peculiarities exist, to be sure, the class struggle in each country and the revolutionary organizations that exist there must be subordinate to the needs of the class struggle on a world scale and the international party—the Fourth International—as the part is subordinate to the whole.

Contrary to the expectations of Trotsky and Cannon who expected the second world war to usher in a period of acute crisis and profound decline for the capitalist system, the end of World War II heralded in the greatest period of growth and expansion in the history of the capitalist system. Instead of witnessing the economic collapse in 6 months to 2 years that Cannon predicted in 1946 in the *American Theses*, the international capitalist system was able to stabilize itself and greatly revolutionize the means of production in the Third Industrial Revolution (that Comrade Mandel has analyzed). This was the result of a number of factors, the first and foremost being the betrayal of the European revolution by the Stalinists in 1945-46. Had the revolution been successful in France and Italy, world history would have taken a different course to say the least. However, the deflecting of the revolutionary upsurge in W. Europe gave the bourgeoisie the necessary breathing space it needed to get its bearings on the situation. The second factor is tied in with the first. U. S. imperialism was able to survive and grow by expanding into the markets of W. Europe and Asia gained as a result of the war; again the cooperation of Stalinism was necessary to try and prevent losing these markets to revolution. This meant that (thirdly) the U. S. as the

only power unscathed by the war was able to reconstruct and preserve the international capitalist system under its aegis. This restabilization under the undisputed supremacy of the U. S. took the form of: (1) The Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944 which restructured the world monetary system around the dollar, which was viewed as "good as gold." (2) The reduction of capitalist Europe and Japan to a secondary status to the U. S. which dominated them economically and militarily-politically. (3) The passivity of the U. S. and European proletariats through their conservatism through certain economic concessions the bourgeoisie was able to grant.

This period of boom which lasted for almost twenty-five years has now come to a definitive end. World capitalism has entered upon a period of decline and crisis. U. S. domination of the world market has been shattered by the rise of European and Japanese imperialisms, ushering in a new period of interimperialist rivalry which borders on breaking out into a devastating trade war. The international economic stability maintained through the Bretton Woods Agreement and the International Monetary Fund has come to an end with the rampant inflation which has racked the currencies, most importantly the dollar, which is the standard against which all the currencies were pegged. Nixon's August 15, 1971, decision to suspend the convertibility of the dollar into gold together with the collapse of the December 1971 Smithsonian monetary agreement and the subsequent devaluations of the dollar have effectively destroyed the Bretton Woods Agreement and the IMF leaving the international monetary system in a state of complete chaos.

This turn in the economic situation destroyed the relative class peace which characterized the boom in the advanced countries. The turn in the economic situation has undercut the ability of the bourgeoisie to grant the proletariat new concessions and has in fact forced it to try and rescind a whole series of gains the working class had already won. Hence you have the rise of "incomes policies," pay boards, cuts in social welfare programs coupled with speedup and layoff at the plant level. This has resulted in the beginning of a new radicalization of the working class in the advanced countries, one which was initially seen in the rise of trade-union militancy and combativity. While this radicalization is well under way in capitalist Europe it has just begin to surface in the U. S. in the last two years. While the initial stirrings could be seen as long

ago as 1970 with the GE and postal strikes, it has been extended in the last two years to embrace a whole new but still relatively small layer of militant workers. The recent rise in the class struggle which has been reflected through trade-union militancy can be seen in a number of examples: the auto strikes at Lordstown and Norwood; the Norristown construction workers march against the open shop; the Philadelphia teachers strike which nearly became a general strike; the struggle of the UFW; and the list goes on. Yet all of this will pass the party by if the line of the present leadership of the party is reaffirmed. Instead of proposing a bold policy of intervention in the class, the present leadership calls for the continuation of uncritical tailending of the peripheral movements that arose in the '60s as the main orientation. This policy must be reversed.

Both Lenin and Trotsky have taught us that the struggles of other oppressed sectors in society must become subordinate to and integrated with the struggle of the working class; that the working class must become the champion and leader of these struggles. The role of the party in this regard is twofold: Firstly, the party must intervene in and fight in the class for a consciousness of the need for it to provide this leadership. The party must fight to transcend the trade-union consciousness of the working class with a more developed higher consciousness of its general political tasks in society as a whole. This theme runs throughout *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin's polemic against the economists and their tailending trade unionism and worship of spontaneity:

"Is it true that, in general, the economic struggle is the most 'widely applicable' means of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is entirely untrue. *Any and every* manifestation of police tyranny and autocratic outrage, not only in connection with the economic struggle, is not one whit less 'widely applicable' as a means of 'drawing in' the masses. The rural superintendents and the flogging of peasants, the corruption of the officials and the police treatment of the 'common people' in the cities, the fight against the famine stricken and the popular strivings towards enlightenment and knowledge, the extortion of taxes and the persecution of the religious sects, the humiliating treatment of soldiers and the barrack methods in the treatment of students and liberal intellectuals do all these and a thousand other similar manifestations of tyranny, though not directly connected with the 'economic' struggle, represent, in general, *less* 'widely applicable' means and occasions for political agitation and for drawing the masses into the political struggle? The very opposite is true" (p. 58-9, New World Paperback edition, Lenin's emphasis).

And again this idea was expressed most succinctly in the following, again from *What Is To Be Done?*:

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse no matter *what class* is affected unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social Democratic point of view and no other" (p. 69, Lenin's emphasis).

The second component of this conception of the role of the party is that the party must intervene in the oppressed layers peripheral to the class posing the need for

these groups to link up their struggles with that of the working class and to look for leadership to the proletariat, as the only creative class in society, as the only class with the social power and weight to smash the bourgeois state, overthrow capitalist property relations and abolish the specific oppression of these groups. Once again we can turn to *What Is To Be Done?* for Lenin's views which were along this line:

"But if 'we' desire to be front rank democrats, we must make it our concern to *direct* the thoughts of those who are dissatisfied only with conditions at the university, or in the Zemstvo, etc. to the idea that the whole political system is worthless. *We* must take upon ourselves the task of organising an all round political struggle under the leadership of *our* party in such a manner as to make it possible for all oppositional strata to render their fullest support to the struggle and to our party" (p. 85, Lenin's emphasis).

Throughout the writings of Lenin and Trotsky the need and imperative of the proletariat extending the class struggle to the exploited rural and urban petty bourgeoisie is stressed. These sectors must come to see the proletariat as their leader and only salvation. There is no independent movement of the petty bourgeoisie that in the long term does not have anything but a reactionary character. This is the lesson of all of Trotsky's writings on the rise of fascism.

So we have a dialectical interrelationship of two factors when looking at this matter. On the one hand the party must strive to transcend the bourgeois trade-union consciousness of the workers with a revolutionary consciousness of their general political tasks in society as a whole and the need to champion the cause of all the oppressed; and on the other hand the party must seek to give direction to the movements outside the class, linking these movements to the movement of the class and making them view the class as their leader and champion.

This relationship between the class and its periphery remained to a great degree suspended throughout most of the boom period. While the working class remained relatively politically passive and conservatized during this period due to the rise in its standard of living that it was able to gain in this period, peripheral sectors to the class were not as socially secure or privileged and were thus not as politically passive or conservative. This was the result of: (1) These groups did not have the paycheck reformism of the working class. That is the ability through trade-union action to raise income to the extent that can even slightly offset inflation much less achieve any real increase in the standard of living. (2) The fact that the boom and the rise in the standard of living was mainly confined to "luxury" consumer goods. The overriding problems of health, education and housing were only dealt with to a minimal extent. Sectors peripheral to the class were again hardest hit by this. The rise of the women's movement is to a certain extent due to this factor. Also the student movement, particularly the high school struggles, stemmed in part from this factor. Also key to the student movement was the ideological crisis of the bourgeoisie, that is the contradiction between the ideology expounded by the schools and the universities and the realities of imperialism, which were first perceiv-

able in the academic and intellectual circles. While these groups were becoming militant and combative, they did not see that their particular oppression could be ended only by the action of the working class in overthrowing capitalism. That is they had a view of their position in the general struggle of society which did not see the primacy of the working class in that struggle. This was due again to the conservatism and passivity of the class which to a great extent saw itself at peace with the system. While the specific oppression of the various peripheral groups to the class laid the basis for an individual molecular radicalization of these sectors, and this radicalization will continue and be deepened, it was the conservatism and passivity of the class that laid the basis of autonomous political movements among these sectors, most of which got their inspiration from the struggles of the Third World peoples explicitly or implicitly rejecting the centrality and revolutionary potential of the proletariat. The rise of the theories of Marcuse and Mills are the most explicit ideological expressions of this.

The decline of the peripheral movements: the women's, Black and most significantly the student movement, which the Political Committee draft resolution seems embarrassed by and at a loss to explain grasping at the most weak and superficial straws (like for instance the negative impact of terrorists and agents provocateurs) is the result precisely of the breakup of the old social relations of the boom period. The new rise of the working class in the advanced countries including the U. S. has eliminated the objective basis for these movements. That is not to say that a conservatism has set in among these layers, quite the contrary, the individual molecular radicalization of these layers in continuing and deepening. While certain struggles in these milieus around issues that affect them may erupt particularly in the student arena, these will take the form of short-term upsurges around local issues (take, for example, the struggle at Southern University). A widespread student movement with an overt political focus died with the May 1970 upsurge. A good explication of this process can be found in the Perspectives Document adopted at the 1972 conference of the IMG. On this point it stated in part:

"... the analysis of why students would now only respond to organizations which intervened in the working class did not appear to explain why on issues such as student files far bigger student responses were found than on working class issues. Here there was the danger of a false counterposition. The comrades working in the universities knew it *was* only possible to recruit if the organization was intervening organizationally in the working class and yet also know the response obtained on student issues, in terms of the mass, was larger. Here was an opportunity for an apparent counterposition and hence for a dangerous false debate. The question could only be resolved by a deeper analysis of the student milieu in terms of a distinction already made between a movement and an individual radicalization. Once this was done it was possible to see that the radicalization, i.e., 'general alienation' of students was deepening but that without a *political* focus it remained on a localised and low level. It was therefore possible to predict both the continuation of short term upsurges on issues directly concerned with

student issues but that (a) for a movement to occur an overtly political issue must arise. . . ." (IIB No. 3 in '72, p. 15, emphasis in original).

Another point that is evident from this quote is that an intervention in the class far from being in contradiction to work among students is complimentary to it. In fact a proletarian orientation is key to maintaining serious work among the periphery. One can only look at the losses suffered in the student arena by the YSA as opposed to the gains being made in this area by groups with an orientation to the class to grasp the meaning of this point.

The Political Committee Draft Political Resolution goes after some of our "sectarian" and "ultraleft" opponents, charging them with workerism and economism for either not supporting struggles outside the class or for attempting to impose too "advanced" on these struggles. While some of our opponents can be correctly designated as economist, notably the Workers League and the I.S., the sad fact is that the same characterization can be applied to the SWP itself, for the party bases itself on the same method and makes the same errors except in reverse. Carl Davidson, a staff writer for the *Guardian*, has been recently writing a vicious and slanderous series of articles attacking the Trotskyist movement and its history in an attempt to apologize for Stalinism. While we in no way solidarize ourselves with Davidson or his attempt to discredit the Fourth International, there is a section from one of his articles that is rather revealing, and we are sad to say true. It is taken from an article entitled "SWP aids reformism in the women's movement" published in the June 6, 1973, issue of the *Guardian* and is as follows:

"The views of the two major Trotskyist groupings in the U. S. (on the woman question—T. Q.) the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers League also express the vacillating character of their movement in tailing after the spontaneity of the masses.

"The two organizations appear to be fundamentally opposed on the issue. The SWP, for instance, considers itself to be 'revolutionary feminist.' 'If you love revolution' goes one of their slogans, 'then you'll love feminism.'

"The Workers League heads in another direction. 'The feminist movement' says one of their polemics against the SWP, 'plays a reactionary role, splitting the working class and sowing the illusion that the problems of working class women could be solved apart from the fight for socialism. The movement is directed against the working class and the revolutionary party.'

"In essence the positions are the same. Both abandon the struggle for proletarian leadership of the mass democratic struggle for the emancipation of women.

"The SWP bows to the spontaneity of the just struggle waged by the women of the middle classes. The Workers League for its part, liquidates even the pretense of a Marxist Leninist approach to the woman question and tails after the spontaneous economic struggles of the workers at the point of production.

Both are similar in another respect. Both identify the entire women's movement with the feminist trend."

What this reveals is that while the SWP may criticize its opponents for economism, it practices a form of it and

what it comes down to it as Lenin put it "the slavish cringing before spontaneity." The difference between the SWP and the Workers League for example is not in the method, the method is identical, but in what is tailended. In fact one is almost tempted to say that the differences between the SWP and the Workers League boil down to a mere division of labor.

The economists that Lenin polemicized against in *What Is To Be Done?* made the dual error of tailending the spontaneous trade-union struggles of the working class and abstaining from the struggles of other sectors. The party as we said makes the inverse error. Indeed we would assert that if some of the terms were inverted in *What Is To Be Done?* we could submit it to the discussion as a document of our tendency. The party has in recent times prided itself on such self attributes as learning from the mass movements, waiting for the movements to develop their own slogans before we develop a position, etc. This is tied in with the party's extolling and propagating the ideology of these movements. It is said we are the best builders and consistent ideologues of these movements. This leads to conceptions like consistent feminism, consistent nationalism, consistent student activism, etc. The party claims that these movements and the consciousness they produce are objectively revolutionary, challenge the bases of bourgeois society and so forth. This conception is completely alien to Leninism. Lenin teaches us that the spontaneous struggles of the masses have a definite limit, that the consciousness of the masses arising from these struggles is bourgeois consciousness. The role of the party in this regard is not to uncritically tailend these struggles, not to be the loudest exponents and cheerleaders of the spontaneous movement, but to fight its provincialism, to transform it into a generalized political consciousness, a socialist consciousness. This is the meaning of Lenin's critique of the "most consistent" and "best-building" trade unionism of the economists: to glorify and applaud the spontaneous mass movement and to even try and give it a theoretical cover is to reinforce bourgeois ideology on the masses.

"Hence to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside to the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology" (p. 41).

"And yet, with only a little reflection it would have understood why *any* subservience to the spontaneity of the mass movement and *any* degradation of Social Democratic politics to the level of trade unionist politics means preparing the ground for converting the working class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy" (p. 94, Lenin's emphasis).

Even now when it has become apparent that the autonomous movements of the peripheral sectors are on the decline and in some areas nonexistent, the party goes on with its old orientation; trying to drum up something to tailend. This has resulted in a situation where as Lenin put it, "Like real tailenders they often go on living in the bygone stages of the movement's inception" (p. 86). This blind tailending of nonexistent movements together with the party's abstention from the class can have dangerous

results for our movement. All we need do is witness the sad spectacle of the LSO's trying to make the language question the central focus of the Quebec general strike when in fact the workers had far transcended the language question and nationalism, and when in fact the situation was one of the working class being pitted against the bourgeoisie along class lines.

The other side of the SWP's economist adaptation to the movements of the '60s has been its sectarian abstention from work in the working class. This is justified on the basis that the class isn't moving or that its backward and so on. The first assertion is just empirically wrong, the second reinforces the need for the party's intervention. Any examination of American society today would show that there is much more empirical evidence of "movement" among the workers than among the various groups that the SWP has been tailending. In fact, while there is no evidence for the assertion that the working class isn't moving, there *is* a certain real evidence that the groups the SWP has been tailending have not been moving. One only need contrast the bitter strikes in auto and among the teachers with the quiescence on the campuses and the miserable showing of the SWP support campaign to WO-NAAC, to take just one example. Of course as we stated earlier the absence of political motion among these sectors does not mean a conservatization, it (the quiescence) is merely the result of a shift in social forces which we outlined. It is precisely because of the breakup of the boom economy and the resulting political motion among the working class, that the SWP is blind to, that these movements have declined. Only on the basis of a proletarian orientation can serious work go forward among the periphery. Only an organization with a proletarian orientation will be taken seriously by these elements.

While for a certain period isolation from the class on the part of the party was inevitable, the SWP has developed this initially inevitable isolation from the class into a whole orientation. This can be most clearly seen in the work of the party theoreticians. They put forward the theory which in essence states that the party in fact is not first and foremost based in the working class, but rather it is based in the radicalization in which the party operates intervening in whatever is "moving" including the proletariat whenever it becomes designated by the party as "moving." Comrades Novack and Lovell in articles submitted to the 1971 preconvention discussion attacking the Proletarian Orientation Tendency cite examples from party history in an attempt to show that this has been the position of the party all along. They compare the sectarianism of the Weisbord and Oehler groupings to the alleged sectarianism of the P. O. Tendency. While the P. O. can be charged with sectarianism in regard to its views on Comrade Mandel's economic theory and other matters, it is completely outrageous to accuse them of sectarianism in regard to their call for a turn to the class and even more outrageous to compare them with sectarian tendencies out of the party's past like the Oehlerites. Contrary to the notions of Comrades Breitman, Novack, Lovell, et al., the party did not have this abstract orientation to the radicalization in the 1930s. While the party correctly intervened in the struggles of non-proletarian elements like students and farmers, for example, it was

always based in the working class and maintained a significant proletarian composition internally. This is the context within which the disputes with Weisbord, Oehler and Muste took place. The disputes were ones over tactics in carrying out the proletarian orientation (although certain of the sectarians saw all kinds of principles being involved). The party leadership in the '30s never proposed abandoning work in the class for the greener pastures of work among other layers. What it proposed was a certain specific tactical orientation to the CP and the Social Democracy, our two major opponents within the workers movement and the trade unions (it should be mentioned that a certain question of principle was involved in our orientation toward the CP in the early '30s as we considered ourselves at that time to be a faction of the Comintern). These tactical maneuvers represented not in the slightest way a departure from the class, but rather were part of the party's central task in fighting for the leadership of the proletariat against its reformist misleaders. In addition to the fact that the party was overwhelmingly proletarian and that the CP and the SP were also overwhelmingly proletarian, the party also carried out independent work in the unions in this period, even while it was *in* the SP. Thus the analogy with the party's past falls to pieces at the slightest examination.

If the party's abstention from the class was wrong in the recent past, it is even more incorrect today. Contrary to the pronouncements of the party leadership the working class is far from "not moving." This year 5 million workers in basic industry are up for contract negotiations in a situation of a declining standard of living and worsening working conditions. In these unions as indeed in much of the working class as a whole, a whole layer of militant workers has emerged. This is reflected in the rise of significant oppositional groupings within almost every union (UNC in auto, MFD in the UMW, Morissey caucus in maritime and numerous local groupings). Yet the SWP promises to be completely isolated from these developments while it chases after the long-since ebbed spontaneous struggles of the periphery. The party must be in and a part of the working class if it is to lead the class and subsequently the revolutionary struggle for power. The opportunities for implantation in the class are greater than they have ever been since the late '40s and the situation is becoming more favorable for this work every day. The party must seize these opportunities and stop its sectarian abstention from the class.

Another point that should be made in this regard is that despite the upsurge in the spontaneous struggles of the working class, the class will never come to see its revolutionary role in society spontaneously. It will never come to Marxism spontaneously. If the party thinks it can wait for this to happen, it will have a long wait. The party cannot wait for the workers to transcend trade-union consciousness because they never will (although that consciousness will become more and more militant). The party must intervene *from the outside* to bring this new awareness to the workers. This is the lesson of *What Is To Be Done?* If the party continues to abstain from the class, more and more militant struggles will continue to emerge, the working-class upsurge will continue to deepen, yet all this will be to no avail, it will inevitably lead to defeat due to the inadequacy of the subjective factor. The

inability of the class to come to revolutionary consciousness spontaneously on its own is stressed throughout the draft thesis *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe*:

"The spontaneists have the illusion that by the very logic of their struggles, the working masses will come to remove the subjective deficiencies that in the past have blocked the victory of every revolutionary upsurge in the industrialized capitalist countries. The broadening and expansion of workers' struggles create the *preconditions* for a rapid rise in the class consciousness; but they do not automatically ensure it. There is no reason to suppose that the masses, educated for decades in the spirit of respect for bourgeois parliamentarism and the 'electoral road to socialism' will be transformed, as if by magic into adepts of the Leninist theory of the state simply because they have unleashed a general strike. It is even more improbable that just by occupying factories masses deprived of all class oriented political education will gain the capacity to put together a coherent program of transitional demands and to wage a successful fight for this program against the maneuvers of the bourgeoisie and the reformist apparatuses" (IIB No. 5 in '72, p. 17, emphasis in original).

And further on commenting on the fragmentation of workers' struggles and the need for implantation in the class the European document has this to say:

"c) The presence within the working class, in the plants, and the unions of thousands of elements that have an oppositionist attitude toward the traditional organizations and can be drawn into important struggles is confirmed by all the experience of the last years. (and we are seeing the emergence of this in the U. S. — T. Q.) But these workers are scattered, isolated from one another, often disillusioned by their experiences in new organizations into which they have let themselves be drawn unthinkingly, almost always under the pressure of the threat of repression from the bosses and the trade union bureaucracy. It is illusory to think that we can absorb these people into our sections in one stroke. Individual cases aside, they will only become a social base for revolutionary Marxist organizations to the extent that these organizations demonstrate their political and organizational seriousness. And such seriousness involves, in addition to the tasks mentioned above, *regular, persistent, long-term intervention in the plants and unions regardless of the immediate results and regardless of the ups and downs in the class struggle.*" (IIB No. 5 in '72 p. 24, emphasis in original).

To use the backwardness of the working class as an excuse for not intervening in the class is to abdicate one's revolutionary responsibility, as to a great extent the consciousness of the workers depends on the extent of the revolutionary party's intervention in the class. Thus to use the backwardness of the class as an excuse for not intervening in it and fighting to transform the consciousness is to blame the workers for *one's own backwardness*. Lenin was particularly fed up with this line:

"Yes, we have indeed lost all 'patience' 'waiting' for the blessed time, long promised us by divers 'conciliators' when the Economists will have stopped charging the workers with *their own* backwardness and justifying their own lack of energy with allegations that the work-

ers lack strength" (*What is to be Done?* p. 90, Lenin's emphasis).

The party must adopt the approach of the European document; the party must stop blaming the workers for its own backwardness and begin a consistent policy of intervention and implantation into the working class. The party must adopt a proletarian orientation.

Another erroneous conception that the party has been putting forward is the idea of the combined revolution or the combined character of the American revolution. This idea is an attempt to extend the theory of the permanent revolution to the United States. The theory of the permanent revolution was developed to answer certain problems of the class struggle in the colonial and semicolonial countries. The term "combined" was coined to explain that in these countries the revolution would and will be necessarily a revolution of the workers in the urban centers combined with a revolutionary struggle of the peasantry against the landlords. Key to this process in the colonial countries is the existence of the agrarian question and the demand for land as a major political issue of overriding importance. There is no agrarian question in the advanced countries and there is no peasantry, and there has not been since the second world war. The postwar economic boom and industrialization have resolved this question or whatever was left of it to resolve for America. Today's rural struggles are not those of small farmers and dispossessed farmers fighting against the landlords and the banks for their land as was the case in the 1930s. Today's rural struggles are in the main struggles of agricultural workers fighting collectively through trade unions against the huge corporations of agribusiness. Whatever was left of the unresolved tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in this regard were resolved by the postwar economic developments. The concept of the combined revolution which was initially developed by the SWP with respect to Blacks who were considered to constitute a colony within the US has been extended to include a whole hodgepodge of groups: women, students, gays, etc. Party and YSA spokespersons are quite fond of saying that the coming revolution will be a revolution of Blacks against their national oppression and racism, of women against sexism and the family, etc. This is a completely erroneous and polyvanguardist conception. The existence of these autonomous sectoralist movements does not stem from these groups representing distinct social classes as is the case in the colonial world where the permanent revolution is tied to the existence of the peasantry as a distinct social class embracing in most cases the vast majority of the population. On the contrary, in the imperialist countries the existence of these movements separate and apart from the class with their own particularist ideology is the result of the surface relationship of class forces during the boom period; that is the quiescence of the working class. As this quiescence disappears so will these movements. In fact this process is already taking place. If the basis of these movements is the result of contradictions in the capitalist system as a whole and if these groups *do* represent distinct social classes, then the SWP should extend this concept to other countries. Perhaps the SWP should call for an Irish immigrants party in England, or promote consistent Catalan nationalism or call for the formation of a mass Basque nationalist party in Spain? (In

fact, according to Comrade Cliff Conner, the party leadership is currently toying with the idea of supporting *Croatian* nationalism! The implications of the party supporting a movement which threatens the breakup of an existing workers state and the restoration of capitalism are staggering!) The lack of any mass working-class party cannot be considered as a serious factor in the basis of the SWP's new radicalization theory. No labor party existed during periods of radicalization in the U.S., yet that did not lead anyone to foresee a "combined" revolution. It was assumed that all of these problems would be subsumed in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. A similar situation existed in Victorian England: no labor party and a conservative labor bureaucracy, yet there as well no combined revolution theories developed. While we believe that the working class must take up and champion the struggles against racism, sexism and all forms of oppression, we feel that the autonomous sectoral movements will recede and be subsumed in the upsurge of the proletariat. In fact, this process has already begun to take place. The document *The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America* goes over this process and states our concept of the coming American revolution:

We believe the coming American revolution will be a proletarian revolution, in which the working class, overcoming the fragmentation that has historically characterized it, organized as a class will confront the bourgeoisie with a situation of dual power. As the basic conflict between worker and capitalist sharpens in all its different forms, the sectoral movement which today encompass partisans of the working class alongside partisans of the bourgeoisie, will split along class lines. The pro working class elements will gravitate toward the organizations of the working class while the workers will seek the support of these layers. All the lessons of the past, and all the recent experiences in other countries such as France and Chile, point toward a situation of dual power in which factory committees or strike committees are combined with neighborhood committees mobilizing the non proletarian layers. It is obvious that a soviet in Harlem would be a Black soviet, and that a factory committee in most electronics assembly plants would be a women's committee, and that both would be particularly concerned about the forms of their special oppression alongside the class wide exploitation. However, in essence, both would be organs of struggle for proletarian power. It is toward this situation that the party must orient its strategy. The party must prepare for a situation of dual power by turning movements of the non proletarian layers of the population toward the working class, by educating the working class to champion the demands of all the oppressed, and by advancing slogans which will lead to a united and centralized struggle to smash the bourgeois state."

Tied to the SWP's conception of the combined revolution is the minimalist and sectoralist approach to the Transitional Program that the SWP has developed. The party has developed the conception that all democratic demands take on a transitional character in the epoch of imperialism. This is combined with an increasing adulation of democracy in the abstract. This is completely false. A consistent struggle for democracy will *not* lead necessarily to socialism. While democratic demands particularly the demand for land reform are crucial to the struggle in

the colonial countries, in the imperialist countries it is all the more important to advance transitional slogans as the masses are losing faith in decaying bourgeois democracy. The only situation where democratic demands could be termed as transitional is in a prerevolutionary situation with demands relating to trade-union workers democracy. In this situation these demands coupled with an armed defense of the workers organizations could lead to a confrontation with the bourgeoisie and the seizure of power. This does not mean that the working class and the revolutionary party do not support democratic demands and struggles that arise out of other oppressed groups. The working class must support all struggles against the oppression of the bourgeois state in order to solidarize and ally itself with these other forces. Yet we should not limit ourselves to this. More advanced demands including transitional demands which go to the class nature of the problem must be raised. The party must seek to raise the level of the consciousness, not tailend the present level.

The minimalist approach to the Transitional Program can be most clearly seen in the SWP strategy for the women's movement. The SWP supported the slogan *Repeal All Abortion Laws* and opposed any other demands being raised as sectarian and ultraleft. This demand can by no stretch of the imagination be considered a transitional demand. It is a democratic demand of the most minimal sort. It is a demand that can and has been easily granted by the ruling class in a number of countries, including the U.S. If the struggle around this demand had emerged spontaneously out of the movement then the party should have supported it while raising at the same time more advanced demands. Yet this struggle did not emerge spontaneously out of the movement; it was conceived by the party. This makes the slogan all the more inexcusable. If the revolutionary party is to initiate such a campaign, it must be on a more advanced basis with demands that got to the heart of the conditions of life of working women. This would have meant organizing our women's work around slogans like *Free Abortion on Demand, Free 24-Hour Childcare Centers, Equal Pay for Equal Work* and similar demands.

WONAAC, which was envisaged as leading a struggle of "millions of women" never really got off the ground and has degenerated to the point where it has become a miniscule pressure group directed toward liberal capitalist politicians. This clearly dispels the notion that "mass action" (we must put that in quotes as nothing WONAAC ever organized could be considered mass) in the streets around a democratic demand has a revolutionary dynamic. Comrade Mandel had this to say about this conception:

"The broad masses learn only through action. Yet although the masses learn only through action, all actions do not lead necessarily to the acquisition of *revolutionary* class consciousness. Actions around immediately realizable economic and political goals that can be completely achieved within the framework of the capitalist social order do not produce revolutionary class consciousness." (*The Leninist Theory of Organization*, p. 43, emphasis in original.)

This same approach can be seen in the SWP's intervention into the meat boycott of last spring. Instead of

intervening as socialists explaining the causes of inflation and the way forward, the party uncritically supported and tailended the demands of the boycott movement. In fact the party went to the extreme of not having any comrades intervene in the name of party at all. Instead our comrades operated as antiwar activists so as not to offend anyone. This is all a part of the SWP's misunderstanding of the united front and its elevation in the single-issue variant to the level of principle. The united front is not a partnership but a temporary bloc for the purposes of struggle. The united front does not mean that the party limits or abandons its independent intervention, as has been done by the SWP, quite the contrary. While the party supports and builds the united front it at the same time advances its own slogans and propaganda to the more advanced layers. This misunderstanding and misapplication of the united front is a dangerous sign. Trotsky more than once pointed out that this is a classic feature of centrism; that the centrists elevate the tactic of the united front to the level of principle and use it as a cover to make accommodations to the reformists.

The SWP sectoralist approach has been reflected in another way again embracing the Transitional Program. The party has concocted the novelty of separate transitional programs for each sector; for many of the peripheral movements of the '60s. One for Blacks, one for Chicanos, one for students (?) and although the party formally hasn't adopted "transitional programs" for other groups it would be perfectly consistent with the SWP method for them to be developed. The compartmentalized version of the Transitional Program that the SWP has developed is a virtual embracement of polyvanguardism. If one can develop a separate transitional program for each of these groups then it follows that each of these groups can make the revolution in isolation from one another, or at best they can make their little part of the revolution in isolation from everyone else who is divided up into little niches each with their own transitional program; their own "assignments." This conception was most clearly expressed in the characterization of the May 1970 struggle by the YSA leadership as the "1905 of the student movement." What does this mean? 1905 was a situation of dual power where the question of which class will rule was posed. Was that the situation in May 1970? Certainly not. No one, we think, would defend that notion, although there is at least one comrade in this branch (D.C.) that is under the fantastic illusion that incipient soviets, that is incipient forms of dual power, actually existed at that time. If May 1970 was not a 1905 then what does this characterization mean? Does the addition of "of the student movement" have any meaning? By definition a situation of dual power is something that encompasses all of society in a face to face showdown between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Can students have their own little dual power situation divorced from the rest of society and in particular the proletariat? If there can be a 1905 "of the student movement" can there be a 1917 "of the student movement"? At best this is a meaningless contradiction in terms; at worst it reflects a complete confusion and lack of perspective for the road to workers power. The party must cut through the confusion. The party must squarely reject the politics of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency and the SWP leadership. The party must reject the line of the PC Draft Political Resolution and clearly

adopt the perspective of the Internationalist Tendency as embodied in the resolution *The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America*. Only then will the

party be armed theoretically and politically to meet the demands that the class struggle will place on us in the next period—the demands of revolutionary leadership.

July 24, 1973

WHERE THE THORSTAD-GREEN COUNTER-MEMORANDUM
GOES WRONG ON THE ROLE OF GAY OPPRESSION
IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY

by Mimi Harary, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

I'm going to take up two of the disputed points in the discussion on gay liberation. First is the question of the social and historical significance of the gay liberation movement. Secondly—and related to the first—is the question of the manner and extent of the party's intervention in this movement.

The differences that the document "For an Intervention into the Gay Liberation Struggle" by David Thorstad and Kendall Green has with the "Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement" adopted by the National Committee are somewhat blurred and confused. If the primary difference were one of emphasis, a counter line document would not be in order. However, there are two inter-related mistakes in the Thorstad-Green document that indicate deeper differences.

Most fundamentally, the Thorstad-Green document introduces a theoretical distortion in its explanation of why the oppression of homosexuals is perpetrated in capitalist society. Comrades Thorstad and Green twist the relationship between the family and the oppression of homosexuals. Here are the parts of their document where this becomes apparent.

On page 3 they write, "It [the gay liberation movement] is a struggle against a form of oppression that is rooted in the need of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior both as a part of its general repression of sexuality and because homosexual behavior conflicts with society's exclusive heterosexual norm. This norm is reinforced by all the institutions of capitalist society, beginning with the family, and continued in the schools, churches and synagogues."

Also on page 3 they write, "While partial concessions can be wrested from the capitalist state by the struggle of large numbers of gays for their rights, so long as society is predicated on the need to suppress homosexual behavior, the full rights of gay people will not be achieved."

Then on page 7 they write, "The effort to suppress homosexual behavior is no accident. . . . Marxists recognize that such long-standing oppression reflects the needs of the society that fosters it, and we identify the source of that oppression as residing in the institutions and ideology of class society. The effort of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior begins in the very first institution that most humans encounter—the family."

And finally, also on page 7, Comrades Thorstad and Green write, "The ultimate impact and appeal of the gay liberation movement can only be understood on the basis of the fact that it involves a struggle not merely for the rights of a presently constituted minority who are defined

as gay, but for an end to the built-in need of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior in all of its members."

They're saying that capitalist society is predicated on the need to suppress homosexual behavior. They're saying that the reason capitalism has to suppress homosexual behavior is because of its general need to repress sexuality and because homosexual behavior conflicts with society's exclusive heterosexual norm. What Comrades Thorstad and Green point to as the key relationship between homosexuality and the family is that the family upholds the oppression of homosexuals.

They have it backwards. They take the role of sexuality in capitalism and make an abstraction of it. They appear to take the oppression of homosexuals and make it an absolute—independent of cause other than the existence of capitalist society.

What cause do they attribute to the oppression of gays? Capitalism. But why does capitalism need to oppress gays? Because it has to repress sexuality in general and uphold its heterosexual norm. But why does capitalism have to repress sexuality? Because capitalist society is predicated on this need.

What this objectively does is to place the need to repress sexuality and hence the oppression of homosexuals on the same plane as, for example, the need of the capitalists to extract surplus value from the working class. The door is left open to the concept that the oppression of homosexuals is a structural part of capitalism.

What is actually the case? The prejudice against gays is not a direct result of a subordinate social role played by gays; gay people play no special social role. Prejudice against homosexuals is rooted in and flows from traditional sexual morality. This traditional sexual morality is a product of the nuclear family system. It helps to preserve the nuclear family relationships in class society. Gay people are oppressed as a by-product of the ideology and morality upholding the family system.

Yes, the oppression of homosexuals is related to the general suppression of sexuality. And yes, the family upholds the suppression of sexuality. But to leave it at that is wrong. To say that the family upholds the oppression of homosexuals is a one-sided, misleading and therefore incorrect characterization. Of course there is an interrelationship between the two. But the fundamental relationship is that traditional sexual morality—of which the oppression of homosexuals is a by-product—helps hold the nuclear family together. The fundamental relationship is *not* that the family upholds the oppression

of homosexuals. It is the family that is a fundamental unit of capitalist society, not the oppression of homosexuals.

The exaggerated view that the Thorstad-Green document has of the significance of the oppression of homosexuals to the maintenance of capitalist society and the resultant overestimation of the importance of gay liberation to the class struggle lay the basis for the error in their approach to implementation, i.e., that the party *must*, regardless of circumstances, take part in the gay liberation movement.

Regarding practical application, the differences between the National Committee memorandum and the Thorstad-Green document revolve around not whether to intervene in the gay liberation movement, but what form that intervention should take.

On page 8 of the Thorstad-Green document they list some of the kinds of activities they think we should be involved in. First on the list they write, "Propagandizing in favor of, and building, united fronts around law-repeal campaigns on a statewide level, where appropriate. *We should encourage the formation of such united fronts and participate in them. . . .*"

The thrust of their recommendations is that the SWP should take responsibility for the gay liberation movement. Not just that we should relate to it and take part in it, but that we should take major organizational and political responsibility for the gay liberation movement.

Comrade Barry Sheppard answered this very well in his contribution to the gay liberation discussion in Vol. 30, No. 8, page 10 of the SWP Discussion Bulletin. He wrote: "We have found from experience in both the antiwar and women's movement that any attempt by any of the socialist tendencies to form antiwar or women's groups essentially around their own organization are doomed to be very narrow in the present situation in this country. No tendency has sufficient hegemony on the

left, let alone among the broader layers such groups could appeal to, to build any such groups on a viable basis. If this is true of the antiwar and women's movements, which have far wider appeal than the gay liberation movement, it is doubly true of the gay liberation movement."

Comrades Thorstad and Green begin their document with an incorrect assessment of the significance of the oppression of homosexuality in capitalist society. They make an abstraction of the suppression of sexuality and the oppression of homosexuals. Then they end their document by lending a certain abstraction to the tasks facing the SWP vis-a-vis the gay liberation movement. They abstract our tasks from what is actually warranted under the present circumstances.

I think that we should intervene in the gay liberation movement wherever possible in consonance with the forces we have available, in the context of our priorities, and taking into account the objective situation and the possibilities for our intervention. This is also what the National Committee memorandum expresses.

On page 9 of the memorandum is written, "On a local level there has been somewhat of a dropping off of struggles for the rights of gay people in the past period, but what struggles have occurred have been locally organized. Where such demonstrations, defense cases, etc. occur, the party should support them. Branches have the responsibility to carry out any such work within the context of carrying out the major campaigns being conducted by the party."

Any comrade who feels the SWP should be intervening in the gay liberation movement in accordance with our forces, priorities and the situation in the gay liberation movement itself should have no need to support a document that is put forward as a counter line to the National Committee memorandum.

July 25, 1973

THE COMING SHORTAGES AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

by Mary F. Walter, Denver Branch

For the first time in a period of "peace" the people of the United States are faced with shortages in one or more essential items, along with the increasing cost of other necessities. Here in Colorado, the lack of gasoline and the increasing cost of groceries are major topics of conversation as cars line up at those few gas stations that are open and trips to the grocery store become exercises in frustration. Of all the causative factors of the shortages, one stands out: that is, the refusal of corporations to produce, or to ship, or to sell if there is no profit, as they react to phases I, II, III, and IV and the shrinking dollar. This is a unique experience for the United States. There are shortages in war time. There is always a layer of the population which cannot afford to buy, a layer which increases during times of depression; but if one has money, the goods have been there. But now, some goods are in short supply, and the prospects are for spot shortages in first one and then other items of local and even national

extent. In Denver, a scare psychology is already developing. Allegedly every freezer for sale in the area was bought over the weekend. A notice appeared on the bulletin board where I work advising people about the kinds of food to stock to weather the coming period. A six-month supply was recommended! One is reminded of times in India when people starve while rice is hoarded for higher prices, or of Russia after the revolution during the period when kulaks would not plant or sell because there was no profit in it. We are in the grips of giant corporations, not peasant farmers, but as in other times and other places it will be the working people, those who do not have the time or the money to make deals, who will suffer the most.

These shortages occur at a time when faith in the two-party system is ebbing and a political vacuum is developing, a vacuum which we should attempt to fill. We need to do some collective thinking on how to utilize the shortages whenever and wherever they develop to gain exposure

for our ideas and build whatever public actions are possible. Here are just a few suggestions:

1. Build coalitions around moderate expressions of our ideas, such as the demand for companies to open their books; and if it proves impossible to involve large numbers of people at first begin with small actions, as we did with the antiwar movement, in the expectation that we would gradually build to large actions. Maybe some guerrilla theatre to help propagandize.

2. For once we could emphasize that capitalism cannot do it, but socialism could. The whole approach of the ruling class to problems of supply and demand, as publicized by the mass media, is so horrible—for example, the cutting off of soybean shipments to Japan even though soybeans are a major item of food; or the shortage of gasoline here in Denver because the companies refuse to truck in extra supplies—that the public is open to radically different approaches. People are open to accepting that the whole system has got to go. Perhaps demonstrations could be called in the name of the SWP and socialist demands made. Would the mass media publicize such events?

3. How could the working class be involved as a class? Are there any unions that might call for nationalization of the gas and oil industries during a gas shortage? How do we keep out of the trap of calling for rationing?

4. Teach-ins, panels, seminars, citizens committees about the shortages along with the inflation!

5. Use of our political campaigns to expose the causes of the shortages.

6. In instances of localized shortages, organize demonstrations or committees or press conferences to demand that local officials do something. Here in Denver nothing is being done by the local government to alleviate the gas shortage. Under capitalism nothing much can be done, but we should demand action just the same.

The above ideas are just beginnings. We need collective thought on how to take advantage now of the turmoil from Watergate and the financial crisis in a manner that will get us out in front as the alternative to the other two parties, an alternative that does things to help alleviate the crunch on working people. The coming shortages offer one way to do this.

July 25, 1973

HOW THE INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY ORIENTS TO THE AMERICAN "NEW MASS VANGUARD"

by Brian Williams, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

In the document "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America," the Internationalist Tendency attempts to take the proposals of orienting to the "new mass vanguard," that the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency has mapped out for Europe, and apply it to the American scene. In order for them to do this, they have to totally distort what the actual relationship of forces are on the American left.

In fact, the Internationalist Tendency attempts to project that a regroupment process is taking place on the left. On page 25 of their document they state, "The radicalizing and revolutionary students are involved in the realignment process going on in the whole left." The document is entirely unclear on what realignment process they are referring to and what forces are involved in this supposed regroupment. Is the Internationalist Tendency referring to the regroupment talks that have taken place between the Spartacist League, Vanguard Newsletter, and Class Struggle League? Is this the realignment process that the comrades think that we should orient to and become involved in? The comrades do not answer these questions.

On page 25 of their document under the section entitled, "The Left," the comrades elaborate a little further about the nature of the forces becoming involved in regroupment. They state, "To the left of the CP, a whole milieu has arisen out of the experience of the past radicalization. It is made up of increasingly political centrist formations and Maoist currents." The comrades are now

stating that what exists on the American left are politically centrist organizations. If this is true, then the Internationalist Tendency has an obligation to explain which of these groups on the left are politically centrist. Yet the counter political revolution is intentionally vague in backing up this political claim. Do the Internationalist Tendency comrades think that these "increasingly politically centrist formations" are the ultralefts in Berkeley who alternate from shouting "Victory to the NLF," to shouting "Victory to the April Coalition and to George McGovern"?

Upon a closer reading of this document there is a hint about what the Internationalist Tendency is talking about when they point to a politically centrist milieu. On page 23, at the end of the section entitled, "The Student Movement, May '68, and Ultra-leftism," the Internationalist Tendency attacks the party for being sectarian towards the ultralefts (a charge I'll deal with in a subsequent section) and they state, "As a result many of the best militants of the new generation were never given a chance to consider the politics of Trotskyism and either became demoralized or joined the ranks of *Maoist and other centrist currents*" (my emphasis).

There we have it. The Internationalist Tendency thinks that the Maoists are a centrist current! The fact that they can include such a statement in their political resolution for the party is illustrative of how far these comrades have strayed from our revolutionary socialist tradition of characterizing Maoism as a counterrevolutionary

Stalinist current.

The Internationalist Tendency apparently sees all kinds of opportunities open to the party if we just become involved in the Maoist milieu. They point to the unity discussions that are being attempted by various Maoist groups such as the Revolutionary Union, Black Workers Congress, the *Guardian*, and the October League, and they propose that the party should intervene in these regroupment discussions. Does the Internationalist Tendency really think that we are going to gain cadre by intervening in the Revolutionary Union? To pose the question is to answer it. And how do they propose that we intervene in these Maoist organizations? Do they think that we should intervene as we would in a centrist organization that we might be able to push towards Trotskyism? If the comrades are serious about characterizing Maoism as centrist, then this is the only thing that they could mean. Our movement has always had a much different approach to the Stalinists than that projected by the Internationalist Tendency. We do not soft-peddle their counterrevolutionary politics; instead, we remain politically firm. In the recent interview with James Cannon that appeared in *Intercontinental Press* (July 16, 1973, p. 879), our traditional attitude toward the Stalinists is clearly stated:

"There is no debate with the Stalinists. It's not a dialogue, you know, of gentlemen who are expressing different opinions. It's a desperate life-and-death struggle between the greatest traitors the world has ever known and the revolutionary vanguard. It's a fight, and that's the sense in which we should be dealing with it. We should never let them get away from the history of the fight."

If any of these present Maoists were to be recruited to our movement, it would be because of our consistency in uncompromisingly blasting their counterrevolutionary politics and as a result, these Maoists being won to our political positions.

In their attempt to depict a large radical milieu to the left of the Communist Party, the Internationalist Tendency points to a growth of Social-Democratic formations which we should consider involving in this regroupment process. The Internationalist Tendency only mentions two organizations in this Social-Democratic category: (1) the International Socialists—a group which is continually splitting into many different factions and which each year becomes weaker and more irrelevant to American politics; and (2) the Labor Committee—of all the groups which the Internationalist Tendency chooses to characterize as Social-Democratic they choose the Labor Committee! The organization utilized by the police and other provocateurs! All the comrades who have any familiarity whatsoever with these two organizations know that it is totally absurd to view them as dynamic, growing Social-Democratic formations. Contrary to what the Internationalist Tendency projects, these organizations do not offer any important possibilities for recruitment for our movement. By including the International Socialists and the Labor Committee as an important part of this growing far-left milieu, the Internationalist Tendency just demonstrates how really fraudulent their conception of striving to regroup the far left is.

How They Adapt to SDS

The Internationalist Tendency also has a totally mis-

taken analysis of what SDS represented and the approach we should have taken to it. The way they project SDS is as if it represented the coming together of all the radical organizations into one big powerful one. This document seems to insinuate that SDS represented the high point of unity of the far-left organizations of the past period, and that the party should now participate in regroupment in the hope of recreating the broad unity that existed in the heydays of SDS. The Internationalist Tendency goes on to state that after the split in SDS in 1968, the different tendencies in SDS began moving toward the working class, and that the party failed to intervene in these tendencies. Let's look at what actually happened to SDS. In 1969 SDS split into two basic groups: (1) the terrorists represented by the Weatherpeople; and (2) the Maoists as represented by the Progressive Labor Party. Is the Internationalist Tendency actually proposing that we should have intervened in either of these two tendencies following, or before, the split?

While SDS was the major radical youth formation, and the YSA and SWP were very small—we did have an orientation to SDS—it was not to intervene in SDS—but to take them on politically at every opportunity because we knew that sooner or later the development of political events would blow the "all-inclusive" SDS in many different directions. During the height of SDS's strength, we correctly chose not to intervene in SDS. We made this decision chiefly because SDS abstained from building the antiwar movement, while the YSA and SWP saw the Vietnam war as the central issue in the international class struggle as well as the key issue which was propelling students into political activity. The YSA and SWP went about consistently defending the Vietnamese revolution, attempting at every step to draw SDS chapters into united front actions. But we also polemicized with SDS at every step of the way for their abstention from the antiwar movement. Through this approach we recruited the best people out of SDS. This was done not by adapting to the mistakes of SDS, but by aggressively presenting our political program and convincing these activists that we were right.

The Internationalist Tendency turns the actual course of events into their opposite. They state that all of our opponents made gains from the breakup of SDS, and that it was only the SWP and YSA that missed out. This statement is simply a lie. It was the YSA and SWP who recruited the best people out of SDS. Because of our work in building the mass antiwar movement, it was the YSA and SWP that significantly increased their ranks and grew at a much greater pace than any of our sectarian opponents. This happens to be a fact. The Internationalist Tendency can ignore it if they choose but they cannot deny this point.

Their Softness toward the Ultralefts

At the heart of the perspective of the Internationalist Tendency is a softness towards all of our opponents and a tendency to politically adapt to all of their backward and petty-bourgeois characteristics. This is most clearly pointed out by examining the sympathetic attitude that they take towards the ultralefts in the antiwar movement. On page 23 they state, "Many antiwar activists who were more aware of the need for conscious anti-imperialism and an orientation to the working class kept away from

our antiwar organization because of the principles of non-exclusion and single issue." The comrades of the Internationalist Tendency actually believe that the American "anti-imperialists"—to so-called "new mass vanguard" of the U.S.—were correct in keeping away from the antiwar movement because they opposed the concept of not excluding anyone from mass antiwar demonstrations and because they opposed the idea of focusing the antiwar movement solely upon the task of defending the Vietnamese revolution!!! These people who opposed the principles of non-exclusion, single issue, and the united front were certainly not the vanguard of the American left—but the *rearguard*. They are the ones who opposed the building of mass actions against the war of a united front character at every step of the way. These so-called "anti-imperialists" attempted as best they could to destroy the mass antiwar movement; and most likely, if it was not for us, they probably would have succeeded.

The Internationalist Tendency document has a little more to say about these ultralefts.

"Instead of continuing to characterize these militants as 'a new radicalized layer,' the party leadership came to look upon them as opponents or, even worse, as 'ultra-lefts.' Viewing them almost as beyond the pale of humanity, the leadership oriented instead toward united fronts with the reformist CP/YWLL."

The Internationalist Tendency projects that it would have been more correct and beneficial for us to focus upon building joint confrontation/trashing actions between us and the ultralefts. The minority comrades really show the extent to which they would have had us adapt to ultra-leftism a few sentences later. They state:

"Marxists have always approached the non-sectarian ultralefts as misguided fellow revolutionists, whereas they looked upon reformists as still basically committed to the capitalist order, and as yet to be radicalized through action. The party on the whole displayed a sectarian attitude toward the broad phenomenon of ultraleftism, and failed to establish any consistent dialogue with it."

Here we have the essence of the minority's view on the ultralefts; that is that they are just "misguided revolutionists," who could be set along the right path if only we would orient toward them and would halt our harsh political criticism of their mistakes. The minority will get absolutely nowhere by trying to dig up the tradition of our movement in order to support this viewpoint. Lenin wrote an entire book on this very subject entitled *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. His aim was not to explain how these ultralefts were just misguided revolutionaries who have gone a little off track, but to explain the necessity for firmly combatting the politics of these opponents. James P. Cannon also had something to say on this subject in his interview in *Intercontinental Press* (July 16, 1973, p. 879):

". . . if there is an expanding radicalization, every panacea will get its sympathizers and supporters and suckers, and we should try to reduce it to a minimum. You can't eliminate it. No matter what it is you want to sell, no matter how crazy an idea it may be, you can find somebody to buy it. . . . You can't prevent it, but you can limit it. You can limit the number of people that they distort by being on top of them and being absolutely merciless and tireless in pounding away. Don't yield to the temptation to say, 'Oh, well, they're a bunch of nuts,

so let them go.' No, they can confuse a lot of people."

Comrade Cannon hits upon a very important point here, which the Internationalist Tendency misses. That is, during a radicalization such as we are experiencing now, all of the radical tendencies will grow to some extent or another. Because of the depth of the radicalization, even our nuttiest opponents, like the Sparts and Wohlforthites will pick up members. However, these sectarian groups do not understand the reason for their growth; which is in spite of their program and orientation. The Internationalist Tendency does not understand this basic point either. Rather than proposing an approach to limit the growth of our sectarian opponents, the minority, by outlining an orientation towards these sectarian opponents, are proposing a perspective for maximizing their growth. The comrades of the minority point to the fact that all these sects are gaining some members, while ignoring the tremendous gains that we have made from our orientation to this radicalization. In place of taking a hard line in order to combat the influence of our opponents, as Cannon projects, the Internationalist Tendency adapts to them.

What Would Happen If We Adopted Their Orientation

It is important for us to assess what the meaning of their orientation to the American "new mass vanguard" would be for the party if it were to be adopted. Their proposal to have the party spend its time trying to work out a regroupment of all the radical organizations, would concretely mean that the party should abstain from the mass struggles. These people who the minority are so high in praising are the very ones who for the past decade have abstained from the mass struggles. They are the ones who supported the slogan "Victory to the NLF" in order to camouflage their refusal to build mass antiwar actions; and they are the ones who attacked the student movement as being petty-bourgeois at the very time that the students were the chief organizers and activists of the antiwar movement and the other social struggles against the government. If the line of the minority document were to be carried out, it would essentially mean the turning of the party into a sect. If our perspective were to become an organization of sectarians, then this proposed regroupment with all our ultraleft opponents—from the Maoists to Vanguard Newsletter—would be as important as the Internationalist Tendency projects it to be.

We should also be clear about what the implications of this orientation to our ultraleft opponents are. It would mean that the party should adopt a petty-bourgeois program and a petty-bourgeois orientation rather than a proletarian one. You cannot have an orientation to the working class, as we have, and also have an orientation toward all the superworkerist sects at the same time—the two orientations contradict each other. The party has to choose one or the other. All of these workerist sects—just like the Internationalist Tendency—degrade revolutionary socialist politics to the question of what particular trade-union tactic should we follow. They all raise the tactic of colonizing the factories into a strategy at the expense of following a consistent strategy of party building. This is the reason that all these superworkerist ultralefts are so adamant in degrading the antiwar, Black,

and women's liberation movements as well as important developments as the meat boycott and Watergate events. Each of these struggles are political developments and thus contradict the sterile conception of these ultralefts that see the workers as only being interested in immediate economic struggles.

Regroupment as Means of Linking up with Mandel-Maitan-Frank

Finally the question must be asked: Why is the Internationalist Tendency proposing this orientation towards the ultraleft sects? Answer: Because they are trying to apply what the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency projects for Europe onto the American scene. The document "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America" is not really written to explain how to build the party, but in order to facilitate a link up with the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency. This counter political resolution is not really intended to convince the party of the politics contained within it—but in order to convince the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency that the minority here will sup-

port them insofar as they continue to attack the positions of the SWP leadership. The Internationalist Tendency projects a position of being soft on Maoism, going so far as to call it a centrist formation, because the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency is also soft on Stalinism as we have seen from their characterization of the Chinese Communist Party as bureaucratic centrist and of the Vietnamese Communist Party as a left-moving centrist party. Our minority tendency, which prior to the beginning of preconvention discussion in the party, never once had raised the concept that the Maoists are centrists, are now putting this conception forward in an effort to build bridges to the European supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency. The political positions which the Internationalist Tendency has outlined in their counterresolution are certainly not those of Trotskyism; and the aim of their document is really not to convince the party of their political positions, but to state to the Europeans that they will find support from the American minority around any question which opposes the position of the party leadership.

July 26, 1973

IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE
MEMORANDUM ON THE GAY LIBERATION
MOVEMENT

by Wayne Hieber, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

It is important to recognize the political context within which this discussion is taking place. On November 13, 1970, the party membership policy was changed to permit openly gay people to be members. The party carried out a probe into the gay liberation movement and later held a literary discussion for a number of months to provide a basis for the party leadership to make proposals concerning our approach to the movement. At the most recent NC plenum, the memorandum now under consideration by the party was passed. Because the discussion of intervening in the gay movement and the change in membership policy were initiated at the same time, I think there is a tendency for comrades to confuse the two issues. There is a tendency to feel that the party must make up for its past exclusionary policy by a cleansing intervention into the gay movement. Only this would explain the extreme subjective sharpness of some of the attacks on the NC proposal which take place in oral reports to the branches.

An important question that has been raised in the discussion of the NC gay memorandum and the Thorstad-Green proposal is how we approach various social movements. The claim has been made, for instance, that there are really only two criteria that we take into account in determining to intervene: namely, (1) Is a given oppressed group willing to move against its oppression? and (2) Is their struggle directed against the ruling class? According to this view, if we can answer yes to both questions, then we are duty-bound to intervene.

The SWP is not identical to nor a direct reflection of

the radicalization as it appears at any given time. The party is qualitatively different from the general radicalization in that it has a strategic orientation aimed at achieving a specific goal which is consciously shared by none of the existing movements. That is, the goal of destroying the capitalist system and establishing a workers' state.

Our analysis of any particular section of society is in terms of its relationship to that strategic goal. We try to evaluate that group's overall relationship to the functioning of the capitalist system. Our conclusion thus far has been that gay people do not constitute a distinct social layer with a special role in the maintenance of the capitalist system, although their oppression is maintained by that system as a byproduct of more fundamental oppressions. Therefore, homosexuals as a social grouping have only modest social weight, regardless of their numbers.

We must remember that the revolutionary party is more than the best builder of the movements for social change. The revolutionary party is an instrument for revolutionary change. To be successful, it must seek to build a mass party based in the working class, capable of leading that class and its allies to power. Of central importance to us are those movements that demonstrate the greatest capacity to bring the decisive power of the class to the fore.

We recruit to the party on the basis of agreement with our strategic orientation, our program. This means that there will be a great number of people who radicalize and oppose the capitalist system as it is who won't agree with us. Some will join opponents and still more will

join no organization. Before we joined the Trotskyist movement, we all came into action around specific goals we wanted to accomplish. But when we join the revolutionary socialist party, we must be willing to subordinate these worthwhile goals to the general task of building a revolutionary party which can lead a struggle to end the oppression of all.

This creates specific problems for gay activists that other comrades might not face. Activists in the women's movement who join our party know that, while party activity in this area is bound to see sharp ups and downs, the party will become deeply involved in any upsurge of that movement. History and recent experience have shown us that the movement of women as women has the capacity to move and arouse the working masses, challenges fundamental material aspects of the existing order, and can prove to be one of the major movements of the U.S. class struggle. But since the party has not concluded that the gay movement has a similar impact and scope, it is very likely that most gay activists who join our party may seldom or never have an opportunity to be directly active in what they legitimately consider to be a movement for their most fundamental human rights. If it is true (which I don't for a moment believe) that these activists, after being convinced of our program, cannot subordinate their specific goal to the strategic goal of the party, then they don't belong in our party. There are a lot of good people who don't belong in our party for one reason or another. Wishing that the gay liberation movement was central to the current radicalization and was going to be central to the American revolution doesn't make it so.

Another point raised in the discussion is the claim that the 1971 political resolution and Lenin's *What is to be Done?* require the party to champion the struggles of all of the oppressed. Hence, intervention is always called for. Yes, the party must be "the tribune of the people." But it does not therefore intervene to the same degree in every struggle that it champions. Intervention into a particular arena of struggle is a tactical question. The party cannot guarantee all movements equal access to the time and energy of its members. Contrary to the charges that have been made, the NC memorandum does not take an approach that counterposes gay liberation to the other movements for social change. Rather, it looks at each movement, not only from the point of view of its value as a struggle against capitalist injustice, but also from a party point of view. On page 9 of the NC memorandum, point four, it states:

"Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question."

Further on under the same point, it states:

"Exactly how the party should orient towards this movement at the present time has to be considered in the light of the concrete situation of this movement and in relation to other fields of work and tasks facing our party."

It will do no favor to the cause of gay liberation for the party to adopt a wrong policy on this question, even if it superficially appears a more "favorable" one. The struggle for democratic rights by gay people may or may not be temporarily won in the United States before a work-

ers state is established here. But it is only through a socialist revolution that the democratic demands of gay people will be secured. It is only if we are successful in building a mass working-class revolutionary party that leads the class and its allies to the establishment of a workers state that particular layers of the oppressed, including gay people, will find real and final liberation from their special bonds. By building the party wherever it must be built, all of our comrades are making the biggest contribution to gay liberation that can be made. Without their efforts, the gains made by gay people in the streets and courts could be rolled back overnight. This fact requires a sober approach to party-building strategy, devoid of fear either of innovation or of being "old-fashioned." Our approach to the class struggle must be scientific and not sentimental.

I believe there are major tactical and political differences between the NC memorandum and the Thorstad-Green proposal, although many of these are not fully developed in the counterposed documents. First, there are big tactical differences between the two about what is possible and about what is actually happening in the gay movement. On page nine of the NC memorandum, it states:

"On a local level there has been somewhat of a dropping off of struggles for the rights of gay people in the past period. But what struggles have occurred have been locally organized. Where such demonstrations, defense cases, etc., occur, the party should support them. Branches have the responsibility to carry out such work within the context of carrying out the major campaigns being conducted by the party."

Thorstad-Green, on the other hand, lay out a hefty list of activities that the party should be involved in. On page 8 section III, they state:

"The SWP must intervene in and champion the struggle for gay liberation. Our doing so will benefit not only the gay liberation movement, but also the building of the revolutionary party."

And:

"Our approach should be flexible. While there is no single focus of action in the gay movement today, we should not let this deter us from seeking ways to support, help build and recruit from the gay liberation movement. We should actively relate to the gay liberation movement on a local level."

This is obviously a much heavier emphasis on the gay movement than that proposed in the NC memorandum. This tactical prescription is not based on a realistic assessment of what is actually going on in the movement. It simply isn't true that political opportunities for fruitful intervention into the gay movement are common at this time, even on a local level. If and when such opportunities do occur, the NC memorandum provides a good guideline for the party. Intervention in such a situation should be neither precluded nor required of a branch. The Thorstad-Green prescription is an abstract method that discounts other factors that should be considered by a branch in making such decisions.

Bluntly, it is simply not dealing with the real world to say that the party is missing opportunities. It is unreasonable to claim as some do that the party may not be miss-

ing opportunities now, but is likely to do so in the future if the NC proposal is adopted because it doesn't lay out what form those opportunities will take or dictate our approach. We must deal with the points raised in the discussion on the basis of the world we live in now, and not on the basis of an infinite number of future possibilities. Above all, it is not proper to rest one's case on vague suspicions and doubts about the leadership's "real," "hidden" views about gay liberation.

An example of the kind of realistic intervention that the document passed by the NC authorizes is that which was carried out by the Social-Democratic movement and other radicals around the Oscar Wilde case in Britain at the turn of the century. The left participated in the tremendous outcry of protest against the persecution of Wilde. Similar events in the U.S. would find the party with a clear and unmistakable position. We would support that person and expose the real mechanisms of the capitalist apparatus' suppression of human rights. Such an approach is included in the method of the NC memorandum.

Adopting the unbalanced approach of the Thorstad-Green document would do more than hurt our work in the gay movement by imposing an approach out of line with realities. It would disturb and disorient our general approach to the class struggle. It distorts the image we project to the masses of people, an image which must reflect both our support to the whole range of struggles against oppression, and *what we think are the most important issues in the class struggle*. Our overall judgment of what is *central* to the overthrow of capitalism and the building of the party and what is "more peripheral" (from this point of view and not from the point of view of human rights or of our ultimate goal of wholly free human beings) is not determined solely on the basis of the ebbs and flows of the radicalization. When the struggles that had top priority go into a downturn, the lower priority ones do not automatically move up on our priority list as their size becomes more equal. If we adopt the T-G proposal, our priorities and our approach to the overall class struggle will be thrown out of whack. And the gay movement is not the only one on which such errors could be made. The same method can be applied to a wide range of struggles.

On key theoretical questions which could well lie at the bottom of these differences, the Thorstad-Green document is vague and inconclusive. They contend that capitalist society is "predicated on the need to suppress homosexual behavior" because of "its general need to repress sexuality" and because "homosexual behavior conflicts with society's exclusive heterosexual norm." On page 8, they write:

"The ultimate impact and appeal of the gay liberation movement can only be understood on the basis of the fact that it involves a struggle not merely for the rights of a presently constituted minority who are defined as gay, but for an end to the built-in need of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior in all of its members...."

And:

"Millions who have never engaged in homosexual activities can and must be won to supporting the struggle for gay rights and liberation."

This section could be interpreted to mean that *in order*

to make a socialist revolution, *millions* of straight people must be won to support the struggle for gay liberation. This strongly implies that in order to overturn capitalism, *there must be a mass gay movement*. Such a far-reaching conclusion should have a profound theoretical base.

The program of our party is that the American socialist revolution will be a combined revolution of the working class and the oppressed nationalities. The women's movement also seems likely to draw large numbers of working and nonworking women into the struggle. But we don't see the sexual revolution as being central to the process of *overturning* capitalism. I don't see how there can be a real mass struggle for sexual liberation unless the social foundations of society have been transformed by a prior revolution. Yet, it seems to be the concept of a mass struggle for sexual liberation under capitalism that may underlie the Thorstad-Green insistence that the gay movement must encompass millions if the revolution is to occur. Thorstad-Green are not direct or clear when it comes to theoretical underpinnings but they don't seem to base their approach on the same theoretical approach and method as the NC memorandum. They seem to leave the door wide open to revisions of our theory.

Since it doesn't clearly state the theoretical basis of its proposal, the Thorstad-Green document unwittingly creates the possibility of an unprincipled combination around its tactical approach. The experience of FAPO and the Internationalist Tendency may have introduced some confusions into what an unprincipled combination actually is and may allow some comrades to slip into one without any awareness that they are doing this. FAPO-IT is an unprincipled antileadership gang with *no principles whatever*. Their recent shifts on the gay question show that their goal is to find a bridge to any grouping that has a difference with the party leadership, regardless of what positions have to be dropped, hidden, reversed, or adopted to do it.

However, a more common type of unprincipled combination in our history is the unity of groups with *different principles* (as opposed to *no principles*) around a secondary tactical question. Thus, the party could accept a tactical line without knowing the theoretical underpinnings of it, and could set off on a new road without even knowing that it was a new road. The Thorstad-Green proposal is totally unacceptable until and unless the theoretical positions that may underlie it (or the different theoretical principles that may underlie it in the minds of different supporters) have been laid before the party.

Support and identification with the gay liberation movement do not justify rejection of the NC memorandum. This carefully thought out document takes a position based on the real weight of the movement, the real opportunities it offers us, and takes a position that places the gay movement in the context of our overall view of what the party should do. Within this context, it permits for flexible interventions where that is called for, controlled by the branches. Opponents of intervention (if there are such left) cannot support the NC memorandum without, as a practical matter, giving up the fight against such local intervention subject to our priorities. Those who, as

I do, support a realistic and modest intervention in the gay movement, subject to national priorities and local

needs, should join me in supporting the NC memorandum.

July 25, 1973

IS THE DETENTE SERIOUS? IS THE MINORITY SERIOUS?

by Bob Schwarz, San Francisco Branch

The following is an edited version of the summary I gave to the San Francisco branch following the discussion based on "The Unfolding New World Situation" report by Jack Barnes to the National Committee plenum (*Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 31, #12). Members of the tendency formed around the June 10 "Statement of Support to the International Majority Tendency" (*Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 31, #11), had asked for and were granted equal time to present a report in opposition to the National Committee report. (Since they have stated that they consider a name for their tendency unimportant, I have referred to them throughout as the "June 10 Tendency" for want of another label.) Lew Pepper from the Oakland-Berkeley branch presented that report, speaking, he said, on behalf of both the June 10 and Internationalist tendencies.

In his presentation Lew Pepper listed four areas of disagreement with Jack Barnes' report, "The Unfolding New World Situation": (1) the characterization of the economic period we are in and the post-World War II period; (2) the meaning of the detente between the capitalist countries and the workers states; (3) the conclusions flowing from the detente and the economic analysis; (4) matters "not sufficiently dealt with" in Barnes' report—fascism in Europe, crisis in Latin America, the political revolution in the deformed workers states, and the state of the Fourth International.

Then Lew started out with an economic analysis. I listened, in fact three times, and I could not catch the substantive differences, except on one point, the World War II detentes to which I will return. But the bulk of his analysis seemed to be, as he put it, a recapitulation of Mandel's analysis, and much the same as the analysis contained in Barnes' report as the basis for this new period. So where is the difference?

Let me briefly outline the analysis Pepper claims to dispute. The present situation of capitalism results from the end of the 1945-1968 rebuilding of capitalism. We find an immediate stimulus for inflation, monetary crisis, trade deficit, etc., in the economic consequences of the Vietnam war, but the underlying factor, the basic economic change is the end of the post-World War II development, based on the rebuilding of Europe and Japan.

This has resulted in part in inter-imperialist rivalry on a much higher scale than before and a rise in working-class struggles in the advanced capitalist countries. But the rise of inter-imperialist rivalries and working-class militancy and struggle in the advanced capitalist coun-

tries— isn't what Mandel says, isn't that what Pepper says, isn't that what Barnes says? Where is the difference in the characterization of the economic period?

No, you're grasping at straws. You're manufacturing differences to provide a platform from which to denounce that petty-bourgeois party bureaucrat Jack Barnes and his messianic obsession with the campuses— not even the junior colleges, but the sons and daughters of the ruling class!

Well, what's the harm in that, besides wasting time? You claim to represent an international tendency. You are not just ascribing nonexistent differences and driving unnecessary wedges into the national discussion, but into the international as well. That certainly doesn't help preserve unity, does it? If Mandel, Maitan and Frank disagree with Barnes' analysis, I'm sure they'll say so. But, since much of it is in fact based on Mandel's own work, they may accept it, or part of it, disagreeing with the other part, which would be a contribution to providing a basis of unity and clarifying the real differences. It's too bad the so-called "internationalists" are not internationalist enough to help instead of hindering that process.

On the questions which were "inadequately covered," I fail to see how any confusion can exist on our position on Latin America. Barnes' report contains considerable material on the political revolutions and the state of the Fourth International. These "differences" seem again to be motivated more by a desire to differentiate yourself from the report than clarify the discussion.

As regards fascism in Europe, Lew described several groups which I think we would both agree do not as yet pose a major threat but must nevertheless be taken quite seriously. In the discussion on the European perspectives document we had some debate over what was the best response to attacks, whether by the state or extralegal, fascist bands. I think this is really what Lew is talking about, and in response it is only necessary to repeat that we oppose so-called "minority violence" or "initiatives in action" where the party "initiates violence" as a *substitute* for and without the backing and participation of the masses. Defense, whatever character it takes, must be based on the level of understanding of the working class and the primary consideration must be actions which will serve to mobilize broader participation. In Europe we are confronted with a wide range of actions, from the fire-bombing of Honeywell-Bull and the Argentine embassy to the united front mass demonstration in opposition to the murder by company goons of the Maoist Renault worker Overney. It is dishonest to make vague references to "initiatives" and militant defense; elliptical

and synthetic formulations will not do here. We cannot possibly give blanket support to such a variety of actions. You must spell out what you're proposing or supporting.

Now we come to what I think is the real difference, the assessment of the detente between imperialism and the workers states. Throughout his report Lew minimized the importance of the detente, calling it a "diplomatic arrangement" and accusing Barnes of overemphasizing the detente's importance to draw attention away from the rise in militancy of the world working class and the SWP leadership's alleged failure to orient toward it. Lew characterized this as a "superstructural analysis" and lectured us with a quote from Marx on the importance of beginning with the mode of production, which determines the political superstructure.

To begin with, we don't consider the detente "both the cause and the result" of the new world situation as Lew maintained we do, anymore than we considered the Vietnam war the "cause and result" of the laste sixties. But we did characterize that war as "the center of world politics." In fact, that phrase occurred at the beginning of so many convention reports and resolutions it became almost a cliché. It was only a political conflict, but one with far-reaching consequences, as we recognized as early as 1965. Does the minority now dispute that contention? They didn't then.

In my report I clearly described the economic situation that forced certain actions on the capitalist class — a certain shift in their strategy. And I said that we were going to analyze what this shift in their strategy is and what it means for us and for the revolution throughout the world. As Derrell put it in the discussion, the Soviet Union, China and the other deformed and degenerated workers states, along with the parties that follow them, are the strongest section of the organized world working class. When they make a deal with the boss, we have to take a close look at it, at the circumstances under which it was made, what pressures are on each side, and conclude whether we think it has a basis, whether it will last, and what effect it will have on the class struggle.

We contend that this detente is central, in much the same way the war in Vietnam was central. What have been its effects? First, it is not true that we believe as Lew implied, that it is primarily economic. Only a very small percentage of American trade is with the Soviet Union at present. The joint investment projects in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe are still in the future. Right now the primary impact and objective is political.

In the first place, the detente has already resulted in the betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution. That is our assessment. In fact, we think that was the primary motivating factor in the detente negotiations. It is true, as the report points out, that that revolution is not crushed, but it has been betrayed, by the Moscow Stalinists, by the Peking Stalinists, and by the Hanoi Stalinists.

In correcting Jack Barnes and the National Committee in their assessment of the present detente, Lew makes some statements which I'm not sure he means about the World War II period and capitalism's viability as an economic system. He draws a parallel between our supposed overestimation of the present detente and the Shachtmanites who, he says, erroneously based their whole approach on the Hitler-Stalin pact, a fleeting detente of no permanent significance. Well, it had permanence for Poland, which was invaded under its aegis by both countries, it had an impact on the Communist parties around the world who

had to stop their opposition to local fascists in deference to the alliance with "peaceloving" Germany, and it had profound significance for the Red Army, which did not respond to Hitler's initial invasion because Stalin could not believe his best friend would turn on him.

Lew is hasty in concluding that this detente ended with the breaking of the Hitler-Stalin pact. Except for a brief interlude it continued, but with the democratic instead of the fascist imperialists, and Stalin became one of the "Big Three." In this country the Stalinists declared and enforced a no-strike pledge in honor of the detente, and internationally they dissolved the Third International in 1943. But the most important consequences came after the war, in 1945 and 1946.

In conferences at Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt divided the world into "spheres of influence." Stalin got Eastern Europe, and in return he guaranteed the preservation of capitalism in Western Europe and coalition governments with the capitalists in Eastern Europe, the so-called "people's democracies." These latter were socialized in self-defense after the detente was broken by the imperialists in 1947-50. But before that happened, Stalin kept his end of the bargain in France, Italy and Greece.

In France the Communist Party emerged from the world war as the largest organized party, growing enormously and dominating French politics. Rather than use this influence to prepare the working class for the seizure of power, under orders from Stalin they prepared the working class to work harder than ever and became the "party of production," even of speed-up, as they urged the workers to sacrifice everything for the good of the "nation."

In Italy the Resistance, dominated by the Communist Party, issued a call for uprisings against the Nazis in the spring of 1945. The workers of the major northern industrial centers seized the factories, executed the fascists and established the armed workers as the state power. Within a few months the Communist Party had convinced the workers to disarm, hand over power to the Allied Army, and dissolve the Resistance.

In Greece the Communist Party led the ELAS, the Greek partisan army, which also dominated the country. After attempts to live within the very constructed "democratic" framework imposed by the British after a capitulation by the ELAS similar to France and Italy, the Greek people finally rose in revolt. Though the Greek Communist Party could not prevent this revolt they did defeat it by convincing the ELAS to commit "military suicide" by changing from guerrilla to "positional" or standard warfare, where they were defeated by the superior armaments of the British and Greek royalists and Stalin's refusal to provide any aid.

In his report Lew contended that "it was the power of capitalism to invest, revolutionize its productive forces and stabilize itself, although only temporarily, that was the fundamental cause [of post-war capitalist recovery and expansion] and not the political power of the Stalinists." Without getting into semantic arguments about the meaning of "fundamental," it is fair to say that Lew overstates capitalism's viability by minimizing the role of Stalinism in stifling, betraying and actually defeating the decisive European revolutionary movements that could have changed the course of history. As Johnson and Feldman have shown, a similar process took place in Asia.

We have always believed this betrayal made a fundamental contribution to the restabilization of capitalism in Europe and internationally. Not only did it offer the U.S. a breather to regroup its forces, but it provided one of the major outlets for economic growth through rebuilding and investment. Can you imagine what it would have meant if France, Italy, Greece, or all three had been rebuilt under socialist governments?

The war-time detente was ended with Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech and the opening of the "cold war" when the imperialists had saved European capitalism and were convinced they no longer needed Stalin's help. They broke it because they were strong enough to do without it. They may do so very quickly with the present detente. If they are only able to stabilize Southeast Asia, which hasn't yet been accomplished, they will have done a lot. I think they're aiming for bigger stakes, but even that would justify calling the world situation "new."

During the 1960s the Soviet Union and China gave grudging aid and verbal support to Vietnam and Cuba and to many developing colonial movements. We have always attacked them for the inadequacy of this support, because we felt the inadequacy encouraged imperialism and prolonged the conflict. But at the same time we recognized that the aid existed and that it was genuinely helpful, as far as it went. This corresponded to a contradictory feature of Stalinist policy. Making it a little hot for imperialism was part of their world strategy aimed at getting a detente — you have to *have* something in order to sell it out. A much lesser factor was pressure for revolutionary solidarity from their own people, particularly politicized layers like students and intellectuals. But the dominant motivation was pressure on imperialism, and that means the detente will largely exclude even that grudging and miserly aid. To maintain their alliance with imperialism they must now act in a more openly and clearly counterrevolutionary manner, as in 1945 and 1946. The bureaucratic misleaders of the most powerful organized section of the world working class has signed a promise of class peace and international stability. And we know from history it is a promise they intend to keep. Isn't that worthy of being the central political feature of the present situation? Isn't it a major change?

Can they do it? That, by the way, is what that "mysterious" sentence Lew quoted from Barnes' report is about: ". . . the class struggle. . . continues, but within an altered set of conditions." It is not a platitude or an attempt by Barnes to "cover himself" on the combativity of the working class. It is an answer to the question, "Can the Stalinists keep the lid on the class struggle?" It answers "no." The class struggle continues; the rise in working-class militancy, in the colonial revolution, in the political revolution continues. The radicalization cannot be turned back by this detente because it corresponds to a basic, immediate impasse in capitalist development. But the detente imposes new conditions on the rise of world revolution, and the purpose of the report is to analyze those new conditions, in the light of the end of both the post-World War II expansion and U.S. economic, military and political hegemony. The fact that Lew not only missed the answer but didn't even understand the question is quite a commentary on his political level and the seriousness of his objections.

What we are seeing is something Marx was very conscious of, even if Lew overlooked it: there is a dialectical interrelationship between the political superstructure and the economic base from which it arises. The economic relations in the Soviet Union in Lenin's time, in Cuba, and in the Soviet Union today, are all the same. But the political superstructure is different, profoundly different, qualitatively different. Is that a "superstructural analysis"?

Now I said that I didn't think Lew necessarily meant everything he said the way it sounded. I think he intended to pick holes in Barnes' analysis rather than propose one of his own. Most of this is motivated by an attempt to expand the very real differences that exist over how to *reach* the working class into a full-blown international position with pretigious allies. But such actions have a logic of their own. In the discussion on Vietnam we will have an opportunity to see just exactly how far the June 10 Tendency has revised our estimation of Stalinism and its impact on history in the interests of opposing the leadership of the SWP.

* * *

Postscript

The June 10 Tendency also requested and received equal time to oppose the majority report on Vietnam. It was announced before hand that the discussion would concern primarily the questions raised in the article by Sterne, "The Debate on Indochina" (*International Internal Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 10 No. 7) on the character of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the assessment of the Accords as counterposed in that contribution to the SWP position expressed in *Militant* articles and the July-August *ISR* article "The Nature of the Vietnamese Communist Party" by George Johnson and Fred Feldman. Jeff Beneke, reporting for the June 10 Tendency, stated: ". . . our tendency as a whole has not yet met and taken a vote on these questions and does not plan to until line resolutions are introduced by either the SWP leadership or the International Majority. Therefore the views that I will express [on these questions] are essentially my own. However, it can be assumed that they are generally reflective of the opinions of most of the tendency members in this area." In expressing his "personal opinion" he did go so far as to characterize the Vietnamese Communist Party as Stalinist but said that on the Accords and "how to struggle against Stalinism," "we do not have full agreement with either Sterne or the SWP." He did not enlighten us on what *his* position is, or how he could bloc with Sterne against the SWP on the basis of the essentially secondary question of tactics and strategy in the antiwar movement while disagreeing with him on the fundamental questions of Stalinism, the Accords, and the character of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Apparently the June 10 Tendency (and the same can be said of the Internationalist Tendency) finds such substantive questions less important than attacks on the Party leadership, buttressed by references to their supposed "European cothinkers." Their lightminded attitude toward politics is leading them into revisions of Trotskyism they don't even imagine.

July 20, 1973

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON IRELAND

by Peter Archer, Chicago Branch

With the publication of the document *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe* it has become obvious that there exist within the Fourth International deep differences on the questions of party building, the relationship of the party to the masses and the relationship between the party and the so-called political "vanguard." These differences do not take place in a vacuum, but in the context of actual work being carried out by sections of the International. This makes it even more important that a thorough discussion of these differences be held in all sections and that the major documents of both sides be translated for different sections as quickly as possible.

In the present contribution, I want to take up one area of work which has been seriously affected by the errors of supporters of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency. This is our work in relation to the Irish struggle. Because of the extreme complexity of the subject it is impossible to summarize all the differences which exist in a single article. However, I hope that other comrades will take up the subject further, both in the written discussion and in the discussion at the convention itself.

The Responsibilities of the International Leadership

Since the world congress four years ago, the upsurge in Ireland has continued apace. The continuing civil rights marches, the rebellions of the Catholic population in Bogside and Falls Road, and the events of Bloody Sunday have all served to focus world attention on Ireland. Although the struggle has run an uneven and contradictory course, there can be no question that it has become one of the central battles being waged in Europe between the oppressed and the oppressors. Hundreds of young people have emerged from the struggles in Belfast and Derry as committed revolutionaries, radicalized in the struggle of Catholic people to gain their rights. The process of constructing a nucleus of Trotskyist party builders has begun with the formation of the Revolutionary Marxist Group.

In light of these developments the leadership of the International has a responsibility to provide a detailed historical and political analysis of the Irish struggle and to assist the comrades of the RMG in laying out a general strategy for party building in Ireland. This they have failed to do.

The British section of the Fourth International, the International Marxist Group, has a duty to build a movement in Britain which can involve the masses of British workers in action against the British government's interference in Ireland. Such a movement can play a major role in destroying the chauvinism which has infected much of the working class in England. It could aid the developing nationalist movements in Scotland and Wales. Building this movement should be made a central priority for our comrades in Britain. They should take the lead in ensuring the nonexclusionary and massive character of this movement. This the IMG has failed to do.

The fault here does not lie exclusively with the leader-

ship of the IMG. The comrades of the United Secretariat should have played a key role in correcting the sectarian mistakes of the British section and using these mistakes to educate the leadership of the IMG, to show them how such a movement *should* be built. Once again, here the international leadership has failed. The European perspectives document (as the document *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe* is usually referred to) attempts a continental analysis of the situation in Europe. Because of this, it does not focus on the specifics of struggles in individual countries. Instead, by attempting to prescribe tactics and strategy for the whole of Europe, it either overgeneralizes so much as to become meaningless, or else falls into the trap of rigid schematism. To attempt to use the same tactics or strategy in France, a country with a tradition of large working-class parties and a large section of the Trotskyist movement already established, as in Ireland, a country with a new and inexperienced section and an extremely contradictory history of struggle, is little short of ludicrous. In those portions of the document where it does touch specifically on Ireland, it makes windy generalizations which can mean almost anything one wishes. For these reasons, the document can only be classified as a step backwards for the International.

The Dynamic of Permanent Revolution in Ireland

There is no disagreement within the International over the basic nature of Catholic oppression in Ireland. The basic function of this oppression is to destroy the idea of a united and independent Ireland, to destroy the sense of nationhood which pervades Ireland. The Catholic population in Northern Ireland represents a part of the native Irish population. The Protestants represent an alien force introduced into Ireland by the British in the 17th century in order to ensure the stability of British rule. This explains the fierce loyalty which the Protestant extremists feel towards Britain.

The Irish bourgeoisie in the South is a weak and divided class. Historically its interests have been closely tied to those of British capital. Indeed, during the crisis in 1970 members of Fianna Fail (the liberal pseudo-nationalist party in the South) began to contemplate the possibility of a federalist solution to the Irish problem, in which both areas would be reunited within the British Empire.

Because the Irish bourgeoisie is incapable of solving the democratic tasks which remain uncompleted in Ireland, and because it retains its ties to British imperialism, the working class of Ireland must take the lead in carrying these tasks through to their conclusion. The achieving of Irish national self-determination cannot be confined within the bounds of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It will take a socialist revolution, led by the Irish working people. Because the civil rights struggle is part of the struggle for nationhood, and because ultimately its goals cannot be carried out in a divided and capitalist Ireland, it has a tremendously explosive potential.

The peculiar nature of Ireland and the Irish struggle lies in the uneven character of their development. The struggle originated as a fight against British conquest in the 17th century, basing itself on backward social forms, most notably the Catholic Church. Thus, the revolution was faced from the onset with the problem of finding a consistent social expression and a revolutionary leadership. Both of these problems have continued to plague the struggle down to the present day. Republicanism, the dominant ideology of the nationalist movement, is a confusing mixture of conflicting political forms, social outlooks and romantic traditions. Its adherents have generally wavered between two incorrect organizational forms: the national front embracing reformist as well as revolutionary elements, and the clandestine military organization, isolated from the mass movement. Marxism is the only ideology which gives consistent expression to the nationalist aspirations of the Irish people. For that reason, the key task for Irish revolutionaries today is the patient, step-by-step construction of a Leninist party, based firmly on Marxist principles.

As one of its first prerequisites, the party must be able to understand the religious sectarianism which exists today in Northern Ireland and be able to place it in correct historical perspective. (N.B.: By sectarianism, I do not mean the kind of political sectarianism which most comrades in this country are familiar with. Sectarianism, as it relates to the Irish struggle, refers specifically to the conflict between Protestants and Catholics.)

The first British invaders of Ireland were consistently driven back by Irish warriors and never succeeded in establishing any permanent base in Ireland. Not until the invasions organized by Oliver Cromwell, leader of the Puritan revolution in England in 1648, was British rule over Ireland firmly consolidated. British settlers were exported to Ireland, destroying as much of the native culture as they could and pushing the native population South. By and large the settlers were Protestant, Protestantism being the ideological reflection of the rising capitalist class in England. The largest colony of Protestants was established in the North, in what is today Ulster.

When the civil war of 1921 broke out, the British forces received most of their support from the area in the North around Belfast, where the population was heavily Protestant. Conversely, the Free State forces were centered in Dublin and the area further south, where a majority of the people were staunch Catholics. When a treaty was proposed by the British in 1922 it specified that the area in the South, comprised of 26 counties was to become a Free State. The six counties of Ulster were to remain under British control. Although the left wing of the IRA opposed the signing of this agreement, they were crushed by the "Treatyites" and peace was concluded.

There are two essential points to understand from all of this. First, the point I mentioned earlier. *The Protestant population represents an alien force in Ireland.* They are being used by the British imperialists to further Britain's economic domination of Ireland. The second point is that the civil war of 1921 did not accomplish the complete unification of Ireland. The leadership of it stopped halfway. As a result, the economic and social unification of Ireland still remains an uncompleted task. It will be a priority for the socialist revolution in Ireland. In-

deed it is an intimate part of the process of revolution in Ireland.

By playing off Catholic against Protestant, the British government can maintain its iron grip on the North and keep the nationalists weak and divided. However, the solution is not some form of false "unity" between Protestants and Catholics based on the skipping over of the civil rights of Catholics. For there to be real unity, Protestant workers must recognize the full social, and political equality of the Catholics. An alliance between Catholics and Protestants will be forged in the struggle against Protestant chauvinism and discrimination. Only thus can true unity be achieved.

The Civil Rights Struggle

The civil rights marches in Northern Ireland began in 1968. The initial organizing force behind them, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was at that time heavily dominated by reformists of various types, content to pressure the Stormont regime (the government of Northern Ireland) into a few modest concessions. As the movement began to grow, it attracted the attention of Protestant reactionaries such as the neo-fascist Ian Paisley who organized "counter demonstrations" of Protestant thugs, armed with chains, clubs and rocks. Violent confrontations took place and scores of Catholics were injured. In the wave of marches and rallies which followed, the Irish Republican Army, largely because of its relatively high degree of organization was successful in winning the leadership of the civil rights movement.

The other organization which played a major role in the struggle at this point was the Peoples Democracy movement, a vague, loosely knit formation, resembling in many ways the American SDS. Peoples Democracy led several major civil rights marches, including one across Ulster which was viciously attacked by Paisley's thugs. They also ran in the elections in Northern Ireland and elected Bernadette Devlin to Parliament. It was the first time that anyone representing the "extreme" wing of the Irish nationalist forces had ever participated in the British parliament. However, when fighting broke out in Belfast and Derry in 1969, PD was unable to play any real role in it because of its loose organizational character. Thus, while the IRA came out of the fighting with its prestige and political influence much enhanced, PD began to fade out of the civil rights struggle.

When the Stormont government proved itself incapable of dealing with the Catholic rebellions of 1969, the British government decided to introduce British troops as a "peace-keeping force." Marches were banned, barbed wire and sand bags were set up to create a barrier between the Catholic and Protestant communities and internment was authorized. Internment is a procedure which has been utilized very effectively in the past. In practice, it gives the government the right to intern, without trial, any individual suspected of planning or committing acts against the government. Internees may be detained for an indefinite period of time, and are usually not allowed any communication with the outside world. Internment has become a part of daily life in Northern Ireland over the last few years.

The Tasks of the IMG

The dramatic coverage which the 1969 August fighting

received over television and in the English press sparked a wave of indignation in Britain. Bernadette Devlin's speeches in Parliament on the condition of the Irish Catholic population caused widespread sympathy, especially among campus youth in Britain. The chief thing which was needed in this situation was a massive movement in Britain directed at the British government to get its troops out of Ireland and to end the policy of internment. The potential for such a movement was vast, both on the campuses and among the general population.

As Comrade Mirelowitz stated in his contribution on the antiwar movement in the United States, we favor an orientation towards the *masses*. With us, mobilizing the masses isn't just a tactic or a conjunctural convenience. It's a strategy, something we try to do all the time, wherever and whenever we can. We understand that the revolution itself is an action by the revolutionary masses, an upheaval which mobilizes huge portions of society. To take this lightly and attempt to carry on work over the heads of the masses is to court disaster.

The leadership of the International Marxist Group failed to understand this. Instead of building a movement around the slogan "Withdraw British Troops from Ireland Now," a demand which could have mobilized the masses of British workers against the government's policies in Ireland, they put forward the slogan "Victory to the IRA."

There are a number of problems with the slogan "Victory to the IRA." First, it is not a demand on the British government. Rather, it is an expression of a sentiment, a statement of what the IMG would like to take place. It does not call upon the British government to *do* anything. Therefore, it is difficult to see what role it could play in exposing the role of British imperialism in Ireland to the British workers.

Secondly, the slogan is politically unclear. There are two wings of the IRA: the Officials and the Provisional IRA. The slogan does not indicate which IRA it supports. Moreover, the raising of this slogan makes the relationship between the political program of the IMG and the programs of the two IRAs very unclear. The IMG itself recognized a certain difficulty in this respect. In May 1972, C. Howard and A. Jones wrote: "What is clear is that we must *now* clarify our political positions. This means in particular (a) undertaking a rigorous critique of the IRA (b) clarifying our slogans, in particular to withdraw any implications that we believe the IRA to be capable of defeating British imperialism (i.e., of destroying capitalism in Ireland)" (SWP Internal Information Bulletin Number 3 in 1972, p. 34).

It is commendable that the IMG has, at least, recognized part of the problem. However, it does not alter the fact that many people who witnessed demonstrations in which the slogan "Victory to the IRA" was chanted by our comrades have been misled by this mistake.

Thirdly, the slogan "Victory to the IRA" is not one which can mobilize the masses of British people behind it. Howard and Jones brush this off as being of little importance: "We are not guided by some consideration of 'mobilizing the greatest number of people'" they contemptuously state. And yet 'mobilizing the greatest numbers of people' is precisely what our movement is all about! To show contempt for mobilizing masses of people betrays a contempt for the British working class.

That is just who the masses are. You cannot simply skip over them.

In contrast, a movement around the slogan "Britain Out of Ireland Now" directly calls for action by the English government. It exposes the government's basic policy of maintaining rule over Ireland by force. And it is a demand which to most British workers and students sounds eminently reasonable. It does not require prior allegiance to some political program; instead it unites *everyone*, regardless of their other political affiliations around actions which are against the interests of British imperialism.

The British workers still retain much of the chauvinism which has been drilled into them by education and the English mass media. The dominant image of the Irish person is that of a whiskey-guzzling terrorist, a bomb in one hand and a Guinness bottle in the other. Similar attitudes exist toward people of Scotland and Wales. One of the key tasks facing English revolutionaries is to break down this chauvinism and unite all the people of Britain in a common struggle against their oppressors. This cannot be done by bypassing the British workers. To regard as unimportant whether or not the masses of workers respond favorably to a demand and are drawn into struggle by it, is the first step towards political suicide. The IMG must reverse its course on this question, before more errors are committed.

The Experience of the Anti-Internment League

The main vehicle for IMG activity around Ireland has been the Anti-Internment League. This organization was originally founded with the idea of uniting everyone opposed to internment. However, this is no longer the case. An article in the *United Irishman* (the newspaper of the Official IRA) of June 1973 explains:

"At its formation. . . the League performed a vital and necessary function of uniting most immigrant organizations and many sympathetic British ones behind two basic demands: withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and the ending of internment. It was a true united front in that people of widely divergent political beliefs sank their differences and joined forces to combat the increasing repression of British imperialism in the Six Counties.

"Unfortunately, this state of affairs did not last. Efforts were made to narrow the base of the AIL. They were gradually successful. By the time of the last annual conference, the League had changed its character. A total revolutionary commitment in general was demanded from the membership. It ceased to function as a broad based united front organisation and became as it still remains a solidarity campaign.

"In our view, what is needed is a movement to which anyone who opposes internment and the British Military presence in Ireland, can belong. The sacrifice of such a movement in favour of a narrower campaign is, at the present time, both incorrect and dangerous.

"Clann na hEireann (the Republican support organization in Britain) believes that the AIL by its composition and nature is incapable of winning the support of the British working class. Without this vital support, we maintain, no headway can be made in this country (England).

"The AIL started off with an impressive collection of trade unionists within its ranks. It has lost them prin-

cipally through the strident immaturity of ultra-leftists. The AIL cannot, in its present state, present any serious threat in the battle to sway British opinion."

The article ends by announcing the withdrawal of Clann na hEireann from the Anti-Internment League. Unfortunately, there can be little doubt as to the identity of the "ultra-leftists" to whom the article refers.

The IMG did not deny the charges that it was responsible for narrowing the base of the AIL. On the contrary, Bob Purdie, one of the central organizers of the AIL and a member of the IMG, speaking at a Coventry Conference of the League said that "at certain times (e.g., after internment) it was possible and absolutely necessary to try to build a movement involving the largest number of people around simple demands (e.g., End Internment). Nevertheless, it was also necessary at times, to fight within the movement for more developed political demands (such as explicit support of the military struggle of the IRA)" (*Red Mole*, Jan. 20, 1973).

The most disturbing aspect of the error of the IMG leadership is their attitude toward the masses. The most important task which revolutionaries have before them today is to raise the consciousness of the masses, to make the masses aware of their own strength. A solidarity movement which ignores the masses, which considers the question of reaching them to be "unimportant" is miseducating the masses and bringing them to a lower political level. This is in direct contradiction to the idea put forward by the leaders of the IMG and the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency that small "militant" demonstrations bring the "vanguard" to a higher political level. In reality, just the opposite is the case.

The Politics of the Provisionals

The 1968 civil rights marches in Northern Ireland caused a crisis in the ranks of the Republican movement. A split took place in the Northern Command of the IRA, after the leadership of the IRA in Belfast and Derry accused the IRA in the South of not providing sufficient military assistance during the fighting. They set up their own Northern Command which precipitated a split in the organization as a whole. At the national convention of Sinn Fein (the political arm of the IRA), a number of delegates sympathizing with the new Northern Command walked out of the convention. Together with the dissidents in the North, they set up a "Provisional Army Council" which has come to be known as the Provisional IRA.

Following the split, the Official IRA began a general reassessment of their work. They came to the conclusion that over the last several years, the Army had committed a number of errors. Among these were:

"(1) The Army had no political base among the people.

"(2) The movement (i.e., the Republican movement) had no clearcut ideology which could define to the people what the struggle was all about."

The Officials also took a significant step forward by reevaluating the traditional IRA policy of boycotting the elections as a principle. "The last number of years has seen the movement engage in all aspects of the struggle and has seen the movement become once more a revolutionary force in Ireland. In order to progress, the Army Council of Ogligh na hEireann (the IRA) feels that no-

body should bind the movement to one form of struggle... As new social, political, economic and other crises arise, so will other forms of struggle." (Quoted in *Ireland in Rebellion* by Gerry Foley, p. 11.)

This was a significant break with the sectarian and dogmatic principle of boycott in the past. Evidently the reevaluation which the IRA was undertaking was producing serious results.

In sharp contrast, the Provisionals made no such reestimation of Republican program and strategy. The balance sheet which they drew of the 1970 split centered on five points:

"(1) The kind of socialism advocated by the official leadership was undemocratic, as shown by their organizational methods.

"(2) The official movement failed to adequately defend the people of Belfast and Derry.

"(3) The Officials defended the autonomy of Northern Ireland (that is, the existence of the Parliament at Stormont) while the Provisionals favored direct rule from Britain, since this would bring the population into direct conflict with imperialism.

"(4) The official leadership systematically drove political opponents out of the movement.

"(5) The Provisionals regarded boycotting parliament as an inviolable principle." (Quoted in *Ireland in Rebellion*, p. 14.)

It is evident that the Provisionals have no intention at any time in the near future of restudying and reevaluating the politics of Republicanism. It is not surprising that this should be the case, since most of the older elements of the IRA stayed with the Provisionals during the split and exercise a heavy influence on their thinking. These elements are generally opposed to socialism as a "foreign ideology," something alien to Irish life and traditions. They intend to stick to the course of clandestine military actions of the type utilized by the IRA since 1922.

What should have been the course followed by revolutionary Marxists in this situation? It had two aspects. First, we should have begun an intensive dialogue with individual members of the Official IRA, explaining our political positions to them, and attempting to win as many of them as possible to the ranks of our party. Our press should have been utilized to polemicize against the terrorist actions of the Provisionals, explaining the revolutionary Marxist position on terrorism and clarifying our strategy of party building for Ireland. Secondly, we should have carefully differentiated ourselves from both wings of the IRA, while expressing unconditional support for the struggle of the Irish people against British imperialism and defending those members of the IRA who were victimized by the British forces in Ireland. In this way, we could have gained the respect of many Irish activists and won them away from the politics of the IRA to our own organization. Such a course would have educated the entire Irish nationalist movement on methods of struggle and defense, as well as building the party.

Unfortunately, the International Marxist Group, the section which should have taken the lead in both of these areas, did none of these things. Instead they offered what amounted to critical support to the Provisional IRA. The rationale given for this was that since the Provisionals were carrying out "armed struggle," they were the more

revolutionary of the two Republican wings. Bob Purdie and Gerry Lawless in their article on the "Politics of the Provisionals" in the November 27, 1972, issue of the *Red Mole* state that "in (a) programmatic sense the Provisionals, despite their adherence to the objective of a 'democratic socialist republic' are bourgeois nationalists." In spite of this, Purdie and Lawless maintain, the programmatic difficulty will be overcome by the objective dynamic of permanent revolution in Ireland. "Therefore, the relationship between the Provisionals and Irish capitalism does not stem abstractly from their program(!) but from the relationship of the Irish bourgeoisie to these political tasks (of the bourgeois democratic revolution)... The important question is whether they (the Provisionals) can transcend that program through conflict with the Irish bourgeoisie and the pressure of class interests at their social base." Purdie and Lawless maintain that it is possible for the Provisionals to "transcend" this program.

Of course it is possible for an organization with a vague or incorrect political program to carry out individual actions which in themselves advance the class struggle. However, without a revolutionary party, such actions will remain isolated and without continuity. The party acts as the collective memory of the working-class movement, assimilating the lessons of many struggles and teaching these lessons to the masses of workers. The party is based on a correct understanding of the dynamic of the struggle and because of this is able to see where the struggle must proceed from any given point. The assertion by Purdie and Lawless that an organization can in some way "transcend" its program, in which are reflected its class outlook and political strategy, leaves the usefulness of such a party in some doubt. Assuming that the Provisionals successfully accomplish this "transcendence," what attitude would revolutionary Marxists have towards them? Would we consider them a new revolutionary party? Or would they merely be an "adequate instrument" composed of "vanguard elements"? If they transcend the present program, does this mean they will have a new program? Or would they only act on the basis of pressure "from their mass base"? Purdie and Lawless apparently leave open the possibility of the Provisionals at some time in the future either becoming a substitute for the revolutionary party in Ireland, or at least an important component of it. And yet this point is never fully spelled out.

Strategy for Revolutionary Marxists

The question of terrorism has been quite adequately dealt with in the context of the discussion of Latin America. Therefore, I do not feel any great need to go into detail on the bombing campaign of the Provisionals. Suffice it to say that the position of the IMG leadership was that the bombing campaign was not terrorist because it kept the British military forces occupied and thus opened the way for mass political opposition to develop. This conception stands the relationship of the party to the masses on its head. Instead of a leader of the masses, the party is seen as their military defender, staving off the enemy while the masses go into action. There is no concept put forward here of teaching the masses to defend themselves and of *involving* them in political actions. The position of the IMG on this point has nothing in common with the traditions of revolutionary Marxism. If they really wish to be consistent in their conception of the role of the party, they should draw their ideological inspiration not from Lenin and Trotsky but from Robin Hood and

William Tell.

The criticisms mentioned above concerning the Provisional IRA are not meant to imply that we should not defend any members of the Provisionals who are victimized as a result of their activities. We defend *all* members of the working-class movement who come under repression from the capitalist class, whether we agree with their politics or not. But we must not bend our program to suit the ideas of radicalizing "vanguard elements." We must stand firm on the principles of Leninism and Trotskyism and win those elements to *our* program and *our* principles.

The program of the Provisional IRA is based on the backward and reactionary aspects of Irish nationalism. Instead of seeing the Irish struggle in an international context, they attempt to limit their vision to Ireland. They do not seek aid from other struggles which are occurring, and they do not understand the relationship that their own fight has to the international struggle against imperialism. The revolutionary Marxists in Ireland have a duty to expose their program and to win the masses away from it.

The MMFT and the Irish Question

Thus far, the bulk of this polemic has been directed against the leadership of the International Marxist Group. However, they are not alone in their errors. The comrades of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency bear responsibility for the errors committed in Ireland as well as those in Latin America. The supporters of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency warned that the mistakes of Latin America would not be confined to that continent. They would be expanded to Europe as well, unless the erroneous course of guerrilla warfare on a continental scale was halted. Although the comrades of the MMFT denied this possibility, we are beginning to see signs of it. The Jebrac tendency in the Ligue Communiste was a warning signal which the International cannot lightly brush aside. Now, we are seeing the results of this orientation in Ireland.

Ireland and Latin America

The comrades in the Chicago branch had the rare privilege some time ago of hearing a supporter of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency state the tendency's position on "armed struggle" with singular clarity. Comrade Debby P., speaking for the Internationalist Tendency, stated: "In certain circumstances, comrades, yes, power *does* flow from the barrel of a gun!" The "circumstances" to which she was specifically referring were those in Latin America today. The IMG seems to have expanded her logic to include Ireland as well.

The most important point to understand about this piece of Maoist profundity, is that if power flows from the barrel of a gun, *exclusively*, then the question of who is shooting the gun becomes immaterial. Likewise the consideration of where the gun is being aimed, sinks to a level of secondary importance. This is the method behind the Purdie-Lawless theory of "transcending the program through armed struggle against the bourgeoisie." Comrade Sterne applies the same method to the NLF in Vietnam and discovers that they have transcended Stalinism. The members of the PRT/ERP in Argentina drew similar conclusions concerning the "revolutionary wing of Peronism." Of course the first question which comes to mind after all of this is that if the program can be transcended

through armed struggle, is the program of any use at all?

Marxists have always held that a mass revolutionary party with a revolutionary internationalist program is necessary to achieve the international triumph of socialism. The theory of "transcendence through armed struggle" calls this into question. The logic of it seems to be that the only function of a Trotskyist party is to impel other parties or groupings towards "armed struggle." Presumably, the more radical the forms of armed struggle, the more quickly the program will be transcended.

The same method is used by the MMFT in Latin America. They move dangerously close to denying, or at least abridging the need for a revolutionary party and a revolutionary program. Yet they allow the issue here to become clouded just when they should be the most clear. If the decision of the world congress is to be a clear and confident one, the comrades of the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency must make their position on the nature of the revolutionary party and program clear.

"Higher" Forms of Struggle

The European perspectives document makes the following statement concerning the Irish struggle: "The resumption of the centuries old struggle of the Irish people for unity and independence coincides with a sharpened crisis of British imperialism and in turn accentuates this crisis. The tendency has been to move rapidly toward higher forms of struggle as well as mobilizing and organizing the vanguard of the masses, above all in Northern Ireland where dual power existed de facto for several months, forcing the imperialists to resort to massive repression" (p. 11). The best that one can say about this statement is that it is remarkably vague. Concerning a situation where, according to the authors, "dual power existed de facto for several months," the document neglects to point out what the organs of dual power were, how they were created, how they functioned, why they were smashed, what role our comrades played in them, what the dominant political tendencies in them were, etc., etc., etc. Since the authors evidently do not feel these points to be particularly important, we are left guessing at the answers. The reference to "higher forms of struggle" is equally un-

clear. Our conception of "higher forms of struggle" has always been those forms which are best able to move masses of people into action, around demands which are in the interests of the masses. However, Comrades Jones and Howard have already indicated that they are uninterested in "some consideration of mobilizing the greatest number of people." Is this the position of the authors of *Building Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe*? If it is, then it should be plainly stated. But in our opinion actions such as bombing campaigns which have no perspective or possibility of involving the masses are not a higher form of struggle. They are a lower form and it is the duty of revolutionaries to polemicize against them.

Conclusion

The discussion on Ireland in the International is just beginning. The errors which have been made are not irreversible. They can, and must, be corrected.

The greatest hindrance to successfully reorienting the forces of the Fourth International in Ireland and in England has been the lack of information which exists in the various sections of the International about the positions of the various tendencies in the International. In addition, there is considerable confusion in this country over the issues at stake in the discussion on Ireland. To some extent, this article may clear up some of the misconceptions which exist. But the comrades in Ireland and England will also have to make their positions known throughout the International. Only thus can there be a clear and democratic discussion in the ranks of the International.

The question which is posed in Ireland is nothing less than the validity of building a revolutionary party in Ireland, and the political nature of the party which is built. We maintain that the party cannot be built over the heads of the masses, that it must draw the masses into action and recruit them to its ranks. The comrades of the IMG and the Mandel-Maitan-Frank tendency appear to have a different view. When this view has been clarified, we are fully confident that a complete and democratic discussion can be held and that a conclusion can be reached which will decisively contribute to the victory of the socialist revolution in Ireland.

July 25, 1973

IS THE NUCLEAR FAMILY ETERNAL?
An Answer to Comrade Vernon

by Evelyn Reed, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

Comrade Vernon, who formerly supported the priority of the matriarchy, has reversed his position. He states that his current article, "Repudiation of the Bachofen-Morgan-Engels Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins" (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 31, No. 20, pp. 17-24) supersedes his views of two years ago (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 29, No. 23, pp. 16-24). He has the right to change his mind. But that switch raises the question: when was he correct, two years ago or today?

First to be considered is the crucial question of method. Anthropology from its inception in the nineteenth century has not been in the hands of Marxists but of bourgeois scholars. However, these have belonged to different schools and applied different methods. The sharpest division is between the nineteenth century founders of the science, who applied an evolutionary approach and their twentieth century, anti-evolutionary, empiricist successors. The former led to Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.

The twentieth century empirical, functionalist and structuralist schools came forward in opposition to the premises of the pioneers. They were not only antihistorical in their method but actively hostile to the intervention of Marxist ideas in their domain. As Comrade Vernon observed about the anti-Marxist anthropologists two years ago:

"Although revolutionists are not the least bit impressed by the pretensions of bourgeois scholars and pundits in the areas of what are termed 'political science,' economics, 'sociology,' and (modern) history, and are not the least impressed by their haughty rejection of Marxist economics and politics, it is not uncommon for revolutionists to bow down before the sloppy scholarship and flimsy 'theories' of the 'experts' in prehistory, ancient history, and anthropology, and their haughty rejection of the meddling by F. Engels and, more recently comrade Evelyn Reed, in their private preserves." (1971, p. 16.)

Now comrade Vernon has made a complete turnabout both in his method and mentors. From support of Morgan, Engels and their school he has aligned himself with their foremost opponents, Boas, Lowie and other British and American empiricists. He has joined forces with the academic anthropologists whose views for the past sixty-seven years have been established as official doctrine in the universities.

In doing so he has also adopted their definition of the scope and nature of anthropology. To the pioneers anthropology was regarded as a science of social origins dealing with prehistoric evolution. They aimed to reconstruct the entire process of human development from the most ancient beginnings up to the threshold of civilization. Morgan for one arranged his findings on the basis of the material conditions of life and labor at each stage of progress and delineated the sequence of historical stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization.

The twentieth century empiricists and functionalists, however, contracted and cut up the field of anthropology. They converted it from an inquiry into the origins and development of precivilized life into a melange of com-

parative studies of various groups of primitive peoples, unrelated to any determinate line of historical development. They reduced the long view of history begun by Morgan and Engels to a patchwork of field studies and a worm's eye view of the panorama of history. After throwing out Morgan's sequence of stages, they concluded that it was neither possible nor necessary to uncover origins or reconstruct ancient history and proceeded accordingly. Comrade Vernon has now adopted the same position and conclusion.

Despite the voluminous documentation produced by the pioneer scholars on the priority of the maternal clan system, Vernon repeats after them that "The ethnographic data compiled during this century offer no support or proof for Morgan's view that there was a universal 'stage' of human history typified by matrilineal clans which later somehow metamorphosed into patrilineal clans. . . ." Thus the "hypothesis that paternity, monogamy and the nuclear family are only relative recent inventions is thoroughly refuted, and finds no support in the ethnographic evidence." He concludes by asserting that the "conjectured 'stages' in the development of the family, has been shattered beyond recovery" (p. 17).

So after all the storm and fury around the discovery of the matriarchy, which has not died down to the present day, it turns out that the matriarchy never existed and the family has always existed.

It is true that a great deal of data has been compiled in this century, some of it very valuable, which has enlarged the stockpile of materials for use by future students. But this century has seen a long and serious setback so far as theory is concerned. The same data can be analyzed differently when submitted to different methods of interpretation and this can lead to deepgoing theoretical conflicts. The problem is magnified when political pressure is overtly or covertly exercised to maintain rigid discipline and conformity in such controversial sciences as anthropology and sociology.

So the main consideration is not, as Vernon puts it, the "mountains" of additional data available today through the field studies conducted in this century but rather through what method it has been derived and to what objectives it is put to use. Those who on principle ban investigations into origins and refuse to permit anyone else to do so under penalty of academic opprobrium will never arrive at enough data either in the stockpiles of the nineteenth or twentieth century to prove what they are determined at all costs to conceal or "disprove."

Once again we must be clear about the reasons for the resistance to the search for origins. It grew out of the reaction to the two major disclosures made by the nineteenth century scholars: (1) the priority of a period of primitive communism before oppressive class society came in with civilization; and (2) the priority of the matriarchal clan before the patriarchal family came into existence and along with it the degradation of women to second-sex status.

The scholars who made these discoveries were not look-

ing for such phenomena, which were so drastically different from our institutions and attitudes. But they scrupulously reported their findings after making these discoveries about primitive life. The full revolutionary implications were not so clear to the watchdogs of capitalist interests when anthropology was still in its infancy and Marxism less influential. It took time before the new schools arose to organize themselves into the official power in anthropology, to conservatize it, and lead it into conformist channels.

Whatever the differences among the new schools, whether empiricist, functionalist or structuralist, they had one thing in common; hostility to theory in general and to the historical-materialist theory in particular. By and large they were data collectors and descriptionists who avoided theory or dealt with it only episodically and incidentally. Having achieved supremacy in the universities, they stressed the superiority of "field work" over theoretical work. Such scholars as Frazer and other theoreticians were contemptuously referred to as "armchair" anthropologists. Those who were short on field reports and long on theorizing were virtually ruled out of academic circles as unqualified interlopers.

Several generations of students seeking doctorates and careers in the field have been thoroughly indoctrinated in, and intimidated by, this categorical opposition between field studies and theory. Many have confined themselves to applied anthropology, avoiding theory altogether. In the long period of theoretical drought that ensued, few anthropologists came forward to challenge the conservatized schools of thought or to extend and build upon the theoretical foundations laid down by the pioneer scholars.

Comrade Vernon approves this elevation of field studies over theorizing. He writes that "ethnographic scholars could not be taken seriously in the science unless they had themselves spent some time gathering data from, and studying at first hand, some particular primitive people, in addition to their book studies and 'armchair' theorizing" (p. 17). Ironically, this would rule out both Comrade Vernon and Evelyn Reed since neither of us have a single field report to our credit. Obviously, neither of us intend to abide by this arbitrary rule of exclusion.

But the problem of the place and importance of field work goes deeper than this. It is wrong to make so arbitrary an opposition between data collecting and theory; the two are so interconnected in any science that they should never be divorced from each other. But there is a special difficulty in anthropology. The time is fast approaching when there will be nothing left of the source materials required for data collectors. Survivals of primitive peoples still living in stone age habitats and cultures are fast vanishing. When that occurs all that will be left for theorizing is the stockpile of materials gathered up to that point.

In the nineteenth century field work was more fruitful because there were more survivals of primitive peoples relatively unaltered or not too drastically altered by contact with civilized and capitalist cultures. Since then, however, the spread of capitalism along with two world wars and a series of colonial wars have smashed up most of the survivals that furnished earlier investigators with their precious irreplaceable data.

Even before the first world war, Frazer appealed to

the British government to halt the deprivations in the British colonies where the evidence required by anthropologists for their work in origins and prehistory was being rapidly destroyed. By the time of the first world war the speedup in this destructive process was well advanced and more widespread. As Malinowski wrote back in 1921:

"Ethnology is in the sadly ludicrous, not to say tragic, position, that at the very moment when it begins to put its workshop in order, to forge its proper tools, to start ready for work on its appointed task, the material of its study melts away with hopeless rapidity . . . when men fully trained for the work have begun to travel into savage countries and study their inhabitants—these die away under our very eyes" (*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Dutton, 1961, p. xv).

Today, fifty years later, there are even fewer untouched pockets of aborigines left for the field workers. As Comrade Vernon himself wrote two years ago:

"Bourgeois-patriarchal anthropologists are *totally incompetent* in the area of prehistory. Their field, handled none too well by them, is the study of the remnants of primitive humanity within the past century, as they find these remnants worked through the meat-grinder of the capitalist world market and colonialism for anywhere from 350 years to 50 years. Period. They are not even reliable when dealing with the recent or ancient history of primitive peoples." (1971, p. 16, emphasis in the original.)

Yet today Comrade Vernon thinks that the field studies made in this century upon these "remnants worked through the meat-grinder" of capitalism by anthropologists hostile to the materialist method have disproved the findings and theory of the pioneer scholars. He leans upon Boas, Lowie and their cothinkers and followers as his pillar of support in rejecting the priority of the matriarchy.

He not only repudiates Bachofen and Morgan but accuses anyone and everyone connected with an interest in origins of "unproven and unprovable conjectures and wild generalizations." By 1920, he asserts, "the science of the study of primitive peoples . . . had been swept free of wild speculators" (p. 17). Among these "wild" men are noted archaeologists as well as anthropologists.

His main target is Lewis Morgan. He admits that Morgan was a superior scholar "in methodology, in theoretical approach, and in the collection of ethnographic data," and then condemns him as an "eclectic, and an idealist and white-racist" (p. 17). To be sure, Morgan, like the other early bourgeois scholars, was not a Marxist nor a wholly consistent historical-materialist. Despite this, he was so much more materialistic than idealistic that he won high praise from Marx and Engels with respect to his method.

Similarly, with the charge of Morgan's racism. The science of anthropology was not founded by Marxists but by bourgeois scholars conditioned by a white-supremacist and male-supremacist society and infected with the prejudices of the times. But the question is: to what extent did such prejudices interfere with their objectivity and integrity as scholars?

Morgan's bigotry did not prevent him from making two discoveries extremely damaging to the capitalist dogma that its key institutions have always existed. His disclosures of the priority of primitive communism and the

maternal clan system shattered the concept of the eternal character of the family, private property and the state. On these matters Morgan transcended the biases of his class and stuck to the truth in his scholarship, letting the chips fall where they may. It is not his personal defects but the integrity of his scholarship that account for his enduring achievements and entitle him to his designation as the founder of American anthropology.

Moreover, bourgeois prejudices were not confined to the nineteenth century scholars; they are also present in the twentieth century schools. Comrade Vernon knows this only too well. While Boas had a more enlightened liberal attitude toward racism, his cothinker Lowie did not. Two years ago Vernon denounced Lowie as a "white racist." But this does not prevent him from standing on Lowie's side today, just as previously he stood on Morgan's side.

The presence or absence of racial prejudice is not relevant here. Vernon has switched sides not on that basis but on the basis of his theoretical turnabout. Retreating from the search for origins and its fearful disclosure that the family did not always exist, he has abandoned the historical-materialist for the empiricist approach.

For the same reason Comrade Vernon tosses away the worth of the reports of settlers, missionaries, travelers, and others who, after the voyages of Columbus, came into contact for the first time with aborigines in hitherto unknown regions of the world. He lumps them all together as "unconfirmed travelers' tales" or mystics "under the influence of the Vatican" (p. 17).

To be sure, some of the early observers, indoctrinated with the class and Christian prejudices of Western Europe, looked upon aborigines as hardly human. Through their reports of lurid sexual immorality and "bloodthirsty" practices, the pejorative use of the term "savage" came into vogue. But others who were not blinded by bigotry wrote different types of reports which have become an especially valuable part of the stockpile of anthropological data. They were the earliest "field workers," so to speak, before the science was established and regulated field investigations were organized.

Living in daily contact with the aborigines among whom they settled, they found them to be the kindest, most benevolent and unselfish people they had ever met. Jesuit priests, in particular, were astounded that among savages totally unacquainted with Christianity they practiced what in Europe was only preached—the solidarity of "brotherhood." There was no need to teach them morality, they wrote, for they were living examples of it. Here again, these reporters transcended their Christian bigotry to tell the truth about savage life and behavior.

To be sure, these early reporters did not grasp the significance of the fact that the primitive peoples were the product of an ancient communistic social system, while the gold-seeking bloodthirsty Europeans who would soon devastate and demolish them were the product of an ascending capitalist social order. It was not until anthropology was established as a distinct science that the term "primitive communism" was applied to characterize the epoch of savagery.

Comrade Vernon does not deny that savage society was communal and egalitarian. Thus he still accepts one of the two major discoveries made by Morgan and the

pioneer school. He confines himself to repudiating the priority of the maternal clan system or matriarchy. In this respect he differs from Boas, Lowie and the other empiricists who are fully consistent opponents of the conclusions of the historical-materialists. They contend that primitive society was neither communistic nor matriarchal.

This places Comrade Vernon in a highly awkward position. Both disclosures were made on the basis of essentially the same data examined through the same historical-materialist approach. How does he justify his accepting that method in regard to primitive communism while rejecting it in regard to the matriarchy? Comrade Vernon does not explain or resolve this contradiction.

Instead, he tells us that after the turn of the century the empirical schools made a "vast improvement" in anthropology "with crippling blows being dealt to dilettantism and racism, and scientific empiricism reigning triumphant as methodology and philosophy." To be sure, he says that the "gain in solid hard empirical work" was "partly paid for in an increased contempt for theory." But apparently this was all to the good because it resulted in writing off the subject of origins and long-term historical evolution as "pointless pursuits" (p. 21). In short, Boas, Lowie and company are to be applauded for "cleaning out the rubbish" of the origin-seekers (p. 20).

But all this does not dispose of Comrade Vernon's dilemma. How does he justify accepting one major proposition that primitive society was communistic while rejecting the collateral proposition that it was matriarchal? Were Morgan and the other dilettantes and racists "good boys" in disclosing the one discovery made through the study of origins and "bad boys" in disclosing the other? Instead of dealing with this problem, Comrade Vernon tells us how and why Marx and Engels, as well as Reed, went completely wrong through their foolish interest in origins and prehistory, which led them to being duped by Morgan.

Before condemning Marx and Engels, Vernon first reassures us that in their proper field of political economy they were genuine "scientists" and not "special pleaders." He writes that Marx and Engels have to their credit the founding of the only coherent and viable body of theory and methodology in political economy or macroeconomics." Furthermore, in their field they were not "myopic empiricists who narrow their research and theorizing to trivia . . . in the quest for a Ph.D. thesis" (p. 20). The mistake they made, apparently, was to go poking around in the past searching for social origins when their proper place was in the present working on macroeconomics.

Marx and Engels, he points out, were not field anthropologists and had never undertaken any particularist studies of primitive peoples. So they "bought Morgan's schemata lock, stock and barrel." This was not entirely "to their discredit," he says, because at least Morgan had done some field work. As Vernon puts it, Morgan "had based his theorizing and conjectures on first-hand contact with at least some primitive peoples" (p. 20).

However, Morgan's theoretical errors were greater than his qualifications as a field worker. This was due to his "substantive ignorance" of data collected in the twentieth century which was not available to the nineteenth century anthropologists. Under these circumstances Marx and Engels likewise suffered from such "substantive ignorance" (p. 18).

Obviously, the field reports of the twentieth century were not available to the nineteenth century scholars because they had not yet come into existence. But it is not true that these later field reports have disproved the theories of the pioneers; that is only the assertion of Comrade Vernon and his new mentors. Marx and Engels did not know that the Boasian school would arise after their time to throw out the Morgan school and assume the mantle of the true dispensers of anthropological gospel. But even if they had known it is highly unlikely that they would have abandoned their historical-materialist approach for the Boasian empirical approach.

It is Comrade Vernon who had made this turnabout, and in doing so he mistakenly thinks he has to apologize for Marx and Engels. Due to their "substantive ignorance," he says, the Marxists cannot really be blamed for having been Morgan's dupes. And he condescendingly adds, "in this context, Marxists have no cause for shame or apprehension in facing the fact that Engels' gambit in ethnology was deficient in many respects" (p. 21). It will be especially interesting to the women in the liberation movement who think they have learned so much from Engels and his *Origin* that in reality Engels was something of a fool and his book no more than a "gambit."

Comrade Vernon then offers another illustration of Engels' deficiencies. Referring to the controversy on whether Engels held Lamarckian views on the transmission of acquired characteristics, Vernon tries to cast a cloud over his essay, *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Human*. That controversy has nothing whatever to do with the main thrust of Engels' brilliant essay. It sets forth the most fundamental factor in the transition from animal to human—the factor of labor activities. Out of labor activities there arose speech and later language, as well as all the higher social and cultural acquisitions of humankind.

This labor theory of social origins dovetails with Briffault's matriarchal theory of social origins. While labor activities in general drew great the dividing line between humans and animals, it was woman's labor activities in particular that elevated the animal maternal brood into the human maternal clan system (matriarchy). From this standpoint Briffault's work *The Mothers*, published in 1927, represents the greatest theoretical contribution to the study of origins in the twentieth century. Comrade Vernon, however, with his antipathy toward the study of origins, refers to Briffault only in passing as a "dilettante."

Having settled with Engels, Comrade Vernon then comes to grips with Evelyn Reed. He quotes from my assessment of the anti-Morgan empiricists of the twentieth century. "Anthropology suffered a severe setback in theory," I wrote, and again, "In the hands of these revisionists anthropology fell from its lofty and promising beginnings" (p. 21).

This is "untenable" to Comrade Vernon. The pre-Boas period, he insists, "was not one of 'lofty theoretical advances' . . . but a morass of sloppy dilettantism, concoction of wild and exotic theories and mechanical-stage evolutionary schemata not based on any reliable findings or research" (p. 21). Among the sloppy dilettantes he dismisses is the "special pleader who hangs for dear life onto a pet exotic hypothesis, rejecting mounting evidence that tends to contradict and refute it" (p. 21).

Not to leave his readers in the dark, the "special pleader" Comrade Vernon is referring to is myself, and the "exotic hypothesis" I am hanging on to is the priority of

the matriarchy. After almost twenty-five years of research into the data and positions of both the nineteenth and twentieth century investigators, I am completely convinced of the former existence of the matriarchal commune, and the priority of the collective clan unit over the individual father-family unit.

This subject, which was previously regarded as academic and having little relevance to current events, has now been catapulted into prominence through the rise of the women's liberation movement. Its second wave brought about a recognition of the family as a prime source of woman's degradation today and this in turn has aroused interest in the matriarchal period when the family did not exist and women were not degraded or oppressed. This explains why I "hang on" to a hypothesis that can be of such immense service to women fighting for their liberation, and why I refuse to be intimidated by the weight of the dominant empiricist schools today which try to deny or conceal the truth.

Comrade Vernon, however, has a different view of the matter. He agrees that the family today is a source of women's oppression but he does not think this was always the case, just as all men are not necessarily male chauvinists. He points out that there is no "one-to-one correlation between espousal of a matriarchalist doctrine and pro-feminism." There are many liberals and men of good intentions who are pro-feminist and yet cannot support the thesis of the matriarchy. On the question of chauvinism he writes that "all industrial societies"—by which I presume he means capitalism—"are saturated with male chauvinism," and admits that even some liberal anthropologists "are saturated with their share of it" (p. 22). Nevertheless, there is no direct correlation between pro-feminism and anti-matriarchalism. And he furnishes some curious examples.

Franz Boas, he informs us, was a matriarchalist prior to 1896, but he "was second to no one in driving matriarchalist theories and attitudes clean out of the science in the space of two decades" (p. 22). Boas hardly represents a beacon light of pro-feminism by depriving women anthropologists from learning the truth about the freedom and lack of oppression of women in the matriarchal period and passing this knowledge on to the oppressed women of our times. But to Vernon Boas was a champion of equal rights for women, "developing a whole constellation of leading women social-anthropologists" (p. 22). These come down to Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and a few others.

It would be more accurate to say that, after the first wave of the feminist movement when women finally became recognized as people, a few women made their way into the sacred portals of male-dominated anthropology. But this was strictly on sufferance that they abide by the official line of anti-matriarchalism. (Even so, as women, they brought fresh insights into many aspects of primitive life which often corroborated not the Boasian outlook but the Morgan-Engels position, even if they were unaware of it.)

The paucity of leading women theoreticians in anthropology exists to the present day, disproving the "constellations" that Comrade Vernon attributes to Boas. In the 1971 convention of the American Anthropological Association, more than two hundred women gathered

together for the first time in its history to form a feminist caucus and fight for more than the tokenism they have been granted. It is through their own struggles as women and not through any doled-out paternalistic concessions by Boasians that they will achieve their demands and gain their rightful place in the science.

As against Boas, the dubious pro-feminist, Comrade Vernon points to Joseph Stalin, the anti-feminist. "It is possible to be a stone-dogmatic matriarchalist while personally engaged in the brutal suppression of gains previously made by women," he writes (p. 22). Stalin was certainly no supporter of feminism. But neither was he a "stone-dogmatic matriarchalist." That cultural ignoramus may not even have been acquainted with the term. But since Stalin had to disguise his political treachery by wearing the mantle of Marxism, there was at that time no reason for him to tamper with the analysis of ancient society presented in Engels' *Origin*.

Today, it seems, that situation is changing. According to Comrade Vernon, some Soviet ethnologists are now beginning to "shake loose from their matriarchalist swaddling bands" (p. 24). If this is the case, such a theoretical development in anthropology cannot be dissociated from the prevailing social and political setting in the Soviet Union.

The Stalinist bureaucracy is just as much an upholder of the nuclear family institution as are the ruling classes of capitalist nations. Women remain the inferior sex in the Soviet Union and are saddled with the double burden of outside work plus maintenance of home and family chores. Disclosures about the absence of the family and of any oppression of women in the period of the matriarchal commune can only damage the pretensions of the Stalinist bureaucrats that the Soviet Union today is socialist or communist. Although it is a workers state in which capitalism has been abolished, the Stalinists still uphold the nuclear family setup and maintain the double oppression of the female sex. The rise of the feminist movement therefore poses a dilemma for these bureaucrats as it does for the capitalist ruling class.

The Soviet ethnologists who may now be disputing the existence of the matriarchy are late-comers in this controversy, which began at the turn of the century with the British and American empiricists retreating from the Morgan-Engels school. But the essence of the issue remains the same. In both instances it is a flight from the discovery that the family is not eternal but the late product of a long historical process in which it was preceded by the maternal clan. The rise of the feminist movement has made this proposition not merely unpleasant to many men but positively subversive to bureaucrats and ruling classes from the longer-range point of view.

The women's liberation movement poses a threat not only to the nuclear family setup but to several thousand years of male supremacy in economic, social, intellectual and political life. This threat is new; it was not present in the first wave but came in with the second wave of the feminist movement. Once women began to point the finger at the nuclear family as the prime source of their oppression as a sex they began to shake the foundation of male supremacy as well—whether or not they are yet aware of it. Contrariwise, men, whether or not they are aware of it, are unnerved by the prospect of losing

control over the subordinate sex. This is the nutcracker that causes even some of the most liberal men to take flight from the study of origins and to insist that the family is an eternal institution.

Vernon's contention that there is no correlation between pro-feminism and anti-matriarchalism may be true in some individual cases, but there is a distinct correlation between the two on an overall social and political basis. Reopening the question of the matriarchy at this time directs the attention of masses of women to the fact that women have not always been the doubly oppressed sex. This in turn sheds light on the fact that the institutionalized oppression of women has a counterpart in institutionalized male supremacy.

Comrade Vernon is quite willing to get rid of the capitalist institutions of private property and the state but not to question the universality of the family. He even fails to define the family in clear Marxist terms as an economic unit serving the propertied interests of the wealthy class and relieving them of social responsibility for the downtrodden families of the working class. He sees the family not as an economic unit but as a timeless biological unit, so often portrayed in the sentimental image of the mother sitting at the hearth smiling down at the babe at her breast—the son and heir of her lord and master.

But this concept of one unchanging institution in a world where everything else changes poses problems for Comrade Vernon. Despite his resistance against origins, he is driven into explorations and speculations on the origin of the family. He compares the human father-family with the maternal brood in the animal world and comes up with an inconsistent result.

Unlike anthropologists like Westermarck who trace the family unit back to the animal world, Comrade Vernon does not. He correctly writes that primatological evidence does not disclose any father-family unit in the animal world. Among the anthropoids "the universally constant basic unit is the mother and her brood, or a troop of related mothers, in all cases. There is no social unit remotely comparable to a human family" (p. 20).

Indeed, it is precisely this fact, as against all the fiction written about animal father-families, that Briffault invoked to sustain his matriarchal theory of social origins. Through labor activities the maternal animal brood advanced to become the maternal clan system in the human world.

But Comrade Vernon refuses to see the logic of this evolution and maintains that the matriclan did not precede the father-family. For proof he relies upon the stock argument that in many primitive regions patrikinship or patrilines coexist side by side with matrikinship or matrilines and there is no sequential historical order involved. It should be obvious that, in the evolution from the matriclan system of the matriarchy to the father-family system and the patriarchy, transitional "patri" forms would occur, whether these are called patrilineal kinship or patrilines and the like.

The question that Vernon leaves unanswered is: how did the maternal brood in the animal world become immediately transformed into the father-family in the human world? The best explanation he can put forward is the favorite theme of the empiricists that human life began not on the basis of labor activities but with "culture, speech

and symbolizing." These attributes, according to Vernon, brought about such "cultural entities" as "father, mother-in-law, cousin, family, clan, paternity" (p. 20).

There is no doubt that what he calls "cultural entities" came into existence once the family emerged. But, as Morgan and others demonstrated, the family made its appearance very late in history, only a few thousand years ago. There is at least a million year gap between the maternal brood of the animal world and the father-family of the patriarchal human world. Vernon tries to bridge over this gap with a dubious speculation.

It is true, he says, that "the 'nuclear family as we know it today,' rests on and channelizes institutionalized oppression of women." However, this need not always have been the case. Women in the remote past, far from recoiling against the family as they do today, might have been the very ones to invent it. He writes, "the earliest transitional forms of nuclear family in the remote paleolithic could well have been invented or evolved primarily on the initiative of the women for their own reasons and advantages . . ." (pp. 19-20).

What Comrade Vernon leaves out of account is the fact that the family institution in all its forms, with the exception of the pairing family, is the product of a developing class society which today has culminated in the nuclear family of modern capitalism. Vernon's convoluted attempts to redefine "nuclear family" and make it somehow different from the "patriarchal nuclear family" cannot alter the fact that the class family has *always* been patriarchal. And, from the time that the patriarchal family came into existence to the present day, it has been accompanied not only by institutionalized female oppression but by institutionalized male supremacy.

It was not the women of the communistic, equalitarian period who invented the oppressive nuclear family but the men of the much later period of class society and private property who coralled women into the patriarchal family as part of their property holdings. What women created—as all the documentation shows—was the clan system, a collective unit in a collectivist or communistic society.

All this is not to say that deficiencies cannot be found in the work of Morgan and other pioneers. Like Comrade Vernon I, too, have found errors that have to be corrected in the light of further information not available in Morgan's time. In my introduction to the Pathfinder edition of Engels' *Origin* I made certain corrections on points that Vernon also refers to in his document, such as the "consanguine family," the "punaluan family," and "group marriage." But whether or not we agree with each other's corrections, each of us makes them in an altogether different spirit and with a different purpose. I firmly continue to uphold Morgan's method despite the corrections whereas Vernon exploits them to demolish his method.

Comrade Vernon even goes so far as to misrepresent Morgan's method, the implication being that it was a spurious form of the historical-materialist method. He states that Morgan relied more on "secondary or tertiary non-causal factors such as kinship terms" than on causal factors such as the level of productivity, technology, etc. (p. 21). The truth is that what Vernon attributes to Morgan, the evolutionary materialist, properly applies to Boas, the empiricist. Marvin Harris, a successor of Boas as

Chairman of the Department of Anthropology of Columbia University, says of his predecessor, "It is true that the strategy of historical particularism required an almost total suspension of the normal dialectic between fact and theory. The causal processes, the trends, the long-range parallels were buried by an avalanche of negative cases." (*The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, Crowell, 1968, p. 251.)

Moreover, Vernon's scornful dismissal of Morgan's work on the primitive kinship system shows that he fails to recognize it as another of Morgan's great discoveries, following those of the primitive communistic system and of the maternal clan system. Although Morgan called it the "classificatory" system, we can understand it better when we see it as a system of *social* or *communal* kinship. This kinship system is further evidence of the priority of the matriarchal commune since it corresponds to that social system just as our family and biological kinship corresponds to our social system. Unfortunately, the primitive kinship system is not understood or poorly understood by the empirical schools which have dominated anthropology for so long.

Comrade Vernon presses his insistence upon the eternity of the nuclear family to the bitter end, no matter to what absurd conclusions he is driven. He says that "neither we nor anyone else have the remotest, scientifically supportable conception of what the origin of the family or the origin of the clan is" (p. 19). How then, in the light of this ignorance, can Comrade Vernon be so categorical that the family has always existed? He writes, "The evidence accumulated during this century proves conclusively that the nuclear family . . . is universal or near-universal" (p. 19).

He doesn't mean by this that the nuclear family is as universal as capitalism in this century, which by and large would be true. He means that it goes all the way into the distant past despite our ignorance about that past. He writes "the ethnographic data do not rule out extending the nuclear family much further into prehistory, past the Mesolithic . . . into the Paleolithic" (p. 19).

What ethnographic data is Comrade Vernon referring to? The only such data that I am acquainted with is that contained in the Old Testament, where the first patriarchal "lines of fathers and sons" are carefully preserved for posterity. However, that documented evidence of the rise of the patriarchal family is dated at about six thousand years ago, which is a long, long way from the Paleolithic era (savagery). It does not even emerge at the beginning of the Neolithic era (barbarism).

The patriarchal family made its unambiguous appearance around the middle of the barbaric era and consolidated itself at the end, as barbarism passed over into civilization. Thereafter, in its further evolution, the patriarchal family of the agricultural period of class society developed into the patriarchal family of capitalist industrialized society, becoming the patriarchal "nuclear family" of our times.

Today even this little stump of a family is being shaken up and broken up before our eyes. The rise of the women's liberation movement will not reverse this process but rather speed it up. Is the nuclear family eternal as Vernon insists? The answer is definitely no. The family is the product of historical development which came in with class society and will give way to new and higher human relations in the future socialist society.

July 24, 1973

A REPORT AND COMMENTS ON THE DISCUSSION WITH THE
MASSEY-SHAFFER-SMITH TENDENCY IN BLOOMINGTON

by Lee Artz, Detroit Branch

(The Bloomington YSA is one of the largest regional locals of the YSA. Unfortunately it is located over 300 miles from the nearest SWP branch. In order to have the educational benefit of the SWP preconvention discussion the local invited SWP supporters of the LTT and MMF tendencies to debate on Latin America, Europe, Vietnam and youth radicalization. This contribution stems from the July 20-21 debate on Vietnam. Maceo Dixon was the reporter for the majority and Bill Yaffe for the minority. Comrade Don Smith, a signer of the International Majority Tendency, participated in the discussion.)

Comrade Yaffe presented the position held by the MMF tendency as stated in the Sterne-Walter resolution on Vietnam. One of the points of that resolution is that the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) "in its practical orientation has broken with Stalinism's classical Menshevik line. . . ." Yaffe held that in theory and practice the VCP had broken with Stalinism and was actually applying the theory of the permanent revolution. Comrade Smith of the IMT took issue with this characterization of the VCP.

A. Stalinism

1. Smith's position has a "dual character." He agreed that the VCP was a revolutionary party in practice, but disagreed that it had broken with Stalinism. Clarifying this position in the discussion Smith presented his "theory" of Stalinist parties. (Comrades should note that the IMT has not taken a position on Vietnam and the VCP, among other things. Comrade Smith claimed that the majority of his tendency agreed with him on the nature and character of Stalinist parties.)

Smith maintains that Stalinist parties have a "dual character." Sometimes they are counterrevolutionary, but at other times they are revolutionary. Under certain conditions and at certain stages they function as a revolutionary leadership. This is what happened in Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, and China. This is the case presently in Vietnam.

He opposed the position that "Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through." He thought it was "incredible" that it was *only* the pressure from the masses and the objective situation that forced Stalinists into revolutionary acts. He held that all history tells us that Stalinist parties have a capacity for revolutionary struggle. He extended this theme to trade-union bureaucrats and CPs around the world.

2. His schematism, and presumably the IMT's, is similar to that of some sectarians on Cuba. "There is no revolutionary party, and no Stalinist party, therefore there is no revolution." Smith's position could be summed up as "if there is a revolutionary (workers') state or revolutionary struggle then there is a revolutionary party leading it." It has nothing in common with Marxism.

This position is a total distortion of the analysis we have of Stalinism. We understand that Stalinist parties put the interests of the bureaucracy in Moscow or Peking before the interests and needs of the masses. We under-

stand that in order to maintain its role in making deals with the bourgeoisie, Stalinist parties must have control of a portion of the working class. This presupposes the necessity of creating certain illusions among the masses about the militant and revolutionary character of the Stalinist parties. Sometimes, given a political crisis and pressure of the masses the Stalinist parties may well end up in the leadership of the struggle, solely for the purpose of diverting or holding it back when the opportunity arises. History has shown us examples of Stalinist leaderships which have been unable to hold the struggle back, which went over into accomplished revolutions. Incredible, but true!

The only thing revolutionary about Stalinism is that it is based on a bureaucracy which is based on the economic foundations of a workers state. The role and function of Stalinism is counterrevolutionary to the core, especially including its potential to lead the struggle in such a way on an international scale that the very economic base, the workers state itself could be overthrown.

The other conclusion of Smith's argument, and presumably the IMT's, would lead to the denial of the need for the revolutionary party. If Stalinist parties are capable of revolutionary acts and revolutionary leadership at what situations will this characteristic occur? Accepting that the goal of imperialism is to crush the workers state we realize that antagonisms will exist and increase. In WWII Smith tells us that in response to imperialist aggression Stalinism became revolutionary. Not that Stalin was required to overthrow capitalism in Eastern Europe as capitalism was in direct contradiction to the social order from which the bureaucracy derived its existence, but that Stalinism became a *revolutionary force because that was part of its dual character*, it became revolutionary out of *desire* not of *necessity*! Given the imperialist aggression we must assume that Stalinism will always and everywhere become revolutionary because that is the nature of the response!

In capitalist countries where periodic crises arise the working class goes into motion, often with CP support. Smith would have us believe that the CP is then fulfilling the *revolutionary side* of its character. We believe it is only fulfilling its *counterrevolutionary character* by misleading the struggle. Whenever there is a crisis we are told that the Stalinists respond as revolutionists. When and where do we need to build Trotskyist parties? Perhaps when there is a lull, certainly not when there is a mass mobilization and we are in the thick of the fight—because then we have a revolutionary Stalinist party! It appears to be the logical extension of the "adequate instrument" schema. And more importantly it would require us to enter Stalinist parties as a left-wing pressure to ensure that the intrinsic revolutionary half of Stalinism is carried out!

I hope I have presented a fair summary of Smith's (IMT's?) argument. At any rate Smith and the IMT should take a stated position and clarify their position, because as I understand it it certainly is not in agreement with

the position on Stalinism or the state held by the majority of the SWP.

B. *Theory of the State—On the Class Character of the State*

1. Comrade Smith and more directly Comrade Stacey of the IMT outlined their "theory" of the state in the Vietnam discussion also. Neither comrade said whether or not it is the position of the IMT, and I would not venture any guesses. Their "theory" of the state is a schematic, un-Marxist muddle.

Comrade Stacey explained to us that Engels' theory of the state centered on bodies of armed men. The changes in the "types" of bodies of armed men determines the changes in the *character* of the state. Stacey said it was "mystical" to maintain that a state's character is determined by the property relations.

Both he and Smith held that the SWP was miseducated by Hansen during the discussion on Eastern Europe. They believe the character of the states were changed when the Red Army was militarily victorious. They held that the Marxist position that the overthrow of the bourgeoisie could only be done by violent means, and Engels' description that one of the *characteristics* of the state was armed bodies of men, meant that the character of the state is determined by who controls the military bodies.

2. This is a distortion of Engels in *Origin of the Family* and a refutation of the Marxist analysis of the state. We hold that "only the intrusion of a revolutionary or counter-revolutionary force in *property relations* can change the class nature of the state." (Soviet Union and Fourth International, Leon Trotsky, *Education for Socialists Bulletin*, "Class, Party, and State and the Eastern European Revolution, Nov. 1969.)

The character of the state determines the character of the armed bodies of men. And the character of the state is determined by which class is the ruling class—the proletariat or the capitalist class. These comrades take a *characteristic* which is common to all states, that of armed bodies of men, and understand that to be the determining factor of the *character of the state*. It is the difference between state *power* and class character of that state power. The state power belongs to the economically dominant class, which is also the politically dominant class.

It is true that to smash the economic basis of a capitalist state it is necessary to first smash the political and military basis of the state. Class struggle means the inevitability of the political rule of the proletariat. Dictatorship of the proletariat as explained by Lenin in *State and Revolution* is the proletariat as the ruling class. Why? "For the purpose of crushing the resistance of the exploiters and . . . in the work of organizing Socialist economy." (*S and R*, pg. 23, Int'l. 1932.)

"The exploited classes need political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitation" (*Ibid.*, p. 22). When Lenin talks of the "first phase of Communist society" he explains that a form of state is necessary. What kind? One that maintains the "public ownership of the means of production." (*Ibid.*, p. 78.) So the smashing of the military of the bourgeoisie doesn't immediately mean a workers state—that is determined when the political and military victory of the proletariat becomes translated into the overthrow of bourgeois property relations. That is

what prompted Trotsky to explain, "When the Third Estate seized power, society for a period of years still remained feudal. In the first months of the Soviet rule the proletariat reigned on the basis of bourgeois economy. . . . What does such a type of temporary conflict mean. It means revolution or counter-revolution. The victory of one class over another signifies that it will reconstruct economy in the interests of the victory." (*Educ. for Socialists, Ibid.*, p. 25.) The comrades of the IMT, some of them anyway, would have time stand still in nice little boxes. Rather than using a projector to view a movie they would take the film and observe it one frame at a time, confusing the beginning with the end. They are not viewing things in transition. It not only applies to Eastern Europe. Let's see where their arguments would lead.

If it is solely armed bodies of men, how do we tell the difference between Cubans and Algerians, and Americans and Russians, which is necessary according to this schema in deciding the character of the state? The discussion would go something like this (I only use the IMT to identify the minority comrades not to imply there is agreement within the tendency):

"It is the composition of the army," IMT says.

"Both capitalist armies and the Soviet army is composed of workers and peasants," I said.

"Yes, but it depends on how they are organized," IMT says.

"Ah, but now the Soviet army has ranks, officers, strict discipline, etc.," I reply.

"That's not right, what we mean is that it depends on which class organized the army," IMT counters.

"How do we find out which class organized them?" I inquire.

"It depends on the origins of the army," the quickly respond. "The origins of the Russian army was in the October revolution, a struggle against the czar."

"But wasn't the US army essentially begun in the revolutionary struggle against the monarchy in England?" I question, confused.

"No, no!" the IMT cries. "Russia had a revolution of the working class."

"How do you know?" I quietly inquire.

"Anyone can tell that by just looking at their relationship to the means of production," IMT bluster.

"Precisely."

The problem stems from attempting to give a militaristic explanation for a political question. It led the IMT comrades to maintain that there was a workers state in Austria when the Red Army triumphed, and then a capitalist state was restored when they left. Here we see a revolution and counterrevolution simply by the movement of the Red Army! A revolution where wage-labor, private profit, and the bourgeoisie maintains economic control, but because of the occupation of the Red Army it is a workers state for a few years!

This argument allows the comrades to maintain dual power exists from "top to bottom" in S. Vietnam. When it is solely a question of where the army of the workers state happens to camp, or where the army under the leadership of the *revolutionary* Stalinist parties has won or lost a military battle then it might be possible to propose an argument for dual power in Vietnam. We understand it to be "two armed camps based on two different

social forces that are irreconcilable in the long run." (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 9, p. 27, "An Evaluation of the IEC Plenum," Barnes.)

We maintain that for dual power to exist there would have to be working-class institutions, like soviets, in the country and in the cities. The soviets are the seeds of the state power of the proletariat, the political basis for making a revolution, or for dual power to exist. The armies are military instruments: one of the Thieu regime, the other of the NLF and DRV. It is the failure of the VCP to call for national liberation, agrarian reform and socialist revolution that at this point means there is no mobilization of the workers and peasants against the bourgeois order and Thieu regime. It is the political organization of the masses that is lacking in the situation which is not dual power. It is a military confrontation now, but social forces are in play and will be a determining factor in the direction of the Vietnamese revolution.

C. Conclusion

It will not do to revise the theory of the state to con-

vince us there is dual power and the Vietnamese revolution is in a better situation than ever before.

It will not do to revise our analysis of Stalinism to convince us the VCP is revolutionary.

We will continue to base our positions on Marxism and see things clearly as they occur. We will defend the Vietnamese revolution by pointing out the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese and the irreconcilable contradictions facing imperialism. We will also clearly draw the lessons from the inadequate leadership of the VCP and the need for a revolutionary socialist party, a Trotskyist party in Vietnam. We will not fall into political support for the VCP, NLF or PRG, but we will defend the Vietnamese revolution against the attacks of imperialism and its puppets.

To do this we must approach the Vietnam discussion with the arsenal of Marxism, not schematism. Comrades of the IMT should find out what their positions are and clarify those to the party as a whole, it is their political responsibility.

July 26, 1973