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THE BUILDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN CAPITALIST AMERICA

Political Counter Resolution Submitted by the Internationalist Tendency

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THE BUILDING OF A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN CAPITALIST AMERICA,
POLITICAL COUNTER RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY THE
INTERNATIONALIST TENDENCY

*INTRODUCTION: TWO LINES
IN THE INTERNATIONAL*

During the early and mid-1960's, the international class struggle was generally characterized by repeated upsurges of the colonial revolution, ultimately focused around the war in Vietnam. The working class in the imperialist centers was relatively quiescent. The latter countries were the scene of numerous lesser struggles against the ruling class, in which the students played a central role. With the general strike in May 1968 in France, a new phase opened: the working class had come onto the stage in its own right. The "creeping May" in Italy in '68 and '69, the continuing radicalization of the Spanish working class, the series of massive strikes in Britain, the general strike in Quebec in the spring of '72, all confirmed that world capitalism had entered a structural crisis which is driving the bourgeoisie and the working class into increasingly massive collisions. These developments signified that the major revolutionary assaults on world capitalism were shifting to the arena of the imperialist countries themselves. This is the context within which we must view the tasks of revolutionary socialists in the United States.

For several years now, the SWP leadership has implied that the revolutionary party could be built gradually, without any organic connection to the class. Now the party stands in danger of being bypassed by the growing working-class radicalization, unless a drastic reorientation is implemented. The disastrous performance of the SWP's co-thinkers in Quebec stands as a warning. During the mass strike of public employees and others in May 1972, the LSO saw as its goal the forcing of the nationalist language question back into the center of a struggle which had gone beyond that demand. In reality, the working class as a whole was pitted against the bourgeoisie, along class lines. The LSO was completely bypassed and as a consequence lost over half its membership. This was the end result of the LSO's emulations of SWP party-building strategy when faced with working-class radicalization.

In a similar way, the SWP leadership's overestimation of the depth of the 1960's radicalization in the U.S., and its belief in the lasting character of this radicalization's initial forms should stand as a danger signal to the party. At the last party convention, the SWP leadership projected four major campaigns flowing from their analysis of the new radicalization. These campaigns were aimed at winning over to the party the best activists in the "on-going mass movements," thereby preparing the party for an eventual radicalization of the working class. Not one of these campaigns achieved their assigned goals! The antiwar campaign failed to produce any mobilizations approaching the size of the Moratorium or even of April 24, 1971. The abortion law repeal campaign did *not* regroup the women's liberation movement, and its demand

was granted without any significant expansion of the movement's organized activity or of the party's influence. The 1972 election campaign, despite redoubled efforts, gathered almost no disillusioned McGovern supporters into our Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley, either before or after the elections. Finally, our organizational campaign failed to double the size of the YSA, which instead stagnated, while the party experienced a small numerical growth but no geographical expansion as of the time of the convention call.

Comrade Barnes himself pointed out the serious consequences of faulty evaluation of a period when he said in his report on the Political Resolution at the 1971 Plenum:

"The scope of our expansion program, the character of the activities we engage in, the character of our planned geographic expansion, the size of the effort to increase the circulation of our press and our literature, the perspectives we have for the growth of the youth movement and the character of the presidential election we project for 1972, would all be part of a Pollyana-like pipe-dream, if they were not firmly rooted in an accurate political evaluation of the objective situation." (SWP Disc. Bul. Vol. 29 #1, p. 23.)

Basing itself on this mistaken analysis, the party feverishly tried to revitalize the movements which has developed out of the student radicalization. It could not explain the decline of these movements to the more advanced activists, and thereby totally cut itself off from the best layers of the student movement who were in the process of reflecting on revolutionary strategy and were open to a correct analysis. At the same time, it took no steps to rectify its isolation from the working class in preparation for its coming radicalization. There was no systematic orientation to the unions, the unorganized workers, and the workers of the oppressed minorities.

This inaccurate assessment of the conjuncture was only one manifestation of a deeper methodological error. The strategy and practice of the SWP stand in sharp contrast to the strategy and tactics of the European sections over the past five years. These sections took advantage of the possibilities for student recruitment *and* maintained an orientation to the class. Starting from skeletal organizations, they have been able to increase their size, win substantial influence over the radicalized vanguard, and integrate these gains with a systematic penetration of the working class and trade unions.

In France, the Communist League launched a series of centralized campaigns based on the conjunctural needs of the class struggle as a whole: campaigns for a general wage increase, for solidarity with Indochina, for a revolutionary intervention in the elections. The League's tactics in the student movement and other movements among peripheral layers of the population was subordinated to its strategic objective: to achieve a breakthrough

Part I: THE CONTRADICTIONS OF U. S. IMPERIALISM

in the working class. This tactic of partybuilding from the periphery to the center (We mean by this, *from* radicalized sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and marginal workers, to the more tightly controlled industrial workers) has resulted in the beginning of an implantation in the proletariat, as well as steady recruitment from the working class and other layers. In England, the IMG has increased in size almost tenfold in five years; it has won the best elements of the new left and puts out a weekly newspaper. The IMG has rejected the concept that there can be an autonomous strategy or self-contained transitional program for students. It uses its influence in the various struggles which break out, to show radicalized workers the steps which must be taken to prepare a general assault against the bourgeois state by the working class and its allies.

The long post-World War II period of relative prosperity and the absence of united working-class struggles of national scope has affected the entire American political scene, and the SWP has not escaped this influence.

"Marx has said that it is impossible to judge either parties or people by what they say about themselves. The characteristics of a party are determined considerably more by its social composition, its past, its relation to different classes and strata than by its oral or written declarations." (Trotsky, 1937-38, p. 162)

But, the contrast is also sharp in the realm of program and method. The SWP's adaptation to the spontaneous level of consciousness of the movements of the '60s, its almost complete estrangement from activity in the working class, and in particular the different lessons it drew from the events of May '68 in France, could only lead the American organization into a deepening programmatic divergence from the majority of the International. In the current international dispute, the SWP, masquerading as orthodox Leninist-Trotskyists, stands at the head of a right-opportunist current. This represents the main danger to the building of a revolutionary International. While this opportunist deviation has tended to dominate the party's practice, its method—reflex reactions to moods in the masses—also leads it to fail to intervene in important situations. Thus we have seen an alternation of adaptationism with sectarian abstentionism, in particular toward the struggles of the workers and oppressed minorities.

This document is an attempt to trace that deviation and offer some corrections. We will take up the change in the world situation and its impact on the U. S. and contrast it to the theories of the "new radicalization." We will also analyze the character of the radicalization of the sixties and the party's intervention in it. Based on the coming radicalization of the working class, we will outline the tasks of the party. This resolution is *not* meant to be an exhaustive analysis of American capitalism, a complete review of the various manifestations of the class struggle today. Such an analysis can only flow from a full discussion of the experiences of the party leadership, its membership, and the International. We will therefore submit further contributions elaborating our perspectives in more detail. This document presents an alternative approach, a counterline. It is based on the method of the "Theses on the Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," with which we have stated our agreement.

The point of departure for an analysis of the situation in the United States, which determines the tasks of revolutionary socialists, must be the deepening structural crisis of world capitalism and bourgeois society which is rapidly preparing the conditions in the U. S. for an upturn in the class struggle. Concurrently, there has been a marked decline in the autonomy of the social movements which developed outside the organized working class in the '60s. Both of these factors have been operating for several years, yet the party has failed to recognize them and draw the obvious conclusion that there is an imperative and unpostponable need to make a conscious turn toward the working class.

In order to understand the transformation which is taking place in the forms of the radicalization, it is necessary to contrast the present period with that of the early and mid-'60s. This will enable us to understand the "autonomous" character of the movements which arose then, as well as the causes of their present decline. It will enable us to distinguish the more permanent features of the class struggle in advanced capitalist countries from their conjunctural form. In this respect, a look at the trend since 1938 will be helpful.

The basic programmatic document adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International included an erroneous economic prognosis. It was thought that the highest point of development of the productive forces that could be achieved under capitalism had been reached. This meant that the tendency for an absolute decline in the productive forces, which was the dominant trend between 1914 and 1939, could not be reversed. In fact, the postwar counterrevolutionary intervention of the Stalinists allowed for an economic stabilization which resulted in an extended growth of productive forces lasting into the late '60s.

Some political tendencies, such as the Lambertists in France and Robertsonites here in the U. S., still deny that there was an expansion. Our party accepted Mandel's economic analysis of the expansion around the time of reunification (1963). The party leadership finally went even further. They began to adopt in day-to-day practice the minimalist program corresponding to the Progressive Era of capitalism prior to 1914.

All went well until the falling rate of profit caught up with the postwar expansion. Mandel saw the reversal in the economic climate, produced a thorough analysis of the situation, and the leadership of the International is attempting to orient the political and organizational approach accordingly. The SWP leadership, in contrast, formally accepts the economic analysis, but pulls back from the conclusion that we are on the eve of major conflicts between capital and labor in the advanced countries. This naturally causes them to balk at turning to the class, winning over the politicized vanguard, transforming the sections from propaganda into action groups, and most of all, establishing the International as a world party, instead of a federation of propaganda circles.

During the frenzied student upsurge caused by the Vietnam war, the SWP leadership, basking in the resulting

euphoria, did not notice the revolutionary optimism of the Ninth World Congress. But three years of lull in the petty-bourgeois radicalization has produced a corresponding despair, reflected in the view that the International has "apocalyptic" visions or, as Comrade Stone put it: "They think its Armageddon."

In the United States, the period of expansion after World War II was only interrupted by a few minor recessions, and had a tremendous effect on the social make-up of the country. Superficial observers concluded that the class struggle had disappeared. In fact, a much more complex process of fragmentation of the class struggle was taking place.

The postwar depression predicted by the Trotskyists never took place. Instead, the ruling class was able to tame and integrate the unions without a frontal attack. While Stalinists and militants were being driven out, the bureaucracy consolidated its hold over the membership of the industrial unions that had traditionally been in the vanguard of the class struggle. The corporations were able to deliver some real concessions, thanks to the imperialist superprofits coming in from abroad and the intensified exploitation of American labor. Workers became victims of speed-up, increased taxation, indebtedness, and degradation of the environment. The average family often had the man working overtime and the woman holding a second job. Their discontent was channeled into narrow economic battles which brought wage increases and sustained the strength of the unions. At the same time, the percentage of unionization declined while the absolute numbers of the industrial proletariat stagnated.

One of the consequences of the political and organizational inadequacies of the trade unions was the appearance of quasi-political forms of struggle among some important layers of workers both inside and outside the unions and in other sections of society. The growing capitalization of agrobusiness was driving farmers and sharecroppers off the land and into the sprawling slums of the major cities, of which the Black ghettos represented only one component. The relatively high demand for labor allowed for a substantial, although unstable, integration of this massive influx of new workers into the key industries. The capitalists had hoped to maneuver them against the unions, but they turned instead into a dangerous social force which threatened repeatedly to create major political crises. Ghetto rebellions were clearly aimed at symbols of capitalism—the police, white businesses, etc. This spirit eventually was reflected in the unions in the growth of Black workers' caucuses. A similar process was embodied in the struggles of the farmworkers' union and in the barrios.

Another aspect of working-class struggle was the unionization of service workers and public employees. The economic role of the state expanded to keep pace with the needs of capitalist industry. At the same time, corporations witnessed an increase of capital associated with the expansion of credit, leading to a many-fold increase in the number of white-collar jobs. This new layer stretched from low-paid clerical workers, through labor aristocracy technicians, to petty-bourgeois near-professionals. Women, while maintaining a constant percentage of the industrial working class, were increasingly drawn into other sectors of the economy. The need for skilled and literate workers led to the development of junior colleges and the

expansion of state universities. Some of the major recent battles of the working class have been fought among these layers. Suffice it to mention the massive organizing drive of AFSCME, encompassing the struggles of Memphis garbage collectors and New York welfare workers; the bitter strikes of the teachers unions; and the growth of the hospital workers and communication workers' unions.

Nevertheless, these struggles fitted into the pattern of fragmentation and dispersion that was characteristic of the whole period. As a result, the movements which grew up in opposition to the various policies of the bourgeoisie appeared in the peripheral sectors of society, that is, outside the major organizations of the working class and apart from the industrial proletariat. The vast majority of those involved in these movements were under the influence of ideologies that looked upon the working class as a passive force. Side by side with this phenomenon, a radicalization took place among a thinner layer, predominantly in response to anti-imperialist struggles. This reflected the general world situation of relative quiescence in the imperialist centers and revolutionary advances in the colonial sphere.

The Turn in the International Situation

The last years of the 1960's were a turning point. In France, May '68 signified both the culmination of the student movement and the beginning of heightened working-class combativity. In the U.S. during the campus strike of May '70, the student movement reached its peak, yet failed to draw the working class into its actions. An awareness of the limitations of the student movement, the new situation created by the end of the expansionary period, and the rise of working-class struggles internationally has led the most politically conscious activists to seek a consistent approach to revolutionary strategy. Both events reflected a deep change in the international situation. This change is outlined in the political resolution of the IXth World Congress, *The New Rise of World Revolution*. It concurs with a decisive reversal of the twenty-five-year expansionary trend, and is bound to have a profound impact on the shape of the class struggle. The conjunctural tendency of capitalism to expand has yielded to the structural tendency toward stagnation characteristic of the era of imperialism. This will erode the material base for the relative passivity of the working class.

The causes of this structural crisis of capitalism are the same as those which provided the basis for the conjunctural rise in capitalism's growth rate. Europe and Japan once provided profitable areas of investment, but they have now become dangerous rivals. The military expenditures and credit explosion which had enabled the United States to police the world and prop up its own economy are now a source of uncontrollable inflation. The bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries are preparing for major class battles, seeking to establish the neutrality of the workers' states bureaucracies, and reinforcing their own state apparatuses. The conjunctural fluctuations of the economy can only exacerbate the conflicts produced by the end of the expansion. No amount of state intervention or planning by the bourgeoisie can resolve these conflicts. This is most clearly demonstrated in the international monetary crises and the continuing decline of the dollar.

This crisis has been an important feature of the economic

life of the capitalist world for quite some time. The weakening of British imperialism finally resulted in the devaluation of the pound sterling in 1967. In 1969, the crises of French capitalism was reflected in the devaluation of the franc and the revaluation of the German mark. In December 1971, the dollar was officially devalued by the Smithsonian Agreement, and fourteen months later, in February 1973, it was devalued again.

The international monetary crises is a reflection of the structural weakness of the economic system, and not simply some technical weakness of the monetary system itself. The weakening of the dollar corresponds to the relative decline in the power of U.S. imperialism within the world capitalist system. Of course, this does not mean that the United States has lost its edge on its competitors. What it *does* mean is that this latest convulsion of the international monetary system sets the scene for heightened interimperialist struggles for markets and trade advantages. The devaluation of the dollar is a tactic used by the United States against its trade competitors.

The logic of this trade war is simple to see. No matter which bourgeois power temporarily gains in the latest round of the competition, the workers will lose. Everywhere, incomes policy and austerity programs are being put into effect. Changes in the international monetary system reflect not only the interimperialist struggle, but also the relative success of the capitalist class in making the workers pay for both inflation and measures aimed at deflation.

As domestic crises produced by the class struggle become increasingly pressing, it will be more and more difficult for world capitalism to control the timing of recessions in different countries. A 1929-type crash is not excluded as an outcome of the current monetary crises; however, such an outcome is not necessary for an intensification of the class struggle. We have already seen overt manifestations of this in Europe. But there also promises to be an intensification of the class struggle in the United States as the capitalist class tries to improve its own position at the expense of the workers.

This attack on the working class is the only way out for world capitalism. The markets of the workers' states are too limited to provide any substantive solution. The American ruling class, for example, cannot consider military solutions at the present time because they would have to defeat their own working class and obtain substantial guarantees from the Stalinist regimes that a U.S. attack on a rival imperialist power would not release a new chain of socialist revolutions. These fears are the basis for the world solidarity of all capitalists and their resolve to strike first at the working class and the colonial masses rather than to attack each other.

In the United States this resolve is already evidenced by the unanimous approval which Nixon's announcement of the wage freeze elicited from bourgeois politicians. It is further evidenced by the increase in the military budget, designed to maintain the immense military system and the continued financing of subimperialist armies. The turn to a volunteer army and the emphasis on the navy is clearly aimed at continuing massive counter-revolutionary war. This policy entails endless inflation and cut-backs in government expenditures for social services. The need to make American industry competitive in world

markets has already brought about a conscious policy of "speed-up" and "rationalization" through lay-offs.

In pursuing its offensive against the living standards of the working class, the government is seeking to use a combination of repression and class collaboration. Thus, we have legislative and judicial attacks on labor rights while the government invites the officialdom onto the Pay Board, and seeks to gain legitimacy in the unions by posing as an anticorruption force. Despite the temporary optimism following the end of the '69 to '72 recession, the government's more and more frequent policy changes are an indication of the basic ineffectiveness of all their policies.

The perspective is therefore one of major battles around economic issues and a radicalization of the union ranks. It means that the advanced elements in the peripheral layers will more and more turn their attention to the center—the working class. The party should prepare for this situation both in its orientation and its program. What is needed is a strategy to unite all the oppressed behind the proletariat. For this, the party must be re-armed.

PART II. THE UNDERSIDE OF THE SWP'S ORTHODOXY

The SWP has been gradually revising some of the fundamental positions of Marxism, in particular the Leninist theory of the vanguard party. This revision focuses on the party's relation to the working class and the broader masses, and its application of the method of the Transitional Program. Although the Party's revision is not fully documented in all areas, it is often reflected in verbal justifications for current party practice. There is a tendency for these justifications to be generalized into "principles," such as single issuism; and strategies, such mass action; and "theories," such as the combined revolution and the new radicalization. These "principles" and "theories" are also being exported throughout the International, first to Canada and Britain, where they have caused much controversy. It is therefore important to outline some of these revisions of Marxist theory and program. All of them revolve around a general deemphasis on the leading role of the working class in the socialist revolution as well as a downplaying of the need for the revolutionary party to be organically linked to the struggles of the masses and their vanguard elements.

SWP theoretical deviations fall into three general categories: the theory of combined revolution, which seeks to apply the permanent revolution to various oppressed sectors in the advanced imperialist countries; the minimalist theory of democratic and transitional demands, which invests all democratic struggles with a transitional content in the epoch of imperialism, and leads to the strategy of single-issue mass actions; and the concept of party building in the abstract, with its emphasis on strengthening of the *organizational* apparatus.

What Is Meant by "Combined Revolution?"

The theory of the combined revolution is in effect an extension of the permanent revolution to the United States. It depicts the American revolution arising out of a coalition of independent movements based on separate oppressed sectors of society, including, but not centered

around, the working class. Traditionally, it was used to describe a specific phenomenon of the colonial areas—the combining of the socialist revolution of the workers in the cities with the peasant revolution in the countryside. Initially, this formula seemed to be restricted to an analogy between the Afro-American ghetto population and a colony. Now, however, it is used to designate the combination of separate and parallel struggles by women and other oppressed sectors with the struggle of the working class for power. This is not just considered to be an American phenomenon, resulting from an allegedly incomplete bourgeois revolution; nor is it merely an application of the general law of uneven and combined development to the imperialist countries. It is a truism to say that the proletarian revolution cannot succeed without winning over to its side the masses of urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. It is also a truism to say that the struggle against racism and the oppression of women, as well as numerous other causes of the oppressed, are an integral and inseparable part of the class struggle. It is also a truism to say that struggles will tend to break out initially in the weakest links of capitalist control, the newer and less privileged layers of the working class, the young and the oppressed minorities.

Then, what is the essence of this theory of the combined revolution in the advanced capitalist countries? The core of it is contained in the prediction that as the working class radicalizes and as a revolutionary situation develops, the independence and particularist ideology of each oppressed sector will tend to deepen. An example often used is the Soviet Union, where the tribal people first awakened to national consciousness after the revolution, when they believed they no longer had to fear the repression of Great-Russian chauvinism.

In the eyes of the party leadership, the increased emphasis that each "sector" will place on the particular forms of its own oppression will naturally lead to ideologies, organizational forms, and actions stressing its difference with the rest of the oppressed masses. The ideologies of nationalism and feminism are characterized as thoroughly progressive because they are held by oppressed layers. The formation of independent parties by Blacks, Chicanos, women is seen not as a lesser evil to complete passivity, but as a superior form of organization. Separate transitional programs stressing the autonomy of each "sector" are put forward to encourage the formation of these parties.

A caricature of the logic of this position was unwittingly put forth by the often glib Comrade Camejo, at the December 1970 YSA Convention in New York. Speaking at the major rally of the convention, he asserted that some sectarians were worried about the seemingly endless series of new parties that the SWP was calling for: a labor party, a Black party, a Chicano party, a women's party. This, he added, was not a danger, but, on the contrary, a valuable asset. Taking the example of a Black woman who could belong to at least three of these parties, he stated that she would have a guarantee that in case one of them degenerated, she could always be active in the next. This kind of logic is not confined to only a few comrades. A large number of comrades have seriously discussed the possibility of drafting a transitional program for women, and others have discussed one for gays. They

were told that this would be premature because the party could not yet know exactly what demands women and gays would raise. The call for a women's party and for self-determination for women was never fully refuted by the SWP leadership. It was opposed for tactical reasons, because the single-issue abortion campaign was on the agenda.

It must be recognized that there is a terminological confusion obscuring the issues. The term "party" is no longer used to mean an organization aspiring to rule in the name of a class, but instead, any organization representing the autonomous interests of a particular layer of the population; "program" is no longer used to designate the road to working-class power, but refers to the tactics used by a "sector" of the population; feminism is used interchangeably with women's liberation; "nationalism" with national liberation; "self-determination" is no longer the right to form a separate state, but the right of individuals to control their lives. For example, in the 1963 Freedom Now resolution, Part IV, it is stated: "We, as supporters of the right of self-determination, should support the Negro demand for a separate nation." Of course, "state" should have been used instead of "nation." (Recall that it was Lenin who charged Kautsky with confusion of "state" with "nation as a whole.")

Tail-ending "Consistent" Nationalism and Feminism

Behind the party leadership's new vocabulary, there is an adaptation in practice to the petty bourgeois ideologies of nationalism and feminism. The SWP leadership's adaptationism is manifested both within and outside of the borders of the United States. In fact, it is not restricted to national groups but has been extended to include women. The nub of the issue is contained in the formula that "consistent nationalism will lead to socialism." Alleged examples of this dynamic are the Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions. In fact, it was the Castroist movement's break with nationalism, that is, with the concept of a national interest above classes, expressed in the smashing of the bourgeois state, that laid the basis for Cuba's advance toward socialism. In the same way, it is the NLF's ties to the workers' state of North Vietnam, rather than its diffused nationalist ideology, that have made it able to endure as a fighting force against imperialism. Marxists have always characterized nationalism as a bourgeois ideology, i.e., a false perception of reality and an apology for particular interests, and have counterposed it to the scientific theory of international socialism.

Lenin's distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed and that of the oppressor applies to the Communist attitude toward the two varieties of nationalism. It did not mean that we should endorse the nationalism of the oppressed, but rather, that while we intransigently fight the nationalism of the oppressor, our attitude is to patiently explain the bankruptcy of nationalism to the liberation fighters of oppressed nations. In some cases, during the incipient stages of a colonial revolution, nationalism may play a progressive role in drawing the masses into action against imperialism. In such cases we give it critical support. But, we recognize that nationalism can only give the masses relief from the most superficial forms of oppression, as with the granting of formal independence. In order to advance the masses, it is necessary

for revolutionaries to dispel the notion that all layers of the oppressed nation share common oppression. They must point out the bankruptcy of the petty bourgeois nationalist leadership, counterpose proletarian internationalism, and become the leaders of the struggle of the masses against imperialism. This requires a qualitative break from the ideology of nationalism and the opening of a world revolutionary perspective, which is precisely the function of a revolutionary party.

The SWP leadership's adaptation to nationalism also takes another form: tail-ending the petty bourgeois program and leadership of national liberation struggles. The case of Palestine was the clearest example of this tendency. The SWP uncritically endorsed Al Fatah's call for a Democratic Secular Palestine, without clarifying its class content. In the case of Vietnam, Bangla Desh and Ireland, the SWP leadership has confined the party's propaganda to the call for self-determination, without raising the need for the establishment of a workers' state as central to the colonial revolution.

In the context of the American scene, the use of the theory of permanent revolution is merely a cover-up for an opportunist and impressionistic adaptation to a nationalist mood which prevailed for some time among a layer of the Black masses.

It is true that Black nationalism is a reaction to the racism of both the ruling class and the white section of the working-class, and their inability to offer any substantial improvement in the situation of Black people. The Garvey "Back to Africa" movement took place amidst the reactionary atmosphere of the early twenties. During the working-class radicalization of the thirties and forties, however, Black and White workers fought their common enemy through the same class organization. The quiescence of the working class and the bankruptcy of the liberals, combined with a rise in the militancy of the Black masses in the late '50s and the '60s, led to a revival of separatist sentiment. Later we will cover in more detail the specific applications of the Marxist position on the national question to the Black movement. In brief, however, it is clear that the overwhelmingly proletarian and urban character of the Black population means that as the working-class radicalization deepens, the separatist sentiments of Black people will tend to recede. More and more, all oppressed layers will identify their particular struggle with the struggle of the working class as a whole for power, and will seek liberation from their oppression through the proletarian revolution.

This is true for women as well as for Blacks. The party leadership impressionistically extended its analysis of the Black movement to the women's movement, adding another "independent sector" to the combined revolution. Here is a sample of the analogy at work, taken from the party's de facto program: (*Toward an American Socialist Revolution*, p. 74): "Equality is what the liberals want; self-determination is the revolutionary situation. For us, the same is true about the women's liberation movement."

And here is the result of such party "education," taken from a *Militant* article of February 20, 1970: "Ruthann Miller, SWP candidate for comptroller, claimed for women the same right of self-determination as for Afro-Americans and the Vietnamese." The following quotations will further show how the green light was given to extend this analogy to any number of new movements and sec-

tors, all to be autonomous participants in the combined revolution, drawing behind them the masses of workers who would identify with them:

"These new movements helped us understand more richly what Malcolm X had said many times: 'if you love revolution, you'll love nationalism.'" (Barnes, *Toward an American Soc. Revolution*, p. 13) and

"The entire evolution of Malcolm X in his last year—his political evolution toward internationalism, toward anti-capitalism—is the evolution of a consistent and irreconcilable nationalist fighter, *impelled by the logic of his fight.*

"We look at feminism in *much the same way.* That is why we, unlike other radical tendencies, aren't nervous when someone says, 'if you love revolution, then you'll love feminism.' You can't be 'too' feminist, any more than you can be 'too' nationalist. If anyone tells you that you're 'too' feminist, be careful with them, comrades." (Barnes, *Toward an American Soc. Revolution*, p. 114*)

This same attitude was to characterize the party leadership's approach to a whole series of new-found sectors: antiwar activists, students, gays, ecologists, prisoners, youth. The whole method involved in the explanation of the role of the "sectors" in the American revolution was "proved" by the use of analogies completely extracted from their concrete historical and conjunctural reality. The virtues of "consistent nationalism" were demonstrated in colonial crisis-ridden Cuba, and then were transferred to the United States, an advanced capitalist country at that time going through a massive economic expansion. They were then extended to petty bourgeois feminism, without any analysis of its relation to the Marxist movement, the class composition of the women's movement, the period it arose in, or its relation to the working class.

Is the "Combined Revolution" Specifically American?

The question that must be answered here is whether there is any qualitative difference between American capitalism and that of other advanced imperialist countries. It is true that American capitalism has displayed certain special features in its past history: co-existence with pre-capitalist formations, the vastness of its internal resources, the heterogeneity of the working class, and the lateness of the emergence of the U. S. as a major imperialist power with world ambitions. But, it would be false to contend that the American bourgeois revolution was incomplete. Since the Civil War, the most advanced capitalist layers, the industrial and financial bourgeoisie, have wielded power virtually alone. As in every other imperialist country, bourgeois democratic rights have been extended and withdrawn as the class struggle developed. The period of Reconstruction was one of extreme radical democracy. If prior to World War I, it may still have been possible to find a major segment of the economy where the basic bourgeois tasks had not been completed, the massive industrialization and urbanization of the postwar period swept it away. Today we are not faced with masses of sharecroppers fighting for their individual rights against planters, but rather with agricultural workers collectively fighting, through their union, the magnates of agrobusiness.

* Hereafter *TASR*.

For the last twenty years or so, the distinctive feature of American society is that despite the economic development of both fundamental classes of society, the class struggle has remained on an extremely low political level, relative to the rest of the world. This is exemplified by the absence of any mass party of the working class. This, however, is not a totally exceptional situation. In Victorian England, the ruling class was able to buy off a large labor aristocracy, thanks to the Imperial super-profits. This did not lead to speculation that the British revolution would combine a struggle of the working class for socialism with a struggle of women for their emancipation and of Irish immigrants for control of their communities. It was assumed that all of these would be subsumed in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Furthermore, previous radicalizations in the United States, when no labor party existed, did not lead Marxists to foresee a "combined" revolution. If today we are able to say that the relative political quiescence of the working class is the basis for the autonomous development of movements in the sectors peripheral to the organized working class, then shouldn't we recognize that the politicization of the working class will mean that the focus of these movements will shift to the central issues dominating the class struggle?

On the other hand, if the independent role of these "sectors" in the American revolution is not due to the specific conditions of America or finds its equivalents in other countries, then the SWP leadership should apply its theory of the combined revolution to other countries as well. Perhaps we should call for an Irish immigrants party in England and a mass feminist movement in Argentina (which we came close to doing!). We should encourage the Spanish section to promote consistent Catalan nationalism and to form a mass Basque nationalist party.

In fact, the autonomous character of these sectoral movements in the United States is merely an extreme manifestation of a more general conjunctural phenomenon to which we shall return. Their autonomy was neither the result of the absence of a labor party, nor of any absolute quiescence of the working class. During the rise of the CIO, no labor party and no autonomous sectoral mass movements existed; during the present period there has been no dearth of working-class struggles. The chief characteristic of the U.S. proletariat has not been absolute quiescence during this period, but rather, the fragmentation of their struggles—the absence of any working-class upsurge of national scope. This fragmentation has been an almost permanent feature of the class struggle in the United States and, moreover, its major weakness. The rise of the CIO represented the most dynamic chapter in the history of the U.S. working class because it finally broke through this fragmentation. It was this powerful revolutionary potential that inspired Cannon's *American Thesis* of 1946. We contend that Cannon's *Thesis*, although historically premature, remains valid as the embodiment of the future of the American revolution.

The Coming American Revolution

We believe that the coming American revolution will be a proletarian revolution, in which the working class, led by a revolutionary party, and leading other layers (unemployed, new middle classes) will confront the capital-

ist class with a situation of dual power. As the basic conflict between worker and capitalist sharpens in all its different forms, the sectoral movements, which today encompass partisans of the working class as well as partisans of the bourgeoisie, will split along class lines. The pro-working-class layers will gravitate towards the organizations of the working class, and 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 or strike committees are combined with neighborhood committees mobilizing the nonproletarian 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 each would be particularly concerned about the forms of their special oppression in addition to the class-wide exploitation. In essence, however, both would be organs of struggle for proletarian power.

The party must prepare for a situation of dual power by turning movements of the nonproletarian 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.

The Minimalist Approach to the Transitional Program

The SWP's theory of the combined nature of the American revolution is closely tied to the notion that democratic demands are generally invested with a transitional content in the epoch of imperialism. Beginning with the correct observation that in the epoch of imperialism the bourgeoisie tends to withdraw some of the democratic rights it had previously granted, this theory draws the false conclusion that the consistent struggle for democracy will lead to socialism. The Transitional Program concluded, instead, that in the case of imperialist countries, it was even more urgent to advance transitional slogans because the masses were losing faith in decaying bourgeois democracy. Democratic demands, in particular the demand for land reform, are crucial in the colonial countries because they mobilize the peasant masses to support the working class, pinning down the bourgeois forces in the countryside. Nonetheless, transitional demands retain their importance for the working class of these countries.

In the imperialist countries, however, democratic demands have a different role. Some, such as the right to scab or hold property, are never supported by Marxists. Others, such as individual freedoms, may be supported according to their impact on the relation of class forces. Finally, the democratic rights of the working class to unionize, put out its press, and hold meetings are indispensable to waging an effective class struggle. As Trotsky pointed out in the case of Germany, the revolutionary party should be interested mainly in the defense of the islands of proletarian democracy. Defense of trade union or party headquarters, of the right to strike or to unionize, can play a unifying role in mobilizing the proletariat against its class enemy. In some situations these struggles will lead to a direct confrontation with the bourgeois state, and only these can be characterized as transitional.

In the case of defense of individual freedoms, we are generally dealing with a different level. The working class will use struggle around such issues to demonstrate its concern for the protection of the oppressed against the ruling class and to broaden its margin of maneuver. The emphasis to be placed on democratic demands depends on the nature of the struggle and the relationship of forces, but it can never be a substitute for the raising of transitional demands leading to a challenge of bourgeois rule as a whole.

An emphasis on the democratic rights of the individual has led the SWP leadership to drift toward the praising of pure democracy and individualism, abstracted from the class struggle:

"We should absorb to the marrow of our bones something that is happening in these struggles in the colonial world, in the nationalist struggles, among women and among the youth. They are standing up and saying, 'I am an individual!'" (*TASR*, p. 115)

Comrade Novack's recent works, despite his own repeated orthodox warnings against that very kind of mistake, are splattered with references to democracy in the abstract, to pure or genuine democracy, understood as some form of freedom from the class struggle:

"Moreover it would be rather odd for a Party and an International whose program proclaims that it stands for democracy in its own movement, and fights for workers' democracy everywhere, to be indifferent to or unconcerned with the struggle of the masses for a larger measure of democratic decision making in every sphere of life. In fact the Trotskyist movement aspires to be *the foremost protector and promoter of genuine democracy* [our emphasis] against all antidemocratic and authoritarian forces, institutions, laws and regimes. (*Education for Socialists*, Jan. 1972, "The Role of the Transitional Program")

Comrade Novack goes on to describe how the call for a democratic republic in Italy, in 1946, was an algebraic formula, which received its working-class content by the associated call for the organization of struggle committees and a general strike by the unions. However, the very same algebraic formula was put forward without any class content in the call for a "Democratic Secular Palestine," which the SWP endorsed at its 1971 convention. This is as incorrect as the Maoist-Stalinist call for a "New Democracy," which leads to the subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie. The 1971 SWP *National Committee Draft Resolution on Israel and the Arab Revolution* stated:

"The currently expressed goal of the struggle is the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine. We give unconditional support to this struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination."

Comrade Horowitz further states in his *Reply to Comrades Langston, Langston and Rothschild*:

"Bourgeois democratic demands, like that for a democratic, secular Palestine, are a part, in fact a central part, of the revolutionary socialist program. Langston, Langston and Rothschild are wrong when they contend that the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine is the practical expression of 'non-recognition of the existence of antagonistic classes within the Palestinian people.'"

This emphasis on democratic and immediate demands

leads to the absence of unifying slogans for the class as a whole. It is a justification for adapting to the spontaneous level of consciousness of the sectoral movements in which the SWP has been operating. It recently provided the basis for an economist adaptation to the immediate demands of the consumer movement. This was exemplified by the SWP's intervention into the demonstrations of April 4 and May 5 with the minimalist slogans of "End the Cutbacks" and "End High Prices," both implying the possibility of a return to a better past, and failing to show the way to an independent mobilization of the working class.

Single-Issuism and the Tactic of the United Front

The idea that democratic demands are generally transitional leads to the liquidation of the specific role of the revolutionary party in injecting class consciousness into the proletariat. The SWP says that since movements based on a democratic demand have a transitional dynamic, to try to add other demands would be sectarian and would weaken the movement. Rather than assessing the conjunctural needs of the class and how a particular movement could fit into the broader revolutionary strategy, and then advancing slogans based on this analysis, the most common approach is to wait for a movement to sift out its own demands, pick one out as central, and organize a single-issue coalition devoted almost exclusively to mass actions. It is considered sectarian for the revolutionary party to advance slogans that go beyond those of the "united front type formation." It is put forward that the most revolutionary policy is to be the best builders and the most consistent advocates of this movement.

This policy turns the united front tactic into a strait-jacket on the party. The traditional united front tactic did not involve a relationship of programmatic partnership, but an alliance for struggle. Joint action against the ruling class enhanced the ability of the working class to win actual concessions, and, as a result, increased its self-confidence. Revolutionaries could demonstrate their dedication to the common struggle while at the same time criticizing the vacillations of the reformist leaderships and laying the basis for a struggle on a higher level.

The SWP leadership puts forth a dangerous formula when it contends that "mass action in the streets against the government" (for even the most minimal of democratic demands) has a revolutionary dynamic of its own. The substitution of the term "government" for "ruling class" can lead to any number of ambiguities. In addition, it is not uncommon for mass reformist parties, especially in non-election periods, to use such actions as safety valves for the discontent of the masses, and as a means of pressuring the bourgeoisie. It is precisely the intervention of a vanguard party that can transform these actions into a challenge to the power of the bourgeoisie.

The tactic of the single-issue antiwar movement was initially adopted as a means of preventing that movement's development from an action bloc into a formation whose program inevitably would have been reformist, due to the low level of consciousness of the masses. Since then, however, single-issuism has been elevated into a principle for the entire period. It has been the necessary precondition for the party's opportunist intervention into the sectoral movements without a class line, and is integrated into the "strategy" of the united-front-type coalition for an

entire period. The result of this whole minimalist approach is that the party becomes a prisoner of the lowest level of consciousness in the "united-front-type coalitions," fails to attract the more advanced elements, and periodically sees the whole movement co-opted by liberals. Despite several experiences of this type, the party has been unable to draw any lessons as to the need for a revolutionary perspective.

The best example of this phenomenon is the abortion law repeal coalition—the exclusive focus for one of the party's two major campaigns in the past period. The demand was selected (1) because it would provide a political focus for the women's movement which was turning inward and in danger of degeneration, and (2), because it was supposed to be the demand around which the largest number of women could be mobilized in the streets against the government. Free abortion on demand was rejected because it involved an incipient socialist consciousness of the need for free health care. Child care and equal-pay demands were not raised because it was thought that they might detract from the ability to mobilize large forces around a single issue. No consideration was given to the fact that in capitalist Japan and Sweden, the right to abortion is recognized. The abortion demand was invested with a transitional content, because it was felt that it would be very difficult to win, and that if it was granted, it would result from a long struggle that would teach the movement the value of mass action. What happened instead was that the Abortion Coalition found itself defending semi-liberal abortion laws, petitioning for reform bills of liberal congresswoman Abzug, engaging in thinly disguised lobbying in Albany, and defending the Supreme Court against the Catholic Church. The abortion law repeal demand was granted while the movement was at its lowest ebb.

The lesson many activists drew was that a combination of modest-sized actions and pressure on friendly liberal politicians could win reforms. Instead of moving closer to revolutionary socialism, they became firmly convinced that the capitalist system was essentially "good" and "reformable."

It is tragically incorrect to believe that demonstrations around single-issue demands will automatically radicalize the petty bourgeois layers. Here is what Mandel recently had to say on the subject:

"The broad masses learn only through action. . . . Yet although the masses learn only through action, all actions do not necessarily lead 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." (*Leninist Theory of Organization*, p. 43)

Party Building in the Abstract

Behind the SWP's adaptation to the spontaneous level of consciousness of the movements in which it has been intervening lies the conception that regardless of the party's practice in real life, its program will remain pure—on the ready for bigger struggles ahead. The leadership believes that no amount of adaptation to the existing petty bourgeois consciousness and concurrently no amount of isolation from the working-class struggles would be

sufficient to mar this purity. All that is needed is organizational strengthening of the apparatus, until, in a second stage, workers will flesh out this skeleton. Finally, in the ultimate stage, when the party is a fully equipped mass working-class organ, the question of armed struggle will be discussed.

There was not merely an American perspective. The document called *The Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International* was put forward in the SWP as the central axis of the work for all sections. Starting from a completely nonclass approach to youth in general (in practice, youth were defined as students), the document advocated numerical recruitment of cadre through the formation of youth groups as the panacea of world Trotskyism. At the 1971 SWP Convention, Comrade Barnes counterposed this document to an alleged mechanical proletarian orientation as the central perspective for Latin America, and as the next big step in increasing the cadres of world Trotskyism.

"They (the Proletarian Orientation Tendency—J. B.) also attack *the Worldwide Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International* and our evaluation of the 1968 May-June revolutionary upsurge in France. They single out for attack Comrade Hansen's 'Assessment of the Draft Resolution on Latin America,' which outlines the position of the SWP on the issues before the last World Congress of the Fourth International. Comrade Hansen's document centers on the central need to orient the world movement towards the radicalizing youth, primarily the student youth at this stage of its development, as the next key step in increasing the cadres of the world Trotskyist movement. We reject ultra-left shortcuts flowing from the inexperience of young cadres. This was especially noted in our position on Latin America. Apparently the leaders of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency disagree." (Barnes and Sheppard, *SWP DB* Vol. 29, No. 19, p. 12)

Comrade Art Young, of similar persuasion, in his international report to the 1973 LSA Convention, deplored the fact that the Argentine PST had been so slow in building a youth group. Comrade Hansen counterposes armed struggle not to the peaceful road to socialism, but to party-building. Party-building becomes an organizational process, abstracted from the needs of the class struggle as a whole, and from the current stage of development of the vanguard of the masses.

Two mistakes are involved in this conception. The first blinds the party to the dynamic of its isolation from the class. The second ignores the task of winning over the vanguard, seeks to go directly to the masses, and ends up in sectarian abstentionism.

In *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, Comrade Cannon clearly warned us against the dangers resulting from the party's prolonged petty bourgeois composition. Trotsky said that this danger was present regardless of the sincere revolutionary intentions of the comrades in question. This is neither a workerist call for an orientation exclusively to the working class, nor does it put forth the idea that the revolutionary nucleus must first root itself in the working class before intervening in other sectors. The first priority is to regroup a nucleus around the program. Trotsky pointed out how the Fourth International started out by attracting outcasts and misfits. He did not make

a virtue out of necessity, however, and added that the main task was precisely to root the International in the working class movement. This task must be pursued at all times.

As was pointed out recently in the document, *The Building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe*:

"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."

The relative importance of this work may vary, but prolonged isolation from the class can only lead to the degeneration of the party. For short periods of time, in some circumstances, such a situation may be unavoidable. The task then is not to ignore the dynamic of isolation or deny it by redefining the character of the petty bourgeoisie, but rather to promote an awareness of the dangers involved and to seek to consciously master whatever deviations occur.

The organizational fetishistic approach to party-building practiced by the SWP includes only two relations between the party and the masses: (1) recruitment and (2) promotion of mass actions. This is reflected in practice in the party's intervention into demonstrations, where, on the one extreme, *The Militant* is sold to a tiny minority while, at the other extreme, the masses are encouraged to remain on the single issue level. What is forgotten here is the need to raise the level of consciousness of the broad vanguard, not only through action, but also through persistent revolutionary propaganda. Without the collaboration of this broad vanguard, the revolutionary nucleus can only limit itself to propagandistic calls to action. By investing all mass movements with an automatic revolutionary dynamic of their own, and by viewing the SWP as the finished revolutionary party of the vanguard, the SWP seeks to escape this contradiction. In fact, it isolates itself from the vanguard elements, and adapts to the lowest level of consciousness of mass movements. This is a revision of the Leninist conception of class consciousness. Here is what Mandel wrote on the subject:

"Experience in struggle is by no means sufficient for clarity on the tasks of a broad, pre-revolutionary, or even a revolutionary mass struggle to be attained. . . . Without protracted and consistent preparation, without the education of hundreds of thousands of advanced workers in the spirit of a revolutionary program, and without the practical experience accumulated over the years by these advanced workers through attempting to bring this program to the broad masses, it would be absolutely illusory to assume that suddenly, overnight so to speak, with the mere aid of mass actions, a consciousness equal to the demands of the historical situation could be created among the broader masses." (*Leninist Theory of Organization*, p. 32)

Tiny revolutionary organizations like the SWP that ignore this advanced layer and attempt to lead the masses to action are either engaging in sectarian adventure or negating the role of the party as the promoter of revolutionary class consciousness. The long-term trend is toward liquidation into the mass movements. The short-term internal effects are that the party ceases to win over the most advanced elements and compensates for the lower political level of its recruitment by increasing commitment

to the party through organizational means. The inevitable dynamic is a process of sectarianization and inability to intervene in the class struggle, accompanied by a fear of losing the apparatus because it is held together only by its organizational impetus. The existence of this dynamic in the SWP bring seriously into question the leadership's counterposition of party-building to armed struggle in Latin America.

PART III. THE REAL LESSONS OF THE RADICALIZATION

The SWP's failure to analyze the present period or to prepare for the intensification of working-class struggles and its rationalization in the form of the theory of the combined revolution are tied to the party's intervention into the past radicalization. It is therefore necessary to review more precisely the nature of the movements of the '60's, how the party intervened in them, and to outline the tasks which face revolutionary socialists today in relation to struggles which may develop.

The Black Movement

The most important of the movements which grew up during the period of relative working-class quiescence was the movement which developed out of the struggles against the oppression of Black people. Despite the SWP's constant reaffirmation of the central role of the Black struggle in the American revolution, the party has actually conducted very few national campaigns on this question, beyond very general propaganda. There has been no analysis of the lull in the Black movement since the demise of the Black Panthers. Our exclusive orientation toward the petty bourgeois nationalist sectors of the Black movement has yielded practically no gains to the party in terms of developing a larger Black cadre. The proportion of Black comrades in the party has remained consistently low.

In this area, more than in any other, the party's intervention has been characterized by a combination of sectarian propagandistic abstentionism with opportunist tail-ending of various Black leaders. A brief review of the Black movement illustrates this contradictory approach.

The civil rights movement was a response to the drastic change in the living conditions of the Black masses. The dispersal of the Black Belt and the integration of Southern Blacks into the centers of industrial production, made possible by the post-war boom, laid the basis for a rise in the expectations of the Black masses. At that time, the party had a very cautious attitude, confining its intervention into the Southern civil rights movement to an occasional presence at national events. At the same time, the central slogan of the 1964 presidential campaign, "Take the Troops Out of Vietnam and Send Them to Mississippi," introduced dangerous confusion on the possible use of the bourgeois state to solve the problems of the masses.

The rising expectations of the Black masses together with the actual widening gap between Black and White incomes led directly to the ghetto revolts. The nationalist ideology which dominated the most militant sectors of the movement at that time was the result of a combination of conjunctural factors: the failure of the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie and of the

labor movement to bring any substantial change in the condition of the Black masses and the increased militancy and frustration of the Black masses amidst general prosperity. However, the most advanced elements were already beginning to abandon nationalism and adopt an internationalist and socialist stance. This break was embodied by the evolution of Malcolm X under the impact of the colonial revolution. The party, however, accepted the equation of nationalism with militancy which the bourgeois press was pushing. A ridiculous parallel was drawn between the Black nationalists and the leaders of the Cuban Revolution. The theory that "consistent nationalism leads to socialism" was born.

When the Black Panthers were in their nationalist phase, the party gave them virtually uncritical support. When the Panthers, their spin-offs, and the Black trade union caucuses began to develop beyond nationalism, the party criticized this turn and recommended that they continue to organize on a nationalist basis. The fact that there were elements supporting Maoism and guerrillaism, and that the Peace and Freedom Party was not *THE* revolutionary party, should not be used to mask the fact that the Panthers had taken a progressive turn in introducing "Marxism Leninism," however distorted, into the Black community, and in taking the difficult step of beginning alliances with ostensibly revolutionary, predominately white organizations. However, it was *this very turn* that was at the center of the party's criticisms of the Panthers. In practice, the party was unable to find ways of participating and initiating struggles in defense of the Black Panthers (except in Seattle). The sectarian attitude of the Panthers and the pressing needs of the single-issue anti-war movement were valid considerations. Nonetheless, in retrospect, they were insufficient to justify our near-abstention from that important struggle, especially when this abstention fits into a pattern of lack of any major effort toward intervention in the Black movement.

The Panthers were not the only expression of the radicalization of a section of the Black movement, centered around young Black workers, from which the party made practically no gains. This radicalization was not only on a general socioeconomic level; it was clearly political in the case of the strike at Polaroid, the League of Black Revolutionary Workers and other Black caucuses, and the formation of militant groups among G.I.s. These struggles, were clearly open to intervention by revolutionaries, both Black and White.

The ruling class policy of repression and conciliation has temporarily diverted the Black movement. We should not underestimate the margin of maneuver of the U. S. bourgeoisie. It was able to repress a part of the most advanced sector, the Black Panthers, and significantly isolate them, not just because of their rhetoric, but also because other avenues of progress seemed to be opening up. This served as a warning to all militants. At the same time, although the increased concentration of capital at the top effectively prevented the formation of any real Black bourgeoisie, there has been a substantial integration of Blacks into the new middle classes. This policy has been consciously promoted by the ruling class, as evidenced in government jobs and in the armed forces, although not without reactionary resistance. Black bourgeois politicians and mayors are today a trusted tool of the

ruling class. In addition, the plethora of anti-poverty and welfare programs slightly alleviated some of the worst abuses, but more importantly served to coopt almost an entire generation of Black activists into the administration of these programs. This carrot-and-stick policy also had an effect on students at the elite colleges who had displayed some of the strongest nationalist leanings.

Today, Pan-Africanism represents a contradictory current. On the one hand, it is an expression of solidarity with the struggle of the colonial masses in Africa. On the other hand, Pan-Africanism represents a retreat from the tasks confronting Black revolutionaries at home: mobilization of the most deprived layers of the Black masses, self-defense, socialist propaganda, and alliance with working-class organizations. These are the problems that the Black vanguard is still confronted with, and which can only be answered with a general strategy for the mobilization of the working class. The Black Panthers had begun to tackle these problems, but they were savagely repressed.

Black Nationalism and Communism

The party's answer to these problems is the product of a series of elaborations of Trotsky's position of 1939: the "vessel theory of nationalism," (nationalism is a vessel which can be either progressive or reactionary depending on its class content); the equation of the nationalism of the oppressed with national liberation (which makes nationalism of the oppressed nation always progressive); the development of a separate Transitional Program for Black Liberation; and the call for a Black Party and Black Control of the Black Community. We believe that the small size of the party's Black membership is due not only to the objective situation but also to an incorrect orientation and theoretical confusion. It is necessary therefore to begin a re-evaluation of the party's position on the Black question.

We believe that Trotsky's position in 1939 was basically correct. It flowed from his knowledge of the C. P.'s line on the Black Belt, and corresponded to the reality of a massive concentration of Black people in the South under predominantly rural conditions. Under those conditions, and due to their relatively smaller weight within the labor movement, it was possible for true nationalist aspirations to develop. This possibility concretely posed the question of the right to self-determination, and Trotsky correctly advocated unconditional defense of that right. It should be pointed out, though, that self-determination, in the Leninist tradition, meant one thing and *one thing only: the right to form a separate state*. It is precisely that challenge to the existing state apparatus that gives the demand its explosive character.

Since 1939 the objective basis for the development of nationalist aspirations has been considerably weakened. There is only a small minority of sharecroppers. The majority of the Black population has been dispersed in the cities and integrated into the industrial production process. An urban petty bourgeoisie and comprador layer has developed. In the unlikely event that a nationalist consciousness develops, we should defend the right of Black people to self-determination, although not advocate that they implement it. However, it should be clear that as the working class radicalizes, the subjective basis for nationalist aspirations will tend to whither away and make way for working-class solidarity. This does not

mean that Black people will become less conscious of their special oppression, but rather that the vast majority of the Black masses will see their struggle as part and parcel of the working-class struggle. This will polarize the Black movement between those elements gravitating toward the more militant layers of the working class and those attempting to resist that process.

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

The Black masses suffer a special oppression, in addition to the class exploitation, and have been in the vanguard of the struggle against both of these aspects of capitalist rule. The party must show the vanguard how the solution to the problems of the Black masses lies ultimately in the elimination of capitalism. Significant changes can only be won by a struggle against the bourgeoisie based on the mobilization of their own strength alongside that of the rest of the working class, and directed at the elimination both of their own special oppression and that which they share with the working class as a whole.

This requires the organization of a struggle along class lines. It does not mean that Black people who are ready to struggle against their own special oppression or even against the oppression of the working class as a whole should wait for white workers. But it implies that revolutionaries should seek to put forward the class line in developing struggles against high rents, high prices, police brutality and for better housing, education, etc. They must warn against the Black agents of the ruling class, generalize the demands of these struggles, and focus them against the bourgeoisie and its state, thereby laying the basis for a united struggle against the ruling class.

At the same time as the party defends the right of the Blacks to self-determination insofar as Blacks raise the question themselves, the party must also relentlessly struggle for Black equality against all forms of special oppression of Black people, and recognize the crucial role of Black workers in the vanguard of the American socialist revolution. This, however, does not mean support to nationalism, but on the contrary, a campaign of patiently explaining the class nature of Black oppression, the revolutionary potential of the working class, and a strategy for unifying the struggles of Blacks and other workers.

The Black Party and Community Control

The party's uncritical endorsement of Black nationalism has led to a tail-ending attitude toward different "solutions" put forward by Black nationalist leaders: Black power, Black control of the Black communities, and Pan-Africanism. It has led to a one-sided opportunist emphasis on

nationalist demands for the Black masses, which reached its culmination in the drafting of a special transitional program for Black liberation. While this program correctly lists a series of demands which can mobilize the Black masses, the very concept of a separate program and a separate strategy for Black people negates the task of integrating the Black vanguard into a global strategy for proletarian revolution, around a program for the unification of working-class struggles.

The concept of a separate program by its very nature has to include such demands as "preferential hiring" and "exempt Blacks from the draft." Preferential hiring is supposed to deal with the reality of high unemployment in the Black community. But unemployment is not an ethnic phenomenon. To pose this narrow solution to a chronic disease of capitalist society which affects all workers doesn't solve anything. Instead it adapts to the bourgeoisie's strategy of dividing the workers' struggle, and gives an opening for the bourgeois state to intervene in unions as a "progressive" force.

Comrade Baxter Smith falls prey to this type of logic when in a recent issue of *The Militant* he characterizes the government's intervention in the Steelworkers Union around preferential hiring as a victory for Blacks. Our solution for unemployment is not preferential hiring but "jobs for all!" The dynamic of "jobs for all" is toward working-class unity whereas the preferential hiring demand exacerbates intra-class conflicts. We would incorporate propaganda explaining to the entire class the reasons for higher unemployment among Blacks. The struggle against racism in the class must be implacable, and there can be no concessions.

The same formula applies to the demand of "exempt Blacks from the draft." We advocate effective military training for all workers (Black, white, male, female) and incorporate this into our propaganda around workers control of the military.

Two questions in particular reflect the confusion in the party's approach to the Black movement: the call for a Black party and the call for Black control of the Black community.

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

It should be pointed out that despite the SWP's hollering for a Black party for over five years on a propaganda campaign basis, there has been no evidence of

this corresponding to any actual sentiment among Black masses. In fact the few motions in that direction which did take place have either moved toward a working-class stand, as the Black Panthers did for a time, or have become mere bourgeois parliamentary pressure groups, as did the Gary convention and the remnants of the Black Panther Party. In the highly unlikely event that a Black party actually was established, the revolutionary party might choose to support it critically and intervene in it with its revolutionary program. In the eyes of the party leadership, though, a Black Party is a necessary step, and is seen as emerging out of the struggle for Black control of the Black community.

This concept actually embodies the essence of the many community struggles which have broken out over a whole range of issues. In fact, the overwhelming majority of these struggles were waged in reaction against the aggravated deprivations which the lower layers of the working class are made to suffer. Only in a few cases did they actually involve aspirations toward local autonomy.

Communists have an answer for such sentiments. They defend the right to local administrative autonomy as opposed to appointed officials because it allows for greater participation by the masses in local government. It politicizes them in the same way that extending the right to vote does. However, it represents a very limited democratic reform, with little impact on the relationship of forces between classes.

The slogan of Black control of the Black community is not an expression of the right to local autonomy. In order to represent local autonomy it could only be applied to 100 percent Black areas. Otherwise, it is more a reactionary expression of exclusivist, national-cultural autonomy, under which only members of the majority national-cultural group can participate in local affairs. In many cases this would exclude Latino, Asian-American, and poor white minorities in the ghetto or barrio. Nor is it an expression of the right to self-determination. In order to be construed as the right to form a separate state, it would have to mean the establishment of an independent federation of enclaves with their own army, navy, police and administration.

The main problem with the party's "Black control of the Black community," is that it is posed as the central solution of the Black struggle, and is seen as a transitional demand. In fact, it is a *minimal* demand, and we should warn that it would solve none of the major problems of Black people.

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

In particular, the call for "Community control of the police" can be extremely misleading. It can only mean democratizing or reforming the bourgeois state, relying on bourgeois politicians for protection. We should counterpose slogans which clearly identify the police as the agents of the enemy class, such as calls for the dissolu-

tion of entire police units and the creation of independent bodies, based on mass actions, to patrol and defend the communities. This has been concretely foreshadowed by the experiences of armed self-defense of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, the Black Panthers, and the Black community in Cairo, Illinois. In these struggles, the right to buy and own arms as well as access to military training proved extremely important, as the role played by veterans demonstrated. The perspective of local action committees can enable the party to intervene with an internationalist class line in the struggles of the ghetto. This line can be concretized by campaigns to mobilize the working class as a whole in defense of these struggles.

As the economic situation worsens and continues to deteriorate, Black people face increasing insecurity and hardship. They will be drawn more and more into actions opposing cutbacks, inflation, speed-up, lay-offs, and wage controls. Being the first and most harshly hit by these measures, they will be in the forefront of the new militancy arising in the union struggles and other struggles against the ruling-class offensive. They make up large percentages of the workers currently being unionized in the organizing drives of AFSCME, hospital workers unions, etc. Already we have seen a number of actions against the cutbacks of federal funds for social services like antipoverty programs and childcare centers. The higher rate of unemployment which is at the core of many of the struggles which have already taken place means that a central slogan must be: *"Jobs for All; no discriminatory hiring or advancement practices."*

In addition to these mobilizations around issues with an immediate mass appeal, there are also signs of higher levels of political consciousness among some layers of Black workers. The actions against the use of Polaroid equipment by the South African police have been followed by a boycott against Rhodesian chrome imports. The strike at Mead in Atlanta demonstrated a definite receptivity to radical (in this case unfortunately Maoist) leadership. It is around struggles such as these that the party can have the most success in recruiting Black militants. The combination of a real perspective for uniting the working class in action and of the repeated demonstration of the party's commitment to fighting racism in concrete actions, should facilitate the recruitment of Black members from all layers of the population, including the campus. Particularly fruitful areas of work should be junior colleges and high schools, the army, unemployed and veterans groups, and industries with large concentrations of young Black workers.

The Chicano Movement

The Chicano population displays some features of national consciousness. The Spanish language, the close ties to Mexico, both historically and geographically, concentration in the Southwest, all tend to give greater cohesion to nationalist conceptions. However, the Chicano population is also overwhelmingly proletarian and therefore there is a greater probability that it will seek to end its oppression through proletarian forms of struggle rather than through the formation of a national state.

Communists should defend the Chicano's right to self-determination. This does not mean advocating separation. Such a stand would depend on the conjunctural development of the class struggle, and the impact of the Chicano

separatist movement on the course of the North American revolution. In particular, the party should not support the scheme of a separate state of Aztlan. The very idea of any substantial improvement coming from such a formula is entirely utopian. In addition, the concept of Aztlan is an arbitrary one, which corresponds neither to the socio-economic reality of the Southwest, nor to the consciousness of the Chicano masses.

The concept that the party must put forward is that the working class is the only force which can eliminate the oppression of Chicanos. This must be counterposed to any reliance on help from the Mexican bourgeois state, favors from the American bourgeoisie, or organizing the struggle along multi-class nationalist lines. It is the Chicano working class behind the farmworkers' union which has spearheaded the Chicano movement, and we must continue to advocate that the working class take the leadership of the movement. This will lay the basis for a united struggle of the working class as a whole. Rather than pushing a nationalist line and stressing exclusive demands, the party should put forward internationalism. This perspective will become real if the party's advocacy of the most complete democracy and equality is adopted by the vanguard of the working class and the broader masses. In particular, the struggle for bi-lingualism in all institutions and aspects of social life is very important.

The confused class position of the Chicano movement has found its expression in the development of the La Raza Unida party. Neither by its class composition, origins, ideology, or organic ties to the working class can the LRUP be considered a proletarian party. On the other hand, it is decidedly not a party of the bourgeoisie. The most accurate characterization must be that it is a petty bourgeois party. The character of the LRUP is reflected in the permanent conflict within it over orientation. On a whole number of issues ranging from the attitude toward the Democratic Party to its relations with the Mexican bourgeoisie, two incipient trends are revealed, one toward the bourgeoisie, the other toward the working class.

Rather than trying to patch over these differences and keep the LRUP together by stressing the nationalist issues which unite all Chicanos, the SWP should intervene with a class line. The concept of a more or less permanent nationalist party flies in the face of the whole experience of the working class movement. Carried to its logical conclusion, it would lead to obstructing the development toward a class line of sections of such petty bourgeois nationalist organizations as the Basque ETA or even the Puerto Rican MPI in the United States itself. The correct approach is to intervene in such formations with the tactic of critical support, to win away the best elements. The experience of Crystal City is a concrete demonstration of the SWP's blowing up the minimal gains of "sewer socialism" into a major victory for the oppressed, thanks to the SWP's inconsistent theory of "consistent nationalism leads to socialism." The same lesson has already been learned from the experience of the Lowndes County Freedom Party. Clearly, while we can support local autonomy, we should not pose it as the central solution of the problems of the Chicano masses, but rather combine it with transitional slogans.

At the same time as we put forward this broad perspective for the Chicano movement, we must recognize the formation of a more advanced layer of militants with a

clearer class-consciousness, who are particularly responsive to such struggles as the Farmworkers strikes, the Farah workers' strike and developments in the Latin American and Vietnamese revolutions. The party must develop a special orientation to this layer:

The Puerto Rican Movement

The Puerto Rican movement in the United States combines the features of a typical colonial liberation movement with the struggle of an oppressed national minority. Puerto Rico is one of the last true colonies. The ability of a revolutionary party to wage campaigns in solidarity with the struggles of the colonial people oppressed by its imperialism has always been the real test of internationalism. The party should defend the right of Puerto Rico to form a separate state and should advocate an Independent Socialist Puerto Rico.

The Socialist Workers Party leadership has found it difficult until recently to even call for independence for Puerto Rico, let alone socialism, and has failed to write a single pamphlet on the struggle in Puerto Rico or analyze the political situation and various movements on the island. This has left our Latino comrades virtually without a line when they discuss politics with members of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) or Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP).

In relation to Puerto Ricans within the United States, the party should defend their right to benefit from the independence of Puerto Rico and from complete equality within the United States, including local autonomy in predominantly Puerto Rican areas. The party must point out how the struggle for Puerto Rican independence and the struggle for equality in the United States are organically connected to the struggle for proletarian revolution in the U.S. This requires a common strategy under the leadership of a revolutionary international, and the building of a multinational party of the American Socialist revolution.

The evolution of the Puerto Rican liberation movement has been considerably influenced by the Cuban revolution. In adopting a socialist platform, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party expressed its understanding of the lessons of the process of permanent revolution which unfolded in Cuba. This represented a major step forward for the new mass vanguard of the Puerto Rican struggle, a step which should be supported by the party. While the PSP and all revolutionary Puerto Rican organizations should advocate united action fronts against imperialism, here even more than in the case of the Black or Chicano movement, the concept of building a mass nationalist party in the United States is a utopian scheme out of which the only practical result would be to delay the emergence of a clearly internationalist vanguard. The PSP is a centrist party, with Castroist, Maoist, Stalinist and Trotskyist currents. Open programmatic clarification will certainly surface these differences in the near future. The party can play an important role by criticizing the PSP's lack of clarity and by intervening with our program for revolution in the U.S. and our advocacy of an independent socialist Puerto Rico. Instead, a weak and abstentionist role has been played by the SWP leadership.

To summarize, the party's orientation toward the oppressed minorities has been characterized by theoretical confusion and tail-ending of various nationalist trends.

This confusion, combined with the exclusive campus and apparatus orientation and the lack of an aggressive interventionist approach, has led to missing real opportunities, and the failure to increase our third world membership or establish any real bases in the oppressed communities. While recognizing the objective difficulties involved, we should consider the greater success of every single one of our opponent tendencies in this work as an alarming trend which calls for serious reconsideration of our orientation.

The Antiwar Movement

Shortly after the appearance of the mass civil rights movement, and the radicalization of a section of those who participated in it, antiwar ferment developed. Here was a mass movement which developed outside the center of the working class, whose participants, for the most part, did not see their struggle in class terms as one between U. S. imperialism and revolutionary working-class forces. In order to avoid generalizing these features, it is necessary to have an exact understanding of why the antiwar movement developed as it did.

The antiwar movement drew its strength from three sources. For a radicalized fringe—the anti-imperialist wing—it represented a movement of solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution, and was seen within the context of anti-imperialist struggles in Cuba, Africa, and Latin America. This phenomenon was an international one and was translated into Vietnam solidarity actions throughout the world.

The massive character of the movement in the U. S. was related to two, more specifically American factors. One was a massive reaction to the direct impact of a large-scale war, especially to the high draft calls and casualties. The other source of strength came from its connection to a whole series of struggles around campus issues, on which the student movement as such was based. The party's initial approach was not a campus orientation for the sake of a campus orientation. The justification for the turn to a campus-based antiwar movement was purely tactical. It was correctly recognized that one of the central tasks of American revolutionaries was defense of the Vietnamese revolution. In a sense, it was an application of the tactic from the periphery to the center—that is, using openings in the peripheral (to the working class) layers of the population to advance key issues of the class struggle. This perspective gradually came to be replaced by a subordination of the antiwar work to the goal of winning hegemony in the student movement by adapting to whatever was put forward in the student-dominated sectoral movements. This meant overlooking the more advanced radicalized layer in favor of soliciting support from student government "activists" and liberals, insofar as the antiwar movement was concerned. Because of the central place that antiwar work has had for the party over the past eight years, many lessons can be drawn from a closer scrutiny of this work.

It was also correctly recognized that it was important to intervene in this movement in order to recruit to the party. The call of the Fourth International for a united front in defense of the Vietnamese revolution against the aggression of U. S. imperialism, which was issued in the spring of 1965, laid the basis for understanding the decisive nature of that struggle. The fact that the SWP responded to that call is a testimony to the basic interna-

tionism of the party at that time. This stands in contrast to the sectarian-opportunist abstentionism of any number of pro-International Committee sects, which under the cover of pursuing the class struggle in their own countries, actually failed to wage any special campaigns in defense of the Vietnamese revolution. The correct implementation of this perspective required an international campaign of solidarity with the struggle of the NLF-DRV, and in addition, in the case of the United States, the organization of the mobilization of the broadest masses through a united front for immediate withdrawal. The principled nature of the demand for immediate withdrawal of U. S. troops from Vietnam flowed from the particular dynamic of the struggle in Indochina.

The call for nonintervention of U. S. imperialism had a democratic content for the United States, where it appealed to the isolationism of the masses and the pacifism of some layers. In the case of Vietnam, however, it had a revolutionary content. The dynamic of the struggle in Vietnam, its history, the intricate connection of the national liberation struggle with the defense of an existing workers' state, precluded any hope that the U. S. ruling class could achieve an Indonesian-type solution. The possibility of a peacefully received liquidation of revolutionary forces under a coalition government is ruled out by the existence of the armed units of the N. L. F.-D. R. V. This is why despite the claims of the NLF to stand for a neutral capitalist Vietnam, the U. S. ruling class has constantly maintained that this was mere "Communist duplicity." The case of China, where the smashing of the bourgeois state left imperialism and native capitalism powerless to stop the process of socialization, stands as a warning to the imperialists. In the case of Vietnam, the constant reaffirmations of the perspective of reunification add an ominous note for capitalism. Finally, it is obvious that the NLF and PRG are popular fronts only on paper. The reality of the situation is that they represent working-class forces and revolutionary peasantry whose continuity with the Viet-Minh, as it emerged out of the August 1945 revolution, and whose relationship with the DRV need not be demonstrated. Withdrawal of U. S. support would most likely mean the smashing of the Saigon regime, leaving state power in the hands of the proletariat. This explains why the splits in the ruling class were always tactical and episodic, and why no bourgeois politician ever consistently advocated immediate withdrawal.

The implementation of the tactic of united action fronts for immediate withdrawal had a real impact on the course of the war, although this should be seen within the context of the heroic struggle of the Indochinese fighters, the international antiwar movement, and the limited but nonetheless real material aid from the workers' states. The success of the Vietnamese struggle is not the success of a spontaneous guerrilla war for self-determination but the success of a highly organized and technically elaborate war for the defense and extension of the workers state, combining many different tactics including rural guerrilla war. The demoralization of American troops in Vietnam, which was based on the strength of the antiwar movement at home, was one of the factors contributing to the tenacious resistance of the Vietnamese. The mass demonstrations, the referendums, the antiwar committees all enhanced that process.

The antiwar movement demonstrated a number of weak-

nesses which the party proved unable to correct. In particular, the drastic disintegration of the antiwar movement during election periods, and after the withdrawal of ground troops, was a sign of the weakness of the consciously anti-imperialist wing, and should have dictated to the party a policy of strengthening and organizing that wing. Secondly, the almost exclusive priority on building a campus antiwar base led to a failure to promote leadership in a number of developments among GI's, rank and file workers, and in the oppressed communities.

The absence of any campaigns to raise the level of political consciousness of the antiwar movement is the most important failure of the party leadership. The party should have intervened in the united front with an energetic campaign of solidarity with the NLF, and an explanation of the imperialist nature of the war. Such a campaign should not have been confined to the pages of *The Militant* and the Pathfinder literature tables. It should have been consistently embodied in speeches before mass audiences, special slogans, special contingents, special actions and organizations aimed at strengthening the consciously anti-imperialist wing of the antiwar movement. Instead of being a real left-wing of the antiwar movement, the SMC became a student replica of the "adult" coalition. Single-issuism, which was initially a tactical choice designed to prevent the antiwar movement from becoming a reformist swamp, was elevated into a principle and achieved an opposite goal. It was systematically used to isolate those elements attempting to introduce any elements of conscious internationalism. In practice, the SMC did relate to issues such as the G. E. strike, Black struggles, inflation, etc. But this was always done on an empirical basis, often justified by the grotesque stretching of the war issue into such formulas as "war causes inflation," or "self-determination for Vietnam and Black America." While these struggles did bring some of the best campus gains to the YSA, they were too few and sporadic to have a real effect. The actual result was that the whole current of sympathy with the NLF—the anti-imperialist current—simply bypassed the party. Under the dictum that the party has only one set of slogans and demands, that which it puts forward for the broadest masses, no orientation was developed to the radicalized layer. SDS was abandoned to our opponents and the whole current was rejected as "ultra-left." Today these people form the basis of the Maoist organizations and of almost all our opponent organizations.

One of the most alarming signs of this rejection of the pro-NLF sentiment is an incipient third-camp position toward the NLF-DRV. Many comrades sincerely believe that we do not call for victory for the NLF because it is a Stalinist or popular front organization, counterposing instead abstract support to the Vietnamese revolution or the Vietnamese masses. Others see our defense of the NLF in the same way they would see our defense of the Ethiopian emperor against Italian colonialism, and adopt an abstract call for self-determination. These conceptions must be squarely rejected. We are in favor not only of the defense of the workers' state against imperialist attacks but also of their extension. Finally, the concept that as Americans we should have nothing to say on what course the Vietnamese should choose is an abandonment of the role of the revolutionary party. We are internationalist *first*,

Americans *second*.

This gross underestimation of the objectively revolutionary role of the NLF in Vietnam can be seen in the party's reaction to the Paris Accords. At the announcement that an agreement was on the verge of being reached in late October 1972, the party grossly overestimated the impact of such an event on the struggle in Vietnam. In an unprecedented move, the party leadership used the YSA convention to announce the shelving of the party's participation in NPAC and the launching of an educational campaign of denunciation of Moscow and Peking.

This proved to be premature. The Accords as they finally emerged represented the formalization of a situation which developed in the spring of '72: the abandonment of the Vietnamese revolution by the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies, the near collapse of the U. S. antiwar movement, and a general stalemate after some advances of the NLF during the spring offensive. Although these Accords represented a modest setback in relation to what could have been hoped for in early '72, the decisive fact is that they leave a situation of dual power in Vietnam, one in which international solidarity becomes more needed than ever. The description of these Accords as a victory and the concept of a state of national reconciliation are dangerous illusions which can only have the effect of demobilizing the masses. However, the signing of the Accords can in no way be considered a sell-out by the Vietnamese leadership, as the continuing struggle in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia clearly demonstrates.

The withdrawal of openly military personnel from Vietnam substantially reduces the possibilities for mass action around that question. This calls for a tactical readjustment, not toward denunciation of Stalinism (although this is necessary at a certain level), *but toward open solidarity actions with the NLF*. We must combine united actions with various left currents with a broader campaign around the question of political prisoners in South Vietnam and defense of amnesty for draft-evaders and deserters.

The failure to campaign for an NLF victory and to win the vanguard elements was not the only manifestation of the party's evolving sectoralist and minimalist approach. Because of its exclusively campus orientation, the party failed to take the antiwar question into a number of situations where advances could have been made. Beyond the general de-emphasis on trade union work, evidenced in the fact that the Gay Liberation contingents in antiwar demonstrations often had more comrades assigned to them than to the Labor Task Force, the whole approach to that area of work was dictated by our almost complete estrangement from the working class. Trade union antiwar work in the best periods consisted of getting trade union officials' endorsements over the phone and a few token leaflettings downtown, at super-markets, and occasionally at plant gates. The endorsements were almost never followed up with actual attempts to mobilize the rank and file through inside and outside work. Antiwar committees and resolutions in the unions were the exception, and were only projected recently. For a whole period in the beginning of the antiwar movement a section of the leadership was under the illusion that trade union bureaucrats were endorsing antiwar actions under the pressure from the ranks. Such a spontaneist vision could only lead

to patiently wait for the workers to come bursting into our antiwar offices and campus antiwar committees, begging for the leadership the bureaucrats could not provide. In fact, many of the trade union endorsements represented attempts by the bureaucracy to tail after the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, and were impossible to obtain during election periods. Furthermore, the party's inability to integrate antiwar campaigns into nonexistent ongoing work within the oppressed communities was tied to its isolation from the class.

G. I. Work

Work within the army is essential to any revolutionary perspective whether in time of war or "peace." The party made a magnificent breakthrough with the Fort Jackson 8. This breakthrough was prepared by our whole history of following the proletarian military policy, and the initial campaigns which we waged around the case of Lt. Howe, the Fort Hood Three, Howard Petrick, etc. It showed the potential for winning over young militants in the army. This work, however, was suddenly discontinued. The correct observation that civilian activities should not substitute for G.I. initiatives was used as a cover to shelve our participation in the G.I.-Civilian Alliance for Peace, and other G.I. work, including the G.I. Press Service. In addition, the generally correct policy of protection of our cadre served to justify the massive use of "'Joe Miles' letters." This was done without any discussion as to the effects of such a policy on our work in the army. The result was that our presence and perspectives within the G.I. movement were tragically under-represented.

Another aspect of our G.I. work was the exclusive single-issue antiwar approach. This conception overlooked the more permanent aspects of work within the armed forces. The traditional slogan of "Trade-Union Control of the Draft" no longer corresponds to the reality of the situation. However, when dealing with an army of draftees, it is possible to outline demands beyond "Free Speech for G.I.'s," aimed at the more conscious elements. The French comrades have given us examples of such demands: The Right to Organize and be Paid at Union Rates, Abolition of Rank and Military Discipline, Election and Control of Barracks, Eight Hour Day With the Right to Live at Home, Effective Military Instruction for All Men and Women Between the Ages of 16 and 65. Widespread knowledge of the use of weapons and military tactics is an asset which the working class should not give up without a struggle. In this connection, the party's slogan for "Abolish the Draft" at a time when the bourgeoisie was preparing a reconversion to a professional army was an opportunist adaptation to the reformist and pacifist anti-draft sentiments of the time. The poverty of our G.I. work laid the basis for a failure to intervene in any significant way within the Vietnam Vets movement, later rejecting it as "ultra-left."

The common answer to all criticisms of the lack of trade union, Black, Chicano, GI and veterans antiwar work was that the party first had to build an antiwar base on campus. While the idea of using campus facilities for the antiwar movement is a perfectly good one, the strategy of the "antiwar university" meant in practice a complete emphasis on setting up antiwar offices which

could organize students so that when campuses were taken over, the SMC might eventually consolidate a sufficient base to reach out to workers and other nonstudents.

The vanguard of the student movement drew from May 1970 the lesson that the students could not have decisive impact by themselves, and a segment of this vanguard began seeking a strategy for revolution based on the working class. The SWP leadership could only offer "more of the same," and reject them as "workerist-ultralefts." At the same time, the party began to generalize its mechanical mass action recruitment formula and offered it as a panacea for all other movements, and even for the International. The typical approach to antiwar demonstrations was massive involvement on a minimal level of the broadest layers, and socialist propaganda through the press. Raising consciousness through transitional demands aimed at the vanguard was totally rejected.

The small size of our Vietnam solidarity actions are a direct result of this inadequate intervention. The Vietnamese revolution is paying for these errors.

Women's Liberation vs. Petty Bourgeois Feminism

The scope and duration of the antiwar movement, and the radicalization which it engendered in its midst, provided the impetus for other movements to develop. These movements tended to follow the model of the antiwar movement: largely campus based, and viewing the working class as, in the best of cases, another constituency for their views—a particularly backward one at that. Such was the feminist movement as it appeared in its second wave. That model also tended to reinforce the already existing nationalist ideologies among layers of the Black and Chicano movements. Finally, it was the basis for speculation on the autonomous development of a plethora of mini-movements: gay liberation, ecology, prisoners.

It was within the feminist movement that the party's theorization of this pluralistic view reached its lower depths. Let us therefore examine more closely how the party related to the feminist movement. In order to justify its impressionistic conclusion that the autonomous character of the "women's liberation movement" was permanent, the party would usually draw a one-to-one relation between the historical oppression of women in class society and the emergence of a feminist women's liberation movement. From the correct observation that the nuclear family was the instrument of female oppression, the usual presentation would jump to the "revolutionary" potential of sisterhood and the need for a feminist movement. Such a view of women's liberation, abstracted from its time and space determinants, was naturally easy to extend to all countries of the world in the most simplistic way. The actual situation was that the second wave of the women's movement in the United States was the product of two sets of factors. The first would take into account the greater independence afforded by the increased participation of women in the labor force in the postwar period. Women remained a more or less steady percentage of the industrial work force after being driven out at the end of the war. However, they have massively entered the white collar and part-time work force and the expanded educational system, where they have been faced, even more acutely than men, with a lack of jobs corresponding to their qualifi-

cations. All this, however, would not be sufficient to give birth to the petty-bourgeois feminist movement as we now know it. A third factor was the existence of a large radical milieu generated by the antiwar movement, which tended to lead toward a broader questioning of social relations.

Thus, the first women's groups arose among the already-radicalized petty-bourgeois and student movements. These groups were made up, for the most part, of women who had participated in the radical movement in one way or another. In particular, a resolution was introduced at an SDS convention in the late '60's which was among the first contributions evaluated on a nationwide basis. These radical women had analyzed the oppression of women in society as a whole, and often found aspects of this oppression reflected within the radical movement, in terms of a lack of consciousness about women's special oppression. This initial phase was dominated by feminist ideology and tended to view male chauvinism as the central cause of women's oppression. Hence, it stressed consciousness raising rather than mass mobilization or, in fact, any outward-oriented political focus. After hesitating briefly on the sidelines, the SWP flung itself into this movement, body and soul. It adapted to the movement and the political value that it placed on consciousness raising and man-hating. The party raised slogans such as, "Sisterhood is Powerful," "When Women Decide this War Should End, this War Will End," and others which presented an extremely distorted, non-class analysis. In order to maintain this "sisterhood," the party sought demands which could unify women of all classes. The 1971 SWP political resolution on women's liberation featured a section highlighting the common interests which allegedly bind bourgeois women and their maids! We believe, unequivocally, that in the final analysis the woman and the maid will stand on opposite sides of the line—the class line.

On an organizational level the party accepted and, in fact, actively defended, the concept of "all-women's" organizations, "all-women's" conferences, and finally, "all-women's" actions. This approach can only serve to weaken the political impact of the goals of the women's movement on the class as a whole.

The terminological revision of the meaning of feminism was not a matter of semantics, but covered up a real revision of the Marxist approach to women's liberation. We need not turn all the way back to Lenin to find the correct Marxist approach to feminism. Comrade Reed, in the past, provided us with a summary of its main line:

"The class distinctions between women transcend their sex identity as women. This is above all true in modern capitalist society, the epoch of the sharpest polarization of the class forces.

"The Woman question cannot be divorced from the class question. Any confusion on this score can only lead to erroneous conclusions and setbacks. It will divert the class struggle into a sex struggle of all women against all men. . . .

"Historically, the sex struggle was part of the bourgeois feminist movement of the last century. It was a reform movement conducted within the framework of the capitalist system and not seeking to overthrow it. But it was a progressive struggle in that women revolted against almost total male domination on the economic,

social and domestic front. Through the feminist movement, a number of important reforms were won for women. But the bourgeois feminist movement had run its course, achieved its limited aims and the problems of today can only be resolved in the struggle of class against class.

"The Woman Question can only be resolved through the line-up of working men and women against the ruling man and woman. This means that the interests of workers as a class are identical; and not the interests of all women as a sex . . . Thus the emancipation of working women will not be achieved in alliance with the women of the enemy class, but just the opposite; in a struggle against them, as part and parcel of the whole class struggle." (*Disc. Bul.* 23, October 1954)

What is attacked here is not a bourgeois version of feminism, but the very essence of feminism, the denial of the primacy of the class struggle. The exhortations of the Communist International in its early years, for the benefit of the new Communist parties, were not directed at any lack of understanding of the "revolutionary dynamic of feminism," as claimed by Comrade C. Lund, but rather at the failure to carry out Communist work among working women. In a more general way, the winning over and neutralization of large layers of woman workers, who traditionally have been more atomized and more influenced by conservative forces such as the church, is an important task of the revolutionary proletariat.

The revolutionary party must have a perspective of breaking down this backwardness by extending and deepening all the struggles against the barriers to the participation of women in the economic, social and political life of the class.

The emergence of three main demands at the outset of the second wave was one of its most positive features. The issues of free access to abortion, free 24-hour childcare centers, and equal pay and equal opportunity are at the center of the special oppression of working-class women. A large part of the working class is forced to have mothers take on the job of raising children and managing the household while working to earn the only, or an indispensable supplementary, income for the family unit. Bearing and raising unwanted children is a form of oppression which strikes particularly hard at the poorest women. It should be pointed out, in order to draw the class line, that the rich have ways to handle the problem. Lack of childcare facilities and collective household services not only serve to tie down working women, but also prevent many from seeking or permanently holding regular jobs. This is the basis for the high proportion of women in the reserve army of part-time and seasonal labor. Childcare is not only an issue of concern to women, but a domestic need of the whole working class, and an essential struggle for the unions and political organizations if they are to include in their struggles this massive reserve army. Equal pay and equal opportunity are key questions not only where unions exist, but as potential issues for organizing drives.

The immediate importance of the woman question to the working-class struggle becomes obvious when one considers that 40 percent of the work force is female, and that of these an increasing percentage are married and have children. In 1965, the median income of women was 60 percent of that of men, a drop of 4 percent over

ten years. Women make up a large percentage of the service industries which have experienced recent unionization, and have been more open to radical ideas (public employees, teachers, health and communication workers). Finally, in the clerical, services and manufacturing industries, women are more and more seeing themselves as permanent parts of the process of production, and challenging discriminatory practices in terms of pay, stability, social meaning and opportunity for advancement.

When it came to adopting a concrete orientation, the party leadership did not chart a long-term perspective based on the objective needs of the class: rather it projected tail-ending what seemed to be the easiest "movement" from which to make quick gains. We have already discussed some of the general aspects of the abortion repeal campaign. To many comrades, it seemed as a healthy turn away from the psychological soul-searching of consciousness-raising toward a more political intervention with mass potential. Other comrades recognized the opportunities we might miss by this exclusive focus on abortion repeal, but tended to counterpose a multi-issue autonomous feminist movement. In fact, the abortion repeal campaign revealed that far more serious problems underlay the single-issue/multi-issue controversy. The party took the existing struggles around abortion and helped to organize a single-issue coalition, first around the repeal of all legislation on abortion, later, in fact, in defense of existing semi-liberal laws, and, finally, in support of a bill by Congresswoman Bella Abzug.

The possibility of an easy victory which would lead to a co-optation of the "movement" was dismissed, probably based on the belief that "the bourgeoisie in the epoch of imperialism becomes less and less capable of granting democratic demands" (the famous democratic-and-transitional demands). No provisions were made to intervene around other issues, or to prepare for new struggles. The implementation of this line was pursued with a mechanical fanaticism. On-going multi-issue women's liberation groups were abandoned. Because WONAAC pursued its work mainly on campus and in collaboration with existing petty-bourgeois reform groups, the question of "No Forced Sterilization" and the question of accessibility and cost of abortions and maternity care were de-emphasized out of existence. Even in our election campaign, the third demand, relating to women was, "Repeal All Abortion Laws." Lobbying at far away state capitals, whether with delegates of an allegedly massive demonstration or a few women, more and more the focus of the repeal campaign was turned away from mass actions, and toward the search for a legislative or judicial solution.

Since the collapse of the semi-real repeal movement, the SWP has been lost, with no perspective whatsoever. Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, a limited number of comrades had been assigned to work in NOW, a mere handful throughout the country. NOW is essentially an organization of women democrats. It focuses its work on legislative lobbying and court suits around reforms in the social and economic condition of petty bourgeois and professional women. Although some members of the labor bureaucracy are NOW members and supporters, it is an almost exclusively white, middle and upper income group. Its program corresponds almost exactly to the positions of the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie. This is certainly not the arena for revolutionary agitation, propa-

ganda, or recruitment. Since the court decision, the only women's liberation work being carried out by the party has been in NOW, around the Equal Rights Amendment. Regarding the E. R. A., the party has taken a stand which is only partially correct. It is necessary for the revolutionary party to stress not only legal equality but also the extension of protective legislation, to protect the interests of both male and female workers.

Today, many related issues remain unresolved: the regulation of abortion by State legislatures, the absence of free abortion and counseling centers, the need for sex education, the question of forced sterilization, the problems of discrimination in education and on the job against pregnant women. WONAAC's formulation was "A woman's right to control her own body." This implied, first, the idealist notion that formal legalization of abortion would represent a qualitative step toward freedom from alienation and secondly, abstracted the whole problem from the need for material institutions and services to make that right a reality.

The result of the party's minimalist single-issue orientation was twofold. In the first place, the party isolated itself from the more advanced elements of the women's "movement," who were calling into question the family and capitalist society itself. Secondly, the party had no orientation toward the many struggles which have developed around other issues: demonstrations and committees for childcare centers in connection with Federal cut-backs, and in the unions; the rising number of challenges to discriminatory wage and advancement practices in many different industries. A correct approach to women's liberation would set as our long-term perspective an orientation to working-class women (workers, proletarian housewives, welfare recipients) around the three demands of "Free Abortion and Maternity Service," "Free, 24-hour childcare centers" and "Equal pay and job opportunities." The purpose of these demands is to draw working-class women into the general mobilization of the working class against the bourgeoisie. This should be combined with an open socialist propaganda campaign directed at women, explaining the class origins of women's oppression, their present class manifestations, and pointing toward the proletarian revolution as the only solution. On a tactical level, this means that the party should indicate a major orientation toward the industries, unions and organizations where working-class women can be found, while at the same time continuing the work among women students. The party should participate in all the struggles of women around different issues, raising its own demands and perspectives within the broader movement. It should educate against the exclusion of men from these actions. This sectarian feminist policy only serves to weaken their impact, and to obstruct the work of winning over broader layers of the working class to support these actions. Within the women's liberation movement it is obvious that existing groups cannot survive as an amorphous current, outside of a continued action perspective. It is all to the party's advantage to push their politicization to the utmost, develop a socialist-oriented layer, and tie this periphery to the work of the party.

Gay Liberation Question

Gays suffer from discrimination and the norms and

sex roles linked to class society. The party should support their struggle against repression, including defense of civil liberties, educate around the issues of sexual freedom and also carry on anti-religious propaganda. However it must be recognized that only a thin layer of the gay movement actually challenges the family and sex roles, that there is not a transitional demand that can be applied to gay oppression, and that the specific weight of the gay "movement" within the class struggle as a whole warrants only a low priority.

In this respect the party leadership has had an extremely demagogic attitude. After upholding the backward policy of excluding gays from membership in the party, we have witnessed the baiting of comrades with allegedly anti-gay prejudices, the subordination of differences on the gay question within the party majority leadership, and the removal of the whole dispute to a literary discussion artificially separated from the pre-convention discussion.

Perhaps one of the most unfortunate sides to the party's attitude toward gay oppression occurred as the result of the so-called "gay probe." Instead of a "probe," the gay comrades had de-facto assignments in the gay "movement." When differences appeared in the National Committee, they were pulled out of these assignments to "wait" for a decision that never really came. The lack of analysis and empiricism of the leadership caused scandalous treatment of gay comrades. First they were the new "big mass movement," and then they were locked back in the closet to hide the differences within the leadership.

Trade Union Tokenism

The party leadership has been locked in a contradiction on the trade union question: While maintaining that the current radicalization was the deepest and broadest yet, it has held back from any systematic intervention in the unions. There have been two trends of rationalization of this policy. The new radicalization devotees have maintained that the working class as a whole would radicalize around the social and political issues raised by the ongoing mass movements. This would be proceeded by an influx of radical young workers into the student-led mass movements. By gaining hegemony on the campus, the party would therefore recruit its first base in the class and be in a position to lead the masses of workers. In this process, the concepts of the establishment of Red Universities, that workers are human beings too and that the petty bourgeoisie no longer exists, all contribute to dismissing altogether any long-term work in the unions.

The other, more sober view, is responsible for the yearly orthodox proclamations about class struggle caucuses and patient trade union work. Its practice, however, is totally empirical. Comrades are directed not toward politically interesting job situations but toward high-paying ones. If we happen to have several comrades in a particular industry, a fraction may be considered, but even this is an exception. When a fraction is set up, its work will consist of keeping its ear to the ground and coordinating the work party members would be doing anyway: circulation of the press, publicity for the ongoing mass movements. There is no specific adaptation of the party's general trade union policy. When a fraction is on the verge of beginning to popularize the basis of a program

around which a class struggle left could be built, the spectre of premature power struggle is raised. This approach is supplemented by rapid, detached reporting in *The Militant* to show workers that our candidates and our party have a passing interest in their struggles.

Nonetheless, this empirical policy has resulted in a few valuable experiences. If there were an overall policy and orientation to the unions, there could have been a basis for further sustained work. During the General Electric strike in particular, strike support work was done by the SMC and the YSA on a large scale. Some similar work has been carried out around campus workers strikes and the Mead strike in Atlanta. Within the unions, our comrades who work in ad hoc committees around political issues have demonstrated one of the ways to regroup the more conscious workers around us.

However these experiments stand in contrast to the frenzied intervention around the meat boycott, which was more in line with the expectations of the "new radicalization" devotees. After describing the meat boycott as a social explosion, led by women, and taking place outside the unions, the party proceeded to try to build a new mass movement around a single-issue minimalist coalition. The problem was twofold. First of all, there was really no such social explosion, but rather a well-orchestrated press campaign with strong implications that the boycott would cut the demand for meat and bring prices down. Many unions in particular, out of solidarity with laid off meatcutters, were reluctant to participate in the boycott. Secondly, the issue of high food prices was one which was relevant to the working masses, especially the lowest paid workers and those with large families. It had no direct impact on the student and unattached milieu toward which the party's standard publicity campaigns are directed. The demonstrations on May 5th were predominantly made up of Trotskyists and a few assorted radicals, even though they were built on the mass line of "end high food prices." The party offered no transitional demands outside of the pages of *The Militant* and a few pamphlets. The general attitude was that it would be premature to raise specific demands, that we should wait for them to "grow out of the movement itself."

The Student Movement, May '68, Ultraleftism

The radicalization of the sixties, centered as it was among predominantly petty bourgeois layers, posed a difficult challenge to the party. From an initially correct tactical orientation toward the layers in motion, the party drifted toward tail-ending these layers, losing sight of its overall strategy. At the center of this adaptation lay a faulty understanding of the student radicalization.

A number of factors contributed to the phenomenon of a sustained student movement at the vanguard of all the mass movements of the '60's. There is a permanent basis for a radical student vanguard based on the ability of students and intellectuals to ponder the contradictions of bourgeois ideology and respond earlier than the masses to shifts in the relationship of forces in the world class struggle. This layer existed in the 19th century in Europe; it exists in the colonial countries today; and it is part of the radicalization in the United States today. However, it is not usually found at the head of a massive student movement. This aspect we believe to be more

conjunctural and arising in particular out of two factors: (1) the inadequacy of the bourgeoisie's traditional methods of handling the student discontent in elite universities, when applied to the new mass production centers of literate workers and new middle classes; (2) the direct and massive impact of the war in Vietnam on the student population.

The party instead saw a one-to-one and permanent relationship between large concentrations of students and a massive on-going student movement, capable of maintaining for prolonged periods a favorable relationship of forces on the campuses. This conception, out of which grew the party leadership's understanding of the "strategy" of the Red University, was partly the result of an incorrect assessment of May-June 1968 in France.

Clearly, the student movement played an important tactical role in France in amplifying the transitional demands and directives emanating from revolutionary groups. However, they proved unable to bypass the CP's blockade of the working class during the general strike. The limits of the student movement became perfectly visible to all when, despite continued student demonstrations and university takeovers, the CP was able to disorient the workers, isolate the more militant sectors, and provoke a gradual return to work. In the years since then the spontaneist conception of bypassing the unions has steadily lost ground within the French vanguard. It is giving way to a strategy combining patient trade union work with campaigns based on vanguard layers and aimed at establishing a solid implantation in the working class.

On the other hand, the main lesson the SWP leadership drew was totally one-sided. It extolled the campuses as revolutionary bases, praised the spontaneous fraternization of young workers and students on the barricades, and in general assigned a central role to the student movement as the catalyst of working class action, not only within the youth radicalization, but within the revolutionary process as a whole.

This analysis placed the party at odds with a growing trend in the New Left, which had been influenced by the May-June events. Even such apostles of student vanguardism as Herbert Marcuse began to qualify their dismissal of the role of the working class. Within SDS and other radical groups, successive layers began to proclaim their working class orientation. Naturally, some of these involved a certain workerist romanticism. However, the party leadership, under the guise of anti-workerism, actually fought a positive motion against student vanguardism, and failed to put forth any real strategy for building communist bases in the working class.

This paralleled a similar process in the antiwar movement linked to solidarity with the Indochinese revolution. 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. Single issue usually meant that imperialism could not be discussed, and non-exclusion meant that raising the class line might alienate some liberals. 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.

Viewed within a broader context, the party came to counterpose the recruitment of newly radicalized reformists, to the recruitment of revolutionary-minded ultralefts, often with a previous political experience. It is wrong to counterpose these two sources of recruitment; 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. 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 become demoralized or joined the ranks of Maoist and other centrist currents.

PART IV. MOLECULAR RADICALIZATION OF THE CLASS AND THE TASKS OF THE SWP

We have already discussed the heightened economic and social contradictions which characterize the period on a world scale, the framework within which the ruling class must decide on its political options. We pointed out how its top priority must be the preparation for the confrontation with its own working class, while maintaining holding and delaying tactics in the colonial world. The rapprochement with the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies represents an attempt to neutralize these potentially disturbing factors, so that these tasks can be carried out with the least amount of interference. In the intervening period, the U.S. imperialists hope to be able to revamp their own counter-revolutionary army and also perfect the repressive apparatuses of their neo-colonial allies. This is their policy not only in Vietnam but also in Iran, Israel, India, South Africa and Brazil. The alliance of imperialism and the workers' states bureaucracies is not a sign of retreat of the proletarian struggle, but rather of the new rise of world revolution which threatens both of these forces. The signing of the peace accords on Vietnam reflected a particular moment of the struggle during which the revolutionary forces were stalemated on the ground and isolated internationally.

The American ruling class is attempting to use this situation to assuage domestic dissidence, and block any politicalization of the discontent over its economic policies. Thus the near-complete withdrawal of American ground troops, whose presence in Vietnam constituted the most unpopular aspect of the war, was immediately followed by the announcement of Phase I. This policy seemed so successful that it brought a near unanimity of the ruling class around Nixon. The labor bureaucracy, after attempting to gain some credibility with some militant talk, collaborated with the anti-working-class offensive by accepting the Pay Board, wage freeze and wage guidelines.

The Meany wing of the trade-union bureaucracy continued its slavish tail-ending of the dominant wing of the bourgeoisie in the electoral arena. The self-proclaimed "progressive bureaucracy," despite its stated concern with social issues, did not sufficiently expose Nixon's economic policies. Their support for McGovern, the lesser candidate of the bourgeoisie, was swamped by the near-unanimous

ruling class endorsement of the Republican candidate.

Of course the major factor in Nixon's sweep was the Moscow and Peking trips which gave credence to his promises of peace in Indochina. Even before the elections, there had been a downturn in political activity on the campuses which were dominated by a new mood of counter-culturalism and studiousness. April 24, 1971 was the last really massive antiwar march. Most of those who were not completely fooled by Nixon's promises put a last effort into the McGovern campaign before cynicism took over. The Nixon vote, including the unexpectedly high youth vote, reflected this process of conservatism. The high number of absents was a result of the large numbers who did not feel represented by Nixon or Wallace, but would not vote for McGovern because of his caricature-like petty bourgeois radical stance. The January 20th demonstration was a warning that the ruling class could not yet reverse its Vietnam partial disengagement policy without the threat of a gradual resumption of antiwar activity.

The final signing of the Accords and the Supreme Court decision on abortion represented a desire to undercut decisively the remaining radicalism. Having accomplished this goal, the ruling class felt confident enough to settle its internal quarrels, and reverse the excessive executive ascendancy which Nixon established. The Watergate affair so far has been fought out within the confines of bourgeois institutions. Nonetheless, it has had a profound impact on the working masses, arousing deep cynicism toward the government. The new part that Watergate adds is the political side of the governmental corruption. The corruption of government officials was already widely accepted. The Watergate disclosures are an attempt by a section of the ruling class to restore the confidence of the masses in Congress. This was coupled with the congressional cut-off of funds for the bombing of Cambodia.

The real focus of the bourgeoisie's attention, though, has been the utilization of a whole spectrum of measures designed to extricate themselves from their economic difficulties. At the level directly dealt with by the unions, various tactics have been used by the employers, depending on the economic situation and militancy of the workers. Some have involved the granting of wage concessions while a consistent erosion of working conditions is pursued. Thus, the railroad workers had to accept new job rules and layoffs through attrition. The oil workers strike highlighted the question of job safety and improvement of the environment. The Lordstown strike was a response to General Motors policy of speedup and rationalization and also raised the question of the extension of the workers' free time. On the other hand, there have been direct attacks on the workers' real wages, through wage guidelines and inflation. These guidelines have not yet come under a general attack, although they have been challenged by the massive strike of the Longshoremens. Furthermore, there is a general renewed interest in the inclusion of escalator clauses in contracts and the removal of no strike pledges.

While the unions have confined their struggle to the economic arena and lobbying, the ruling class had diversified its offensive against the standard of living of working people. While taxation continues to reduce their pay-checks, the amount of public services provided is becoming scarcer and more expensive. The Talmadge Amendment, which provided for the manipulation of welfare recipi-

ents into below standard jobs, the proliferation of Manpower agencies, and the selective use of federal contracts in the construction industry, is designed to undermine the power of the unions. Injunctions by the courts have been used to intimidate strikers. On a more general level, the ruling class is trying to cover up the real role of the federal government by its propaganda against corruption in the unions, and for protection of U. S. industry.

The reaction to these ruling-class policies in the working-class ranks have been diverse. There is a general loss of confidence in the ability of the system to provide steady material improvement. At the time the wage freeze was announced, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy briefly mumbled some empty threats about a general strike. Only the Meatcutters Union actually held a one-day strike. Attempts to use injunctions against strikes have been met with militant actions. Thirty-five thousand construction workers marched on June 22, 1972 in Norristown, Pa. to protest the fines and jail sentences levied against their leaders. The Philadelphia Labor Council was forced to call a general strike in defense of the Teachers Union threatened by union-busting Mayor Rizzo.

Two strikes in particular demonstrate the militancy, social, and political concerns, and openness to radical ideas of the young workers concentrated in some industries: The UAW strike in the Lordstown GM plant, and the wildcat at the Mead Plant in Atlanta. Another manifestation of this diffuse militancy is the appearance of a number of broad, anti-leadership caucuses based on the secondary layers of the bureaucracy, for example, the Miners for Democracy in the UMW, the Morrissey caucus in the NMU, and a number of local caucuses. This was the kind of sentiment that the Right To Vote Committee captured in the United Transportation Union. On a smaller scale, a number of more or less successful groups initiated by radicals have coalesced some politicized elements, for example, the United National Caucus and other caucuses in the UAW, various formations in the teachers union and welfare workers union, the Teamsters United Rank and File, some groups of PL's Workers Action Movement. (It must be noted that there is a marked tendency on the part of PL to intervene as a "progressive force" in the struggles for union democratization.)

Outside the union movement, the motion has principally been through reformist organizations, with episodic outbursts and a radicalized fringe. In the Black community, reformist organizations like SCLC and PUSH have taken the initiative. The welfare movement remains in the hands of politicians of the same ilk. Thus we saw the Childrens March for Survival in February 1972 and the April 4 demonstrations against the cutbacks called by these leaders. A number of community control fights have taken place under their auspices. High school blowouts have punctured the life of the urban ghettos. Some reformist and centrist organizations have begun to develop among the Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asia-American, and Native American oppressed communities. The GI movement has suffered from the conversion to a professional army. Prisoners have gone through substantial politicalization. Family farmers have so far not made themselves heard in any national protest movement in this period. Among the urban petty bourgeoisie, a layer of concerned radicals has gravitated around organizations like the National Lawyers Guild, the Medical Committee for Human Rights

and radical professors conferences.

At the same time, as the class has entered a process of molecular radicalization, the student movement has been transformed. Among the masses of students there is a profound mood of cynicism toward political activity. This is reflected in an increased interest in studies, spurred on by the increased competition for jobs; the new popularity of sports; drinking and the turn to drugs; counter-culturalism and mysticism. The struggles have tended to be over issues directly affecting students, and too episodic to sustain a permanent broad student movement. There has been a reaction to the various effects of cutbacks in education. At Southern University, the students were protesting the poor living conditions on their campus. Other fights have challenged tuition hikes, arbitrary dismissals of popular teachers, and cuts in financial support. The radicalizing and revolutionary students are involved in the realignment process going on in the whole left.

The Left

The decline of the "mass movements" signified the break-up of the broad, amorphous and ideologically undefined organizations. Different answers to the problems of revolutionary strategy have been the main dividing line. The lack of any strong social-democratic organization has created a vacuum on the left. The Communist party has recruited a number of young workers, especially Blacks. This has not been due solely to their residual ties to the trade unions and the Black community, nor to the Angela Davis case, but to their policy of industrial concentration and their systematic efforts in this direction. Within the Communist Party there is an increased polarization between the hard pro-Moscow core, which thanks to the pro-Nixon stand of their mentors have been able to bloc with the more sectarian youth on the basis of a left line; and the mass-work wing, opposed to the invasion of Czechoslovakia and bathing in the milieu of the left-Democratic clubs. Many potential supporters of this wing have fallen out with the party over its Mideast policy. The attraction of China and Maoism remains strong among the youth. In the long term, the CP remains the main opponent tendency because of its ability to capture left-wing sentiment in the unions, and the continuity provided by Moscow's support.

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 strong attraction of this layer toward Maoism is partly a product of admiration for the Chinese Revolution and the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution, but it is partly also the product of a repulsion for the SWP's opportunism and exclusive student orientation, as well as the sectarianism of the professional anti-Pabloite groups.

The main ideological current which is gaining from the above described milieu has been Maoism. The party has blinded itself to this development for a long time, using such glib formulae as "ultra-left" and "unhealthy." Today it is obvious to most comrades that there is a potentially massive opponent organization developing in this current. The size of the November 4 Coalition demonstration and their re-appearance on January 20 and for the anti-

Thieu demonstrations, the large attendance at the forums on the building of a new communist party in the U. S. A., and the May Day demonstrations have all shown the ability of this layer to unite a whole variety of local groups with a few national organizations. Despite their differences, the *Guardian*, the Revolutionary Union, the October League (M-L), the Black Workers Congress, the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization, and others have made a consistent effort to unify. Support for the gains of the Chinese revolution together with a major emphasis on trade union and working-class work has been the main cement uniting the Maoist groups.

The many contradictions which exist within this layer should afford the Party ample opportunity to intervene. The origins of this current in the anti-imperialist movement will create many problems when it will be faced with the obviously different policies of the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban leaderships. The question of Stalinism is bound to arouse resistance from the admirers of the reincarnation of the Paris Commune in 1967 Shanghai. Finally, the programmatic elaboration of a perspective for the United States will force them to examine the positions of all the groups which have preceded them on the American left.

The alternatives to Maoism have been various brands of left-wing social democracy of the third-camp type. Thus, the New Left magazines *Socialist Revolution* and *Radical America* have been steadily evolving toward workers councilism and state capitalism. Similarly, Progressive Labor's many turns seem to have stabilized the organization around a historical state capitalist position, and a practical tailing of the Communist party, not without causing severe dissension and defections within its ranks. The Labor Committee has put forward a special brand of Luxemburgism, and have appealed to the "intellectuals of the socialist movement." Its rejection of Leninism, general underestimation of the subjective factor, and vagueness on the question of the state places it in the ranks of social democracy. Finally, the International Socialists have gone through many discussions. For the past three years they have pursued a policy of industrial concentration. Their policy in the unions generally has been one of establishing caucuses on a limited, militant, trade unionist level. The Vietnam war has been their main problem since they see a triangular fight between U. S. imperialism, North Vietnamese bureaucratic collectivism, and a petty bourgeois colonial movement. The way out has usually been to attack American imperialism and call for a victory to the Vietnamese revolution in the abstract, sometimes along with the call for workers of the world unite.

There are a number of pseudo-Trotskyist groups of the sectarian variety who, in the main, have their roots in the International Committee period of the SWP. The Maoism of the Workers' World Party and Youth Against War and Fascism, sometimes seems to conceal almost completely its residual Trotskyist core. However, their aggressive policy has enabled them to recruit substantial numbers of rebel youth, despite a high turnover. Most interesting has been their success in the American Servicemen's Union. The Workers' League has also grown, and the *Bulletin* claims a press run of around 16,000. The W. L. seems to have found a response among Black youth

to its line that "nationalism leads to genocide and concentration camps." The impressionism of the Workers' League analysis, its fetishistic use of the Labor Party slogan, its absurd position on Cuba, its dictatorial internal regime and mindless activism all seem to have caused internal problems. The Spartacist League has demonstrated its ability to recruit from the Maoist milieu. It remains deeply marked by its origins as a small intellectual group around Robertson, evidenced by an extreme case of purism and sectarianism. In particular, the S.L.'s characterization of the antiwar movement as a popular front and its frequent announcements that the Vietnamese have sold out are but a cover for its criminal boycott of the antiwar movement and its Shactmanite-like refusal to support and defend the extension of the Vietnamese workers' state.

The Class Struggle League-Vanguard Newsletter is partly the result of a subjective reaction by a group of dissident SWP members to the drive-them-out-of-the-party campaign conducted by the SWP leadership. Their ludicrous call for a Fifth International is a typical example of the tendency for SWP splinters to be "fun-house" mirror images of the SWP's current practice. Interestingly, of all the professional anti-Pabloite groups, only the Lambertists have not moved to initiate an American section.

Tasks of the Party

The strategy of the party must be to unite the struggles of the working class and its allies in preparation for a challenge to the bourgeois state. This perspective enables the party to put forth a program which is based on the needs of the working class as a whole and combines the raising of political demands in the working class with intervention in the movements of the peripheral layers in order to turn them toward solidarity with the working class.

The party must get away from the idea that comrades working in a particular "sector" of the population should focus their work around producing a single-issue mass action movement in that sector. The programmatic emphasis of the party should be dictated by the development of the class struggle, and should lead to a series of campaigns around the major international and national questions by the party as a whole. The long-term orientation which must always be present must be to root the party in the most combative and decisive layers and to raise the issues and demands which correspond to our strategic goal: the assembling of the revolutionary party, linked to the advanced workers, and capable of leading the masses at the crucial juncture.

A major part of the party's work must be to wage campaigns of solidarity with the revolutionary struggles taking place in the world. First and foremost is the struggle in Indochina. Actions and propaganda based on themes with a broad appeal such as the total end to U. S. intervention, the question of political prisoners in South Vietnam and of amnesty for war resisters, should be carried by NPAC. The present situation calls for a particularly clear public stance by the SWP in its own name in favor of "Victory to the NLF-DRV, Pathet Lao, and MUFK."

In addition, we should conduct sustained propaganda

campaigns with special actions, when the situation warrants it, around the Palestinian struggle, the Southern African and other African struggles against imperialism, the Northern Irish revolt, and the struggles in Latin America. The Quebec situation poses the question of revolution in one part of the continent and necessitates the raising of the perspective of a Red North America. In this work, we should explain the need for the Fourth International and publicize the activities of its sections.

Another major theme must be the rejection by the labor movement of the economic policies of the ruling class and the advancing of lines of struggle against it. These policies have come into question in a number of situations. The strikes of the Longshoremen, Teachers, and Farmworkers are example of opportunities where we could launch broad strike-support campaigns. Combined with the widespread sentiment against inflation, these strikes raise the question of a sliding scale of wages and hours, popularly understood as "30 for 40."

The question of workers' control can be raised in relation to the struggles over speed-up (such as Lordstown), job rules (such as the discussions over the railroad contracts), the quality of production and services (for example, class size for teachers), the setting of prices (such as the protests in the food industry). Today's high prices raise the concepts of worker-consumer committees to control prices, of open accounting and nationalization of corporations. The federal and state cutbacks in various service areas call for propaganda around free and massive public services (free health care, etc.), but this propaganda must be integrated into on-the-job demands for equal pay, childcare and against layoffs. Many of these struggles revolve around the problem of unemployment and call for a campaign for "Jobs for all— No discriminatory hiring or advancement practices."

Finally, agitational and propaganda campaigns must be conducted around a number of class-struggle issues not directly tied to the conflict at the point of production. One of the most important ones should be directed at exposing the role of and conditions prevailing in the imperialist army. The actions in the navy, and continuing unrest over racial discrimination, are the predictable result of the need to maintain a large military force, which must be necessity be drawn from the most oppressed layers. Various high school and community struggles over ghetto conditions are opportunities to intervene among the masses with a class line. Events like those of Wounded Knee, the prison revolts, and the Watergate disclosures must be seized upon to expose the nature of bourgeois rule.

One of the vehicles for these campaigns is electoral work. Elections used to be the occasion for the party to intervene with open socialist propaganda. Today, the SWP substitutes election campaigns for real mass work, and election demands are confined to parroting the spontaneous demands of the masses. Elections should be used entirely for educational purposes, as a complement to mass work. They should stress the revolutionary role of the working class, the class nature of the state, and the impossibility of any significant change through the electoral process. Defensive formulations should not be extended to the point where they blur a positive presenta-

tion of the need for the working class to use arms (mass self-defense by the Black Community, defense of workers' pickets, etc.).

These campaigns around class-struggle themes must combine an orientation to the most politicized elements with patient base-building work in the class. On a number of issues, it is possible to initiate campaigns around themes with a particular appeal among the radicalized layers, and achieve joint actions. We must fight to integrate these actions within a broader perspective of mobilizing the working class. This requires special attention to and a sustained polemic against the various organizations and positions of the Maoist and centrist currents. Proposals for joint actions must be followed up by forums, open letters, and persistent efforts to engage in political discussion. In particular, international solidarity campaigns can expose the Maoist bureaucracy, and pose the question of building a revolutionary international.

All these working campaigns will amount to nothing unless we are actually rooted in the class and its mass organizations. The delay and the resistance to this turn indicate the imperative need for an intensive campaign to educate the party on the overriding importance of this task. We must begin a systematic and carefully planned assignment of a substantial number of comrades to selected industries with a long-term perspective. General guidelines from the national center can be implemented concretely by the branches. It is not necessary to remove a single comrade from the campus, or any other area of fruitful work in which members are in continuous contact with people we want to influence and recruit. The truth is that the vast majority of comrades are not active in any milieu outside the party, with the result that the party is isolated from the class and also from the struggles of the oppressed minorities, women and the radicalized youth as well.

Naturally, a sense of proportion is necessary in applying this turn. The situation of each comrade must be examined before assignment. Obviously not every member is a suitable candidate for every job and in some cases there are good reasons for leaving comrades where they are. However, considering the age level and mobility of most comrades, a high percentage should be available for this critically important re-orientation.

While some comrades may be assigned to unorganized shops, in which case their work is cut out for them, most however should be assigned to union situations which show promise. At this stage, while the workers have not yet begun to move in great numbers, the work of revolutionary socialists is to patiently educate and recruit co-workers. Trade union fractions made up of comrades inside and outside the workplaces must be set up. The main orientation would be to seek out and to propagandize the more advanced elements. These elements can be regrouped through raising motions at meetings, participation in ad hoc committees around issues leading to struggles (womens rights, antiwar, anti-inflation), or permanent ones such as shop stewards' committees. This work should be backed up by sales of the press. Comrades cannot just breeze into the union as visiting lecturers. They must win the confidence of the workers by participating in their day-to-day struggles.

Existing anti-bureaucratic caucuses, and in some cases, caucuses set up by radicals can be fruitful areas in which to popularize the demands that will make up the platform of a class-struggle caucus. Although as a general rule the party is not in a position to initiate caucuses, in some particular cases, this will be a useful tactic.

A proletarian orientation is not only directed at the plants. It implies a presence in the communities. In selecting areas for concentration, heavy priority should be given to those with large proportions of Black, Latino, and other young workers, as these are the most oppressed, most advanced, and most receptive to proposals for militant action and radical ideas. Black and Latino comrades should be urged to move into those communities, seek out organizations of struggle, and become the most active and dependable fighters for the demands of the oppressed minorities. Sales and party functions should supplement this work. In the same way, student work should prevail at the junior colleges, technical schools, and urban high schools.

On the internal level, it is also necessary to re-orient the party. While certain technical aspects of our functioning have undoubtedly been professionalized over the past period, there remain a number of hangovers from the slow tempo of the '50s. The rhythm of our conventions once every two years is by itself totally inadequate to the turns of the political situation and the development of the party. In addition, although the Voorhis Act prevents the SWP from being a section of the International, the fraternal relations must undergo a transformation. A campaign against the Voorhis Act would be an opportunity to explain internationalism and its concrete embodiment in the Fourth International. Only by fully absorbing the lessons of the work of all the sections, participating in the world discussions, and accepting responsibility for their decisions, can a true international outlook be developed. In this respect the high standard of living in the United States places a particular responsibility on the SWP to devote a substantial part of its resources to fraternal support. The overextension of our full-time apparatus, which numbers about two hundred, is a sign of a wrong ordering of priorities, when it is known that the International can barely afford a handful of full-timers.

For a new internal life of the party we need "permanent education." That means theoretical education, all year long, concerning the workers movement around the world, social democracy, the histories of revolutions, the thesis of the Third International, and other Marxist topics. On the practical side, comrades must be educated to be revolutionaries, which means they must learn how to become mass leaders, able to take initiative in the mass movement. There must be a permanent discussion within the party, which concretely means regular internal information bulletins, annual national conferences covering the main problems facing the comrades. Branch meetings must be transformed into political meetings, with political discussion around political events, activity, and the internal life of the party.

The organization must be transformed into a unified body instead of fragmented groups of revolutionaries linked to the center by party administration.

The party apparatus must be kept to a minimum. The party must be able to function on a volunteer basis. Full-

time comrades should have some work skills so that they can take a job if necessary. There should be a rapid turnover of the full-time comrades and no more than 10 percent of the membership should be on full-time payroll (professional revolutionary does not mean full-time paid revolutionary).

The party stands at a crossroads. It can continue to drift along the path of the new radicalization, and risk being bypassed by the working class, jeopardizing the future of Trotskyism for years to come and degenerating

into a sect. Or it can break out of its stupor and return to the road of Trotskyism and the Transitional Program. By adopting our approach and our perspectives, the party will make a significant step in that direction.

Forward to the Proletarian Party!

Forward to the American section of a Mass Revolutionary International!

**FORWARD TO THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND
WORLD COMMUNISM!**

July 6, 1973