

International Marxist Group

1973 PRE - CONFERENCE DISCUSSION
BULLETIN

Why the general line of the
European Perspectives Document
should be rejected

- submitted by the Tendency -

March, 1973

Number 10

price 5p

for members only

The Position of the Tendency on the European Document.

(This contribution is intended to explain why the membership of the IMG should reject the line of the document "The building of Revolutionary Parties in Capitalist Europe," submitted by the United Secretariat. It is understood that the members of the United Secretariat who oppose this document will be submitting a reply. At the moment of writing, this reply is not yet available. Throughout this contribution the document submitted by the United Secretariat will be referred to as the Document.)

PART I.

Where the Document is indisputably correct.

1. There is a deepening crisis of the bourgeois ruling order. The fiercer inter-imperialist competition and the declining rate of profit compel the ruling class increasingly to resist reform and to open big attacks on the living standards and democratic rights of the working masses. The crisis is a social crisis, involving all the relationships of bourgeois society, not only "economic" relationships.

"The crisis of capitalist production relations has become a crisis of bourgeois relations as a whole. In the beginning it was expressed more and more sharply by youth attending school (the college and high school revolt), and then became generalised as a crisis of all the social relations (education, family, church, mass media, etc.). Penetrating into the working class, particularly through young workers and apprentices, this crisis of bourgeois social relations has, in its turn, aggravated the crisis in the capitalist relations of production." (Document, Section 2.)

The crisis is sharpened by the new needs generated by the twenty years of capitalist boom.

"A good part of these new needs, keenly felt especially by the youth, clearly cannot be met within the context of bourgeois society. In this category must be placed requirements of high-quality social consumption, met according to the "satisfaction-of-needs" principle (health, education, culture, news, retirement, etc.), as well as the need for creative activity radically breaking from alienated labour." (Document, Section 2.)

2. Big battles are looming ahead between the rulers and the exploited and oppressed masses.

3. The capitalist class is at present unable to inflict a decisive defeat on the working class and there is a crisis of bourgeois leadership which is not going to be rapidly resolved.

4. The drive towards "European Integration" will tend to exacerbate rather than resolve the crisis of bourgeois leadership.

5. The gap between the needs of the sharpening class struggle and the inadequacies of the bureaucratised leaderships is more deeply felt than it has been for more than twenty years.

6. The radicalisation is widening and deepening to a large extent outside the direct control of the traditional leaderships,

and objectively anti-capitalist demands are being thrown up by different sectors and layers of the population (industrial workers, women, students, immigrants etc.).

7. Highly favourable circumstances exist for the Fourth International to sink roots and extend its influence in the struggling masses, and thus to build its national sections.

What is required.

In this situation what is required is a document which provides guidance, drawing on the recent experience of our sections, and given the features of the unfolding radicalisation and the actual strength of our forces, guidance as to what to do in the coming period to build the revolutionary cadre round which the future mass party will be constructed. Given our revolutionary perspectives, where we are NOW and what to do NEXT are the questions which should concern us in the Document. What the Document says should be spelt out clearly.

Doesn't measure up.

The Document fails to meet the requirements. The Document is ambiguous on important points, is open to different interpretations; it fails to make any assessment of the recent experience of our sections; it fails to come to grips with the features of the current radicalisation and the problems and possibilities which this radicalisation brings for organisations as small and lacking in influence as ours. In so far as a clear line emerges, the Document supports a course which has been put into practice in Britain, tested and shown to be mistaken.

Why a document on the building of revolutionary parties in capitalist Europe ?

The Document is artificial in that it is too wide and too narrow in scope at the same time; too wide in that capitalist Europe encompasses situations as different as Britain and Greece, too narrow in that it passes over developments outside capitalist Europe which may contain valuable lessons for some sections in capitalist Europe.

It would be more reasonable to have a document on advanced capitalist countries with bourgeois democracy. Such countries have more features in common than have, say, Sweden and Portugal. The Document tacitly acknowledges this artificiality. Section 8 begins,

"In the industrialised capitalist countries....." Only in Europe ?

The Document has a whole section on repression (Section 19). It is strange that there is no assessment of the activities of our sections, inside or outside capitalist Europe, against repression. Our comrades working in capitalist European countries in conditions of severe repression have probably more to learn from comrades similarly situated outside capitalist Europe than from sections which only recently emerged from 15 years or so of Enrty sui generis*, and operate in conditions of bourgeois legality, unlike Spain, Portugal or Greece.

.....
(* Note: "sui generis" is a Latin phrase meaning "of its own kind" or "of a unique kind" or "in a class of its own." The

PART II.

Some ambiguities of the Document.

1. The timetable approach.

The Document says,

"The socialist revolution is once again on the agenda in Europe, not just in a broad historical perspective (in this sense it has been on the agenda since 1914), but even from a conjunctural point of view." (Section 2, page 9.)

"We must therefore prepare ourselves for years of intense social struggles, in which there will be ups and downs, and for enduring possibilities for revolutionary upsurges..." (Section 2, page 10).

"In these circumstances, the most probable political perspective remains a prolonged period of instability, with successive bourgeois teams wearing themselves out in centre-right and centre-left forms of government and with spectacular periodic recoveries by the traditional workers' organisations...." (Section 3, page 11).

"But the fact that we are only at the beginning of the deepening of the social crisis,.....allows us to envisage a period spread out in most cases over four or five years before the decisive battles are fought." (Section 3, page 11).

According to this, revolution is on the agenda, but agendas are of various lengths; revolution is on the agenda in the "conjunctural sense" but the conjuncture can be "years of intense social struggles" with "enduring possibilities" or "prolonged periods", or, if you want to be more specific, at least as regards time scale, "four or five years"; that is, in "most cases" (not at all specific as regards place).

Those who think a revolution is round the corner get some backing from the Document. So do those who think it is not that close (a "four or five year" period and a "prolonged period"). Provision is also made for slower thinkers - there may be cases in which the decisive battles will be held up at least a little longer. Even those who refuse to participate in crystal-ball-gazing are catered for. The Document, speaking about the immediate conjunctures which spark off revolutionary upsurges tells us;

"The immediate detonator of these explosions can vary greatly; economic demands,.... acute economic crisis,.... abrupt change in the economic situation,....etc., etc. It would be futile to set up a possible timetable in advance." (Section 7(d), page 14 emphasis added.)

The setting of timetables is certainly a futile exercise. However, the overall effect of the timetable approach (for all its ambiguities) is to direct attention to "dual power and revolutionary victory" and away from discussion of our tasks in the current stage of the radicalisation and away from an assessment of our activity in the past period. That is the objective effect of

phrase 'entryism sui generis' was used to describe the "deep", long-term entry into reformist parties carried out by the European Trotskyists in the 1950s and 1960s, as distinct from the short-term entry tactics carried out by the French, American and Belgian Trotskyists in the 1930s.)

the timetable approach, regardless of the intentions of the sponsors of the Document.

2. Which view of Entryism?

Without presenting any balance-sheet, the Document takes a position on the tactic of entryism, that is, takes a position on the history of the European Trotskyists over a period that lasted more than 15 years. What is given in the document by way of assessment is contradictory.

In Section 11 (Three Tactics), the Document states;

" The entryist tactic for building a revolutionary party proceeded from the hypothesis that the radicalisation -- of forming a new mass vanguard -- was taking place for the most part within the traditional mass organisations. Such a hypothesis was shown to be correct in capitalist Europe in the period which extended from the early fifties until the beginning of 1969 (e.g., Bevanite left.... Communist Youth and Ingrao tendency in the Italian CP; Renard tendency in the Belgian workers' movement..... ..etc.).

" The error committed in conceiving this tactic did not, therefore lie in the objective perspective -- which events have by and large confirmed -- but in underestimating the numerical relationship between our own forces and those we could impel to break with the mass parties in a social climate where no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared."

Here we are told that the theoretical basis for entryism was "by and large" correct. The only error was a partial one; namely an underestimation of numerical relationships in "a social climate where no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared." This point will be taken up later. First, a look at how the document presents the situation which the entryist tactic led the European sections into, after 15 years of its application. The Document says;

" In the present stage starting in 1967-68, the Fourth International began a turn toward independent activity aimed at winning hegemony in the new vanguard. Since its sections had undergone a process of overspecialization in entryist work, they generally went about making this shift in too slow and stiff a way. The turn was carried out in the best conditions everywhere there was a youth organisation led by revolutionary Marxists existing independently that could "skirt" the problem of a section identified in the eyes of the vanguard with an entryist orientation." (Section 16 page 22).

The test of a pudding is in the eating. What was "by and large" correct in Section 11, turns out in Section 16 to have been a serious impediment for our sections in intervening in the youth radicalisation of the 1960s. The sections were "slow" and "stiff" to respond. Luckily there were youth organisations which saved the situation from fiasco. However, this way of salvation brought its dangers!

"..... there was a real danger that youth organisations lacking a sufficient number of experienced Trotskyist cadres would let themselves be caught up in a sectarian (or spontaneist) tendency to underestimate and misjudge....."

(Section 16 page 22-23)

This danger was met by a rather rapid fusion of the sections with

the youth organisations which were really doing the work of Trotskyist sections. This admittedly was a pragmatic solution but it paid off where it was applied.

Entryism, which in Section 11 is by and large correct, is in Section 16 seen in a different light, the light of actual events. The tactic appears here to have resulted in the sections' almost completely missing the boat of the youth radicalisation. It was by chance rather than design that we did not miss the boat. The price we have to pay for this chance rescue is the fusion of the youth organisations, which leaves us with the problem of how best to attract the youth.

There are two lines on Entryism in the document. A vote for the Document as it stands is a vote for two contradictory lines on 15 or so years of the history of our movement.

Numbers and revolutionary tensions.

Section 11 of the Document tells us that the error that was made was an underestimation of the numbers necessary to impel a break with the mass parties in a social climate where no revolutionary tensions had yet appeared. From this it appears that our numbers would have been sufficient if there had been revolutionary tensions. But was not the entryist tactic based precisely upon the assumption that there would certainly be revolutionary tensions? This assumption of revolutionary tensions was based on the belief in the imminence of world war. (See Vergeat and Delphin in 'Preparatory Text' for the 1971 Conference of the leaderships of the European Sections).

The Document, in contrast, leads us to believe that entryism was not based on the assumption of 'a social climate' with revolutionary tensions, not based on the belief in the imminence of world war. The membership requires full and unequivocal information on the theoretical basis of entryism if it is to commit the movement to a definitive position on its history.

Light on Entryism by Vergeat and Delphin.

In the 'Preparatory Text' (mentioned above), cdes. Vergeat and Delphin assess entryism as a correct tactic. They make no mention of 'numerical relationships' and an 'error' in 'underestimation.' They are less specific. The correct tactic (entryism) was 'often tried but poorly mastered.' No attempt is made to describe this tactic when well mastered. However, their document is of interest in that it throws some light on what this 'correct tactic' resulted in. (Section A).

In Belgium; "..... The renovation of the JGS is not the result of entryism..... The worker nuclei gained during that period provide a substantial basis for the new Belgian section, although they remain imbued with syndicalism and find it rather difficult to grasp the role of a revolutionary party."

In Germany; "...the split of the SDS from the SP occurred in the absence of any intervention whatsoever from us....."

In Italy; "...these attempts blew up at the very moment they came to a culmination, the militants involved in them either returning to the CP or going over to ultraleftism or Maoism. The new Italian section had to start again with very little after its disintegration"

In France; "...The success of the JCR operation was merely the result of entryist work of a very particular character at the fringes of the CP..." (Emphases added).

In general; " from this past flowed the difficulty experienced by militants of the European sections in breaking with entryism and throwing themselves into the activity of constructing Communist organisations on the basis of a revolutionary program...." (Section A (5)).

This formulation leads logically to the question as to what the sections were doing in the entry period if they were not "constructing Communist organisations on a revolutionary program."

Delphin and Vergeat are supporters of the European Document. Does their evaluation really square with the evaluation of the Document? At least there is a lot of room for question marks. Consequently the few lines of evaluation of entryism in the Document are a completely inadequate basis on which to take a decision on our history.

3. Ambiguities and Dual Power.

In Section 17, one of our three priorities is expressed thus;

"--winning a growing base in the workers' and trade union movement that would enable us to transform the numerically and politically strengthened revolutionary organisations into a permanent factor in raising the level of consciousness and organisation of the most militant layers of the workers, into a driving force in preparing the way for future explosions of mass struggles culminating in a system of dual power."

and immediately after the Document reads;

" From these combined priorities -- which are not the same as the ones in the preceding period and are not yet those of a struggle to win control of the broad masses away from the traditional parties -- flow the conclusions....."

This part of the document raises some questions. If, as the Document says, one of our priorities is to prepare the most militant layers of the workers for explosions culminating in a system of dual power, would it not be as well to prepare them for the opportunities of such a system, namely the seizure of power? Would it not be as well to prepare them for the dangers of a system of dual power? Dual power solves nothing. Social tensions merely reach an intense level. Seizure of power is the only way forward in such a situation.

Is it absolutely excluded that organs of dual power may be formed, in a period of sharp social conflict, through initiatives from the top?

By placing emphasis on a system of dual power does the Document imply that the proletariat and its allies will share power for a relatively lengthy period? Months? Many weeks? Is it excluded that the dual power could last only a few days? It appears so. Otherwise more emphasis would be placed in the 'priorities' section on the seizure of power.

It should be noted that our priorities are not ones for a period of a struggle to win the control of the broad masses. When does such a period begin, before or after the struggle culminating in a system of dual power? Surely not. If the decisive battles are coming in four or five years, and if we are working for a system of dual power surely we are in the period in which we struggle for the 'control of the broad masses away from the traditional parties?' It seems to be irresponsible not to do so. However, the period we are in is one of winning the vanguard, according to the Document, and we must win the vanguard before we can win

the broad masses. So the introduction of the notion of dual power leads not to clarity, but leads to further ambiguities in respect of 'vanguard' and 'masses'.

In a discussion of our priorities, the introduction of the notion of dual power merely serves a decorative function to what is being said, namely that we need to do serious revolutionary work in the trade unions. If the Document intends more than a decorative function for "dual power", it should iron out the ambiguities. If it is mere decoration then it had better not be there at all, since it raises unnecessary questions and answers none.

4. Ambiguities of the "New Mass Vanguard".

The "New Mass Vanguard" is a central concept of the Document. Here we have a right to expect clarity as regards the nature of the phenomenon and clarity as to the tasks we are to carry out. However, what is said about the "new mass vanguard" is open to a variety of interpretations. Predictably, there will be a hot debate on the definition of the "new mass vanguard" - in some quarters the very existence of the phenomenon will be put in question. Confusion on this central concept can lead only to political disorientation.

The "new vanguard" is of "mass proportions" we are told in Section 5. But how "mass" is "mass"? This is not spelled out. However we are told that it "still remains very much a minority within the mass movement, and even more so within the organised workers' movement." The terminology of the phrase "...Even a vanguard of 50,000..." suggests that in no country does the vanguard consist of so many individuals. Even assuming these are spread over only a few major cities, it means that the "new mass vanguard" is still very thin on the ground. Hardly a justification for the label "mass."

The "new mass vanguard", says the Document, is "becoming capable of effective action." However, we are told a few lines earlier that "the road from spontaneous revolt to effective struggle for socialist revolution can be a long one," and the "new mass vanguard" was only recently born out of spontaneous revolt. Whether the "new mass vanguard" is effective or not, and if so in what sense, is unclear.

The politics of the "new mass vanguard."

We are told that it is an illusion to think that the "new mass vanguard" is, as a whole, revolutionary. It is therefore safe to say that what is meant by the "new mass vanguard" is not a political vanguard. Some of the participants in the new vanguard are "prisoners of spontaneism, sectarianism, ultraleft infantilism, apolitical workerism or primitive syndicalism." Even a vanguard of 50,000 or 1,000,000 can become isolated and waver between opportunist adaptation to the traditional leaderships and sectarian abstentionism and defeatism. However, nowhere in the document are we informed what sectarianism is, or what constitutes opportunist adaptation, nor are we given any concrete examples of ultraleft infantilism or apolitical workerism. A few examples of these aberrations would have gone a long way to making clear the political method being proposed in the Document. How can we conduct a constant political struggle within the "vanguard" (Section 6) if there are various interpretations of the political nature of the "vanguard" and the various currents within it.

Just one illustration would go a long way to making clear what is meant by ultraleft infantilism etc.. For example; during the fight against redundancy at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, one issue of the "Red Mole" carried the legend on its front page;

"The occupation of Clydeside - FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE SCOTISH WORKERS' REPUBLIC ?"

Meanwhile comrades in the west of Scotland were being directed to build "Claimants' Unions" to help unemployed workers and others to get welfare benefits. The struggle at UCS was characterised by the IMG majority leadership as the "most important working class struggle in Britain since the Second World War." The conduct of the leadership is surely worthy of assessment. If it were discussed in terms of "ultraleft infantilism", "sectarian abstention" and "defeatism" there would be possibilities for a rich discussion in the course of which we might get a clearer idea of where the document stands on such questions.

The lack of concreteness in the Document in respect of the politics of the "new mass vanguard" leads in places to completely empty formulations. For example in Section 6 we read, in connection with the "central task" of winning hegemony in the "new mass vanguard";

"It is no easy task for revolutionary Marxists to win hegemony within the new mass vanguard. Such an objective can be achieved neither by adapting opportunistically to the lowest common denominator of this disparate vanguard, nor by a (in the final analysis, no less opportunistic) attempt to make a "synthesis" out of the various currents running through it. Achieving this goal requires a constant political struggle within this vanguard to transform it, making it an adequate instrument for regenerating the organised workers' movement."

How do we win hegemony? By struggling to transform the vanguard to make it an adequate instrument. But transforming the vanguard means winning hegemony within it. So we reach a wordy tautology.

The real issue is how to intervene in the current radicalisation, but this tends to get lost in the ambiguities surrounding the "new mass vanguard."

What is the "new mass vanguard?"

When it is all boiled down what is the "new mass vanguard?" Simply the more conscious and active individuals among the radicalising youth, some of whom are organised in left-wing groups, plus a thin layer of older workers who share the youth's dissatisfaction with capitalist society and with the bureaucratised leaderships of the working class. Sometimes a number of these individuals and groups unite for common action and sometimes are able to lead struggles. This 'vanguard' is not 'hegemonised' by any one or number of political tendencies. Consequently it is hard to say whether any individual is part of the 'vanguard' or not. The 'vanguard', in short, is rather difficult to pin down. This surrounds the concept which is central to the Document with a vagueness which impedes the reaching of the clarity which our sections need if they are to intervene effectively in the on-going radicalisation. The radicalisation and our method of approach can now be taken up, attention having been drawn to the ambiguous nature of the Document.

.....

PART III.

The Current Radicalisation.

The deepening of the current radicalisation is a prerequisite for the emergence of a pre-revolutionary situation.

The general experience of the last few years suggests that the current radicalisation will continue. Nowhere in capitalist Europe has the bourgeoisie been able to inflict on its opponents the massive defeat which could put the radicalisation in reverse. On the contrary the masses have shown a readiness to fight back, and this readiness appears on a wider scale despite the lack of any determined leadership from the bureaucrats. The shift towards electoral support for the social democracy and the stalinists in Germany and France (as in Australia, Canada and New Zealand) is an indication of the mass mood - an indication of the mass seeking a way forward in opposition to what the bourgeoisie hands down.

This trend towards electoral support for social democracy and the stalinists, while it is a manifestation of the radicalisation of the masses, at the same time represents the danger that the radicalisation could be absorbed and hugged to death by the social democrats and stalinists. They act as props for bourgeois rule. Their conciliationist position breeds disillusion and demobilisation, preparing the way for the capitalist class to inflict big defeats.

Whether or not the current radicalisation will follow through to a pre-revolutionary situation is largely dependent on whether the workers and their allies can prevent the demobilisers playing their characteristic role.

Our general task.

If we look at the situation in this way we can see that our task, in general terms, is to play a role which will help to deepen and widen the current radicalisation. This we can do only by working out demands and methods of struggle which have the objective and potential of promoting mass struggle against capitalism and its evils independent of the bureaucratised leaderships and in opposition to them. The discussion of demands and methods of struggle appropriate to this task should be the main concern of the Document.

The Document does mention that no revolutionary upsurge will take place unless the "social and political 'fever temperature' has risen and infected a considerable part of the proletariat. (Section 7d). The Document also states that revolutionary explosions "always take place as a culmination of a phase of radicalising struggles...." (Section 7c). However, these insights are not really taken up in relation to the current stage of the radicalisation. Instead of proposing guidelines for the activity of the sections in helping to raise the "fever temperature", the emphasis of the Document is away from such questions towards a consideration of what is needed when a pre-revolutionary situation does arise - dual power, insurrection, etc.

Always assuming that we maintain our revolutionary perspectives and principles, it is the way we conduct ourselves in the current radicalisation (the demands we raise, the methods of struggle we propose) that will determine our success or failure in the central task

of the next period - that is the construction of a Leninist cadre round which will be assembled the mass revolutionary party with authority among the masses, the essential ingredient for transforming a pre-revolutionary situation into a revolutionary struggle for power.

By passing over the features of the current radicalisation, the document fails to grasp the importance of the uneven and combined development of the radicalisation for our organisations, which are at present small and weak in influence and resources.

The incorrect assessment of the radicalisation and the wrong assessment of the stage we are at in building our movement which is contained in the Document has already resulted in the lost opportunities we have experienced in Britain.

Uneven and combined development of the radicalisation.

In Section 12 and in Section 15 (Sectors and Forms of Intervention) the Document pays some attention to uneven development and 'sectoral' struggles. However there is little political discussion of these questions. The main pre-occupation is with organisational forms to group sympathisers drawn towards us from the struggles of the various 'sectors' (Taupe Rouge, Red Mole Circles,). As to the demands we should raise in these 'sectors' we are left in the dark. The potential of the Women's Liberation Movement to draw large battalions into independent struggle is passed over. Women are bracketed with artists, scholars etc.. No guidance is given as to what demands to put forward in the women's movement. No assessment of our activity so far in this area.

There is no mention in the Document of the role the national struggles will surely play in the coming crisis; Catalonia, the Basques, Welsh and Scottish nationalisms, language struggles in Wales and Belgium. In view of the tendency of the Common Market economy to result in the run-down of the 'regions', the class struggle will increasingly find expression in the form of nationalist and separatist movements.

We should prepare for such developments by discussing the kind of demands we advance in such movements in opposition to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships, and also the kinds of demands we might have to raise and fight for within the oppressor nations. The document has nothing to say about the conduct of the European sections on the national struggle in Ireland.

There is no concrete discussion of the struggles of students against the capitalist attacks on their living conditions and on their right to organise independent unions.

The mobilisations (primarily of young people) round opposition to imperialist intervention in the colonial and semi-colonial world receive scant attention in the Document. Again no assessment of our activity in the past period, no concrete guidelines for the future.

The only area of society in relation to which the Document approaches concreteness as regards demands is the industrial working class. Here the main axis of our intervention is to be round the demand for workers' control. We are to seek to link up 'sectoral' layers with workers' struggles.

The whole thrust of the Document in relation to uneven development

is to down-play the autonomous character of the struggles of radicalised layers struggling outside the industrial working class. While it is true that in the long run the working class will have to take up the demands of other oppressed sectors and be in the forefront of the struggle for the kind of society which can satisfy these demands, this does not mean that these struggles will die down or necessarily lose their autonomous characteristics as the workers come forward more militantly to press their own demands. Nor does it mean that the ups and downs of the 'sectoral' struggles will be dependent upon the ups and downs of the struggle of the organised working class.

The experience of the recent past shows that the 'sectoral' struggles (women, students, the Irish) have not given up their autonomous nature as the workers come into stiffer combat with governments and employers. Furthermore, the struggles of large numbers of people round 'sectoral' demands, especially if given effective leadership, will hasten the radicalisation of the mass of workers including the organised battalions. For our organisation at its present stage of development, it is precisely in the fight around 'sectoral' demands that we can get a rapid hearing, gain authority as genuine leaders and win political activists to the program and the sections of the Fourth International.

Combined development of the radicalisation.

At the general theoretical level the combination of the struggles of all sectors is understood by the Marxist movement. Taken in their entirety, the demands advanced by all oppressed sectors can only be realised in a socialist society. A prerequisite for socialism is the overthrow of the bourgeois state, the shattering of bourgeois property relations, the taking of power by the working class led by its Leninist party, as the leading force in the construction of a new society.

The proletariat can only rise to its historic task if it stands out as the leader of all the oppressed. It can only do so on the basis of making its own the anti-capitalist demands of the oppressed nationalities, the women, the youth looking for a human future, the petty-bourgeoisie facing ruin from the assault of big capital etc.. The political expression of this identification is the program of the proletariat's Leninist party. This general theoretical truth is, however, only the ABC of Leninism. It does not absolve us from an assessment of the current combination. The situation at present is that no mass Leninist party exists. The fact is that movements outside the organised working class are advancing demands that often challenge capitalism in a more fundamental way than the struggle of workers in the plants. Our task at present is to build our movement in the most time-saving way. This is best done in today's conditions, and at our current stage of development, by participating in the independent movements against capitalist oppression, formulating demands and methods of struggle which have the potential of giving these movements a mass campaigning character, which in turn gives them the potential of drawing into the struggle organisations of the working class. Such a campaigning policy can create the climate within the workers' movement in which we can more readily obtain a hearing as a political tendency. The experience of mass independent struggle by 'sectors' has a stimulating effect on the workers just as well-conducted workers' struggles can set an example to other oppressed layers. The main pre-occupation of the Doc-

ument should be with the demands we raise within the context of the above approach. The Document as it stands leaves all this at a level of vague generality, open to all sorts of interpretations as regards the type of demands to be raised. Only with regard to the workers in the plants does the Document approach concreteness. The pages of talk about dual power and revolutionary upsurge are all out of proportion to the tasks in the coming period. The simple truth is that unless we are clear on how we are to intervene to deepen the radicalisation in society as a whole and build our cadre in the process, the question of dual power and revolutionary victory will not in practice be raised.

Essentially a 'workerist' line.

Despite the wordiness and ambiguities of the Europe Document, the essential line emerges clearly if we look at it in the following way; in all those pages about dual power and getting a foothold in the working class, perhaps a dozen lines are devoted to Indochina and Ireland, the highpoints of struggle on a world and European scale. Nothing is said about our conduct in relation to these questions, no line laid out for future activity, no line worked out to assist in drawing the working class into struggle on these issues. The message is simple - movements demanding the end to imperialist intervention in Indochina and Ireland are consigned a place way down below the struggle in the factories.

This is essentially a 'workerist' line. Before we examine what this line leads to, as exemplified in Britain, we can take a look at how we reach this 'workerist' position.

'Vanguardism' and Adaptation.

It is generally true that the way to reach the masses is through the vanguard. In earlier decades it was easier to identify this vanguard. In earlier times the 'vanguard' generally was organised in a particular political formation, e.g. the Communist Party and splinters from it, or the left social democracy and crystallised centrist formations (ILP, Socialist youth groups, Musteites in the U.S.A. etc.) The "new mass vanguard" of the Document, however is characterised by its heterogeneous nature; it is not crystallised into one or even a few organisations with set programs and traditions. The "new mass vanguard" consists primarily of radicalised youth who find the existing mass parties and even the trade unions unattractive vehicles for social change. This feature of the youth vanguard means we are able to play a creative role in the formation of a new vanguard, influencing it at its very inception with Trotskyist ideas, rather than seeking to win an existing vanguard from sometimes deeply entrenched positions (the loyalty of the CP members to the Comintern, for example). This 'openness' of the youth represents a tremendous advantage for us from the point of view of winning people directly to our ideas. At the same time we should be aware that this very openness can lead to rapid changes of mood, means that the lack of experience in political struggle can lead the radicalising youth vanguard to drawing hasty conclusions from partial successes or failures. Another feature of the "new mass vanguard" is that it is constantly being renewed as the radicalisation continues and widens. For all these reasons concerning the "new mass vanguard", the method of the Document in its assessment of our tasks is incorrect. In earlier times we could point to particular political formations in which the vanguard was assembled. This meant we could see more clearly how to intervene, confronting a situation in which the van-

guard was already 'hegemonised' by definite programs, definite leaderships. These leaderships and programs determined to a large extent the tactics we had to employ in winning the vanguard to our program.

Because of these features, the general concept of 'winning hegemony within the vanguard' had a certain concreteness in respect to tactics.

In the situation which confronts us in the present radicalisation, in which the "new mass vanguard" is not 'hegemonised' by definite leaderships and programs in the main, the concept of 'winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard' becomes virtually devoid of concreteness. In the context of the (largely youth) radicalisation, in which the 'vanguard' ranges from wild ultra-lefts to apolitical workerists (Section 5), the concept of 'winning hegemony in the new mass vanguard' tells us nothing about the tactics we should employ.

In the present period, when we have an opportunity to play a creative role ~~in~~ in the very formation of the vanguard, as distinct from orientating to a previously-formed and 'hardened' vanguard formation, our method of approach should be as follows. We work out methods of intervention and demands which have a perspective of mass struggle, helping the movements forward and at the same time educating wider layers in our total outlook. What determines our demands at any given time is, first, the objective needs of the situation, and second, the consciousness of the mass which is involved or which we aim to involve in action. Objective needs and mass consciousness—these are the pillars on which we construct our demands for mass struggle. To down-play the objective needs leads to a loss of revolutionary perspective, to tail-ending (e.g. Negotiations to end the war, 'Sign Now'). Ignoring the mass consciousness or making a wrong assessment leads to isolation from the possibility of mass action, (Victory to the IRA, 'Smash the Bourgeoisie..).

Our demands for mass struggle on a united action basis should be capable of evoking a wide response and at the same time point the way forward to the realisation of the objective needs. The 'vanguard' (the most radicalised layer) is only of relevance in so far as it is able to carry such a program of demands to the masses. We do not aspire to win hegemony within the 'vanguard' on an incorrect political line (such as the sectarian policy of 'third period' stalinism). Such hegemony would only result in the isolation of the 'vanguard' as the Document correctly points out in Section 5.

By raising the question of the 'vanguard', telling us that we must conduct a struggle within it against ultra-leftism, sectarianism, apolitical workerism, defeatism etc., and then failing to be specific about the demands round which we are to conduct such a struggle, the Document is wide open to various interpretations which will lead to adaptation to the various currents within the 'vanguard'. What is 'ultra-left' or 'sectarian' to some will be simon-pure Trotskyism to others. Thus the Document sanctions the adaptation of the past period. Adaptation to ultra-left currents, leading to sectarian poses with a 'workerist' twist. We in Britain have a rich experience in operating the 'vanguardist' line of the European Document.

PART IV

'Vanguardism', Adaptation, and the IMG Leadership.

'Vanguardism' and defence of the Vietnamese revolution.

A workers' state under attack, a small backward nation struggling against the most powerful imperialist ruling class in the world; intermingled with this a civil war of the mass of peasants and workers against the collaborationist landlord and capitalist classes of Vietnam. This was the situation in 1968. The imperialist attack had roused widespread opposition throughout the world. The Vietnam struggle had accelerated the radicalisation of young people in the imperialist countries. Following the decisions of the Eighth World Congress the Fourth International had played a positive role in mobilising opposition to U.S. imperialism. In the struggle against the reformist currents in the movement against the war, we made our tactical orientation towards the radicalising youth currents, most of which at the time tended towards ultra-leftism. Such an orientation was correct so long as it served the line of promoting mass independent actions against U.S. imperialism. The danger is that such a tactical orientation can lead to adaptation to the ultra-left currents. This is basically what happened to the IMG leadership in relationship to the struggle in Vietnam. In order to 'hegemonise' the 'vanguard', the leadership adapted to it, abandoning in practice the perspective of building a mass movement to aid the Vietnamese.

The objective needs of the situation in 1969 was for a mass movement in opposition to the U.S. war. However, 1969 saw a decline in the movement in Britain and Europe generally. A main reason for this (as well as the Paris talks) was that the bulk of the most radicalised youth of the period (the "new mass vanguard"), who constituted the backbone of the movement, suffered a let-down after the euphoria of 1968. De Gaulle remained, the U.S. did not leave Vietnam. In this situation the 'vanguard' sought a short-cut to the victory which had been missed in 1968. 'Turning to the workers' sums up the thinking of a large part of the 'vanguard' at that time. Other elements, which still identified strongly with the Vietnam struggle and deemed it important, gave up any perspective they may have had of building a mass movement. This element contented itself with small 'militant' actions, plus plenty of rhetoric about Vietnam and revolution, all spiced with ultra-left, sectarian bombast.

Instead of resisting these trends the IMG leadership began to adapt to them in a big way. Instead of emphasising the objective need for a mass movement, assessing the mass consciousness on the question and planning activity which had the potential of drawing on this mass consciousness and building united actions round the demands for U.S. withdrawal and an end to British (Labour) Government complicity with the U.S., the leadership in practice abandoned the perspective of building a mass movement. Since mid-1969 the line of the IMG majority leadership is to promote a very few 'militant' actions. Mostly the line has consisted of long silences, interspersed with empty rhetoric and super-revolutionary phrase-mongering incapsulated in sloganising such as 'Victory to the NLF!', 'Victory to the Vietnamese Revolution!', 'On, On, to Saigon', 'Power to the PRG.' By setting its face against all attempts to build united actions round the demands for U.S. withdrawal and an end to Britain's role, the leadership has in effect abstained from any serious attempt to defend the Vietnamese revolution, isolating itself from the

possibility of involving large numbers in any campaign, cutting itself off from reaching out to the organisations of the working class. Our 'vanguard' method prevented us from coming seriously to grips with the sectarian and class-collaborationist policies of our opponents. Such abstention could only help the labour bureaucrats and the stalinists to pursue unchallenged their brazen betrayal of the Indochinese struggle.

The adaptation to 'vanguard' currents which led to the sectarian policy on Vietnam, was not a local aberration of the IMG leadership. This 'vanguard' line was upheld in Germain's report to the International Executive plenum of December 1969. It was boldly stated that outside the U.S.A. our movement could do nothing that would have a direct effect on the outcome of the struggle in Vietnam. We could not build a mass movement in Europe, but were to insert ourselves in the general trend of political radicalisation and contribute to the maturing and political clarification of the vanguard. We were to indicate clearly that we were not pacifists, reformists, etc., but revolutionaries. (See International Information Bulletin, Jan 1971) This was the 'vanguard' line for Europe. The objective needs of the Vietnamese revolution for a mass movement against U.S. imperialist intervention were subordinated to the supposed 'task' of winning hegemony within the mass vanguard. With perspectives like this we cannot and do not deserve to reach out to anyone let alone the mass of toilers and their vanguard fighters.

This 'vanguard' adaptationist line has seriously weakened our capacity to oppose the various class-collaborationist currents, social democrats, Communist Party and Macists who now hold the initiative in whatever movement exists in Britain on this question.

In the Europe Document the issue of Vietnam is dealt with by means of a deafening silence. Four years of the 'vanguard' line on the high point of world struggle and by way of assessment - zero, nothing at all.

'Workerism' and the Women's Liberation Movement.

The trend towards ultra-left and sectarian positions, however, was only one aspect of adaptation to the 'vanguard.' The 'workerist' current among the radicalising youth and intelligentsia, reinforced by the increased combativity of the workers, inevitably found its expression in the ranks of the vacillating IMG leadership. The 'workerist' turn was given its 'theoretical' justification by Jones as follows; as the workers come into stiffer combat, those engaged in 'peripheral' struggles (students, women, black people etc.) will increasingly look to the organised working-class for leadership. If we are not 'implanted' in the organised working-class we will find it increasingly difficult to gain a hearing in the 'peripheral' sectors, besides being a historical irrelevance. (A Turn to Trade Union and Industrial Work by A. Jones. IMG Pre-Conference Bulletin No. 1 Jan '71.) Fearful of becoming a historical irrelevance the whole IMG majority leadership swallowed this line which became the new orientation of the IMG at the 1971 National Conference. At the same time, however, the sectarian and ultra-left mistakes were not rectified. Needless to say the sectarian line does not blend well with a turn to 'implantation' in the working-class; hence the peculiar eclectic confusion of the IMG leadership line ever since.

In the women's movement the combination of adaptation to an ultra-left sectarian line and to workerist currents in the 'vanguard' was expressed in this way; abstention from intervening in the women's movement was propped up by pretensions to a proletarian orientation.

The IMG leadership set up a network of "Socialist Women's Groups", which were to be a pole of attraction in the women's liberation movement. These were sometimes referred to as 'bridge' organisations, that is, stepping stones from the women's movement to the IMG. What would distinguish them would be that they would be socialist and would make their main pre-occupation the problems of working-class women. Their main campaign would be the fight for equal pay and against low pay. It is impossible to assess the success or otherwise of the equal pay and low pay campaign, since it never really got off the ground after two years of talk. What can be said is that the Socialist Women's Groups acted not as a pole of attraction but as a pole of repulsion not only to serious women's liberationists but also to socialists who saw them, quite correctly, as fronts for the IMG. Our work among women's liberationists has been seriously harmed by the sectarian 'workerist' self-isolation from the women's liberation movement. The IMG majority leadership in 1971 was united on the "Socialist Women's Group" tactic. The collapse of the whole enterprise now results in the admission in some quarters that the tactic was 'left sectarian.' However, it appears that this current criticism of the line is confined to a characterisation of the organisational form of our operations. The political line was by and large correct, but it was carried to fiasco in a 'left sectarian' manner. The truth is that the sectarian politics and the sectarian organisational forms were parts of the same package. It was the sectarian politics, a product of the adaptation involved in the 'vanguard' line that led to the debacle of the line in women's liberation. By separating us from the women's movement, the 'vanguard' line led us to dodge the duty and miss the opportunity of giving leadership to women in struggle, helping the reformists and 'community action' trends to come forward as the main spokeswomen of the movement. Our line has prevented us from carrying out an offensive on this issue against opponent organisations on the left.

One test of a serious organisation is how it assesses a new social movement. All our opponents on the left are embarrassed by and hostile to the women's liberation movement. They respond to a new social movement by means of ritualistic 'workerist' incantations. By its adaptationism to the 'workerist' trend the IMG leadership was blinded to the revolutionary implications of the growth of women's liberation. The demands thrown up by this movement present a challenge to the institution of the patriarchal family, a main prop of class, including capitalist oppression. The movement has the potential of drawing large battalions into battle against capital and its agents. Correct leadership by Trotskyists can help the movement forward and in turn the movement can provide combative cadres for our movement. The operation of the 'vanguard' line in the women's movement is a tale of lost opportunities.

Gimmickry versus Politics—the case of the phony 'fusion'.

Regarding the question of the fusion of European sections and youth organisations no attempt is made here to assess the experience due to lack of information. Suffice it to say that it is readily understandable that sections which surfaced after 15 years or so of entry sui generis into reformist formations with little or nothing to show for it should be eager to fuse with open Trotskyist groupings.

At the same time it is recognised in the Document that there is now a problem of how best to win the youth to the ranks of the Fourth

International, now that the youth organisations have been fused.

The Document gives no clear guidance on this question. It fails to come out clearly for the building of Trotskyist youth organisations. All that is said is that there is no objection in principle to the building of youth organisations. The essential conservatism of the Document is revealed by the qualifications which surround the discussion of youth organisations. According to the Document we need to reach 'a critical threshold of forces and roots in the working-class' (whatever all that means) before we can build youth organisations.

It is interesting to note that this question used to be looked at the other way round, at least in Britain. A youth organisation was seen as a prerequisite for 'a critical threshold of forces and roots in the working-class.' The 1970 IMG Conference resolution states;

"...the forces vitally necessary for us to intervene and build nuclei in all fields I have listed will be gained directly from the youth organisation.... The winning of hundreds of cadres through the youth organisation will give us the young workers for the trade union base, the young black workers, the Irish, Arabs, women unionists etc.." (Peter Petersen in 'From a Propaganda Group to a League for Revolutionary Action, Appendix 17').

As against the line of the Europe Document, Petersen's line is correct. However, what made this line impossible to implement was the adaptation of the IMG leadership to ultra-left and sectarian currents, an adaptation which undercut the possibility of a youth organisation intervening effectively in mass struggles. An additional mistake was to plan for a 'cadre' youth organisation with 'a high theoretical level'. What was and is needed is a campaigning youth organisation, based on the general outlook of Trotskyism which can bring into its ranks young people who have not yet decided on the commitment necessary for membership of a Bolshevik organisation. From such a campaigning youth organisation we can win the most educated and committed young people to our sections.

The Spartacus League did provide us with an indication of the possibility of building a Trotskyist youth organisation in Britain. It attracted quite a number of revolutionary-minded young people. However, the sectarian approach of the IMG leadership and the 'cadre' concept severely limited the ability of the Spartacus League to move out in a vigorous campaigning manner among the youth.

The 'workerist' turn of 1971 only worsened the situation. The line of the 1970 Conference document was stood on its head. Instead of seeing our road to the organised working-class by way of the youth, we were now told that we could not hold our influence in 'peripheral' sectors, including the youth, unless we had an implantation in the working class, (essentially the line of Section 16 of the Europe Document.) This contradiction expressed itself in the indecision of the 1971 Conference on the question of the youth organisation. Two possibilities were open - to go for a mass youth organisation with a lower level of commitment or to go for a 'fusion' of the Spartacus League with the IMG. The attitude was wait and see. The youth organisation had only just got off the ground. We should hang on for a year or so to see if it could fulfill its potential. (See 'No, We haven't got ALL the Time in the World.' 1971 Conference Resolution.)

In practice it was easy to see which way the wind was blowing. The real situation was that the youth organisation was blocked from out-going activity by the exclusive political approach of the IMG.

leadership, while the IMG was not being particularly successful in 'winning hegemony within the vanguard.' Other left organisations were increasing their size and influence at least as fast as the IMG. Our specific weight in British politics had not increased as a result of operating the 'vanguard' line. The line sanctioned by the Europe Document had already led the IMG into an impasse. The leadership sought a way out by means of a gimmick, 'fusion' with the Spartacus League, to create the impression of a qualitative step forward for the group. Within a few months of the 1971 Conference, 'fusion' was all the talk. What did this 'fusion' really mean for the group? It meant simply capturing ourselves. It all so meant missing the opportunity of reaching out with a vigorous youth organisation to young people coming into struggle. It meant about 60 new members for the section to be balanced against the big possibilities open to us in the youth field. It is ironical that just as we were winding up the Spartacus League, the biggest student demonstrations ever in Britain were taking place and the struggle in Ireland reaching a new stage with the Derry massacre, not to mention the miners' strike and the defeat suffered by the Tory government in its Rhodesia policy.

The Europe Document is at best ambiguous on the key question of a youth organisation. But one thing is clear - it leaves the road open for a continuation of the essentially conservative attitude to youth a la IMG majority leadership.

'Vanguardism' and 'Implantation in the Working-class.'

The radicalisation taking place in Britain today, especially among the youth, the attacks of the ruling class on living standards and the right to organise, the lame response of the labour bureaucrats, provide a better basis than ever before for the Trotskyists to win influence in the ranks of the trade unions and among unorganised workers. The crisis produces a favourable climate for us to get a hearing for our fundamental idea - class struggle versus class-collaboration. Has the 'vanguard' line enabled us to make the most of these opportunities which exist to gain a hearing as a serious revolutionary tendency in the workers' movement? The attacks on the working-class carried out by the Labour government and the failure of the Labour Party to rally to the side of the colonial peoples, led to a contempt and loathing of the Labour Party and its leadership among wide sections of the radicalising youth and the more class-conscious workers. Such loathing for the hypocrisy of reformism without reforms is the beginning of a revolutionary attitude. Such an attitude, however, is an insufficient basis for revolutionary strategy and tactics. What is needed for this is a rounded and realistic assessment of the place of the Labour Party in the class struggle in Britain. What are the facts on this matter? The existence of the Labour Party and the loyalty of the workers to that party represents the extent of the mass progress which the workers have made towards the realisation that they are a class with interests at odds with those of the capitalists, and that their interests can only be safeguarded and advanced at the level of society as a whole (the government and the state), and that they need a party independent of the capitalist parties to fight for their interests at state level. Despite the realisation of a large mass of workers that the Labour Party and its leadership is not a consistent defender of its interests, there is no indication that any substantial section of workers is prepared to break to the left from the reformist Labour Party or from the trade unions which support it. Nor is there any indication that any section of the trade union bureaucracy is even remotely considering

a break to the left from the Labour Party. In the absence of any credible alternative, class conscious workers in the mass see no other way than to support what they see as their party against the parties of capital. Any other course would represent a step away from independent working-class political action. In such a situation changes in the political mood of the masses will inevitably be expressed within the Labour Party as well as in the trade unions. Until the workers come to realise through their experience in trade union and political struggle that they require a revolutionary party and until they see a way of creating such a party, the existing leaderships will be put to the test again and again. It is only in the course of the struggle against capitalism that the workers will see the need to take up struggle against the reformist, parliamentary leaders and reach the practical understanding of the need for new leaders, new methods of struggle and more fundamental objectives. No mass break with the reformist apparatuses will take place without a gigantic struggle in the unions and the Labour Party. The split of the ILP from the Labour Party, with 30,000 members was the action of a group which had the perspectives of a sect.

In the wake of the betrayals of the Wilson government, large numbers of the politicising youth saw only the right-wing face of the Labour Party, saw only its function as a prop of the capitalist system. For them it had been tested and found useless for the purpose of working-class struggle for socialism. Failing to understand the historical gain in working-class consciousness which the Labour Party represents, large numbers of the youth thought it a matter of indifference whether the workers continued to support the Labour Party or not. To many of the youth there was no real difference between Labour and Tories. As already stated this is a fundamental error. In the absence of a revolutionary alternative, the workers if they fail to support Labour against the Tories are taking a step back. A Tory victory presents an additional obstacle to the working-class on its way to political power. Revolutionaries have no alternative but to identify with the workers in their opposition to the Tories as it is expressed in their support for Labour. Any other position only acquiesces in a step backward in political class-consciousness.

In accordance with the 'vanguard' line, the IMG leadership tuned in to the consciousness of the 'vanguard.' The leadership adapted to the inadequate understanding of the politicised youth on the class question of support for labour against the Tories. Instead of seeking to educate the newly politicised layers on this question, the general attitude of the leadership was to plug the tweedledum-tweedledee attitude of the ultra-left currents, with a few shame-faced bows in the direction of a Leninist class position. This adaptationist line carried us through the election period of 1970. The 1970 Conference Document had described the possible defeat of Labour as 'a marginal defeat for the working class.' The prospect was that a defeat for Labour would result in a 'mildly reformist Tory Government.' The actual defeat of the Labour Party brought into office the most reactionary government in Britain since the war, and placed the initiative in the hands of a government which set about attempting to destroy the right of the workers to organise. The present Tory government is the product of 'a marginal defeat for the working class.' The class line is that we are not indifferent to any defeats, 'marginal' or otherwise. We try to resist any defeats. All the talk of 'marginal defeats' on the part of the leadership only served to miseducate our cadre and our periphery in the spirit of indifference and sectarian abstention.

Adaptation to mistaken assessments of the role of the Labour Party in British working-class politics and to sectarian attitudes towards the Labour Party can only produce big mistakes in our efforts to obtain 'an implantation in the working-class.' It leads first of all to lost opportunities for establishing contact with active trade unionists. For a small organisation such as ours, with a large proportion of members who are not in industrial trade unions, membership in the Labour Party can help enable us to reach a trade union audience. Second, the failure to realise the central importance of the Labour Party in working-class politics leads us to project fantasy worlds to those who listen to us. The most blatant example of the result of the blindness towards the role of the Labour Party was the slogan (or the 'algebraic formula') of 'A workers' government based on the trade unions,' or its more precise rendering, 'A workers' government based on the democratic control of the trade unions.' Apart from the fact that when this 'algebraic formula' is filled with some relevant content it reads simply 'For a Labour Government,' the sponsors of this tack never seemed to consider what would happen if the unions showed the slightest inclination to pose themselves as a government. What would happen is that the reformist Labour Party would be going through an intense struggle over the line to be carried out in relation to such a union development. The slogan 'A workers' government based on the trade unions' was intended to 'skirt' the issue of the need to conduct a struggle against the bureaucrats both in the unions and the Labour Party. The slogan (or 'algebraic formula' or 'orientation') which was a means of avoiding the issue merely raises the real issue once again - the need to conduct a struggle inside the reformist Labour Party. So adaptation to the ultra-left attitude of the 'vanguard' led to a mystification of the political tasks in Britain in relation to the mass workers' organisations. The only realistic perspective we can give to trade unionists whose organisations show no sign of breaking at this stage with the Labour Party is the construction of class-struggle left wings in the unions and in the Labour Party. Instead of grasping the key political task in relation to the mass reformist formations, the IMG leadership has thrashed about wildly in quest of the philosophers stone which will turn the base metal of sectarian 'vanguardist' politics into the pure gold of 'an implantation in the working-class.' Instead of working out a program of demands which answers to the main problems of the class-struggle, the leadership has gone through the list of 'Claimants' Unions', 'Socialist Trade Union Committees', 'Action Committees' and now 'IMG industrial action groups.' There is nothing at all wrong in a political group trying out all sorts of experiments in organising for episodic struggles and particular actions, and it is correct to seek to establish independent struggle organs if they have a potential of mass influence. But this can only be done by an organisation which has a firm and well-thought-out general orientation as well as an experienced leadership which is capable of carrying out abrupt tactical turns without leading to disorientation and confusion in the ranks. As yet the IMG has not attained any of these attributes.

What we need is a firm commitment to the task of preparing the way for class-struggle left wings in the unions and the Labour Party. We need to work out a series of demands round which such left-wings can be assembled. Demands should include the end of all class-collaboration - it is useless to seek solutions in collaboration with those whose system causes the problems, the capitalists and their agents. As a counter to inflation - a sliding scale of wages with no limit on wage increases won through struggle. To counter unemployment, a sliding scale of hours and a programme of

public works to provide housing. The fight for democracy in the mass organisations would be seen as part of the struggle for these type of demands. In addition we would seek to win support in the mass organisations for our united action initiatives on Ireland, Women, Indochina etc.. The construction of such left-wings requires the abandonment of all sectarian, exclusionist postures, and a willingness not only to struggle for and support but also to give leadership where possible for partial, democratic as well as transitional demands. A serious attempt to organise and test out such a policy would enable us to get away from the present 'grasshopper' approach, and help us to gain some collective experience in the organised workers' movement. Such a serious approach to our work in the mass organisations would go some way to helping us avoid such errors as the prediction of the defeat of the victorious miners' strike of 1972 and the incomprehensible muddle of our proclamations on the fight at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971, when even our sensible thoughts (the need to spread the struggle, criticism of the stalinists' "non-political" line etc.) could not be taken seriously, spiced up as they were with 'revolutionary' talk about the workers' republic and the coming withdrawal of troops from Ireland to quell the Clydeside insurrection, talk which had nothing to do with the actual events taking place.

The 1971 turn to gaining an implantation in the working-class, represented a pragmatic adaptation to the dominant 'workerist' current in the 'vanguard.' The planlessness of the turn is evidence of that. The turn was in line with the 'vanguard' method of the Europe Document. The turn has not brought us the hoped-for gains. Objectively it has functioned as a substitute for doing the things we should, building a mass campaign on Ireland, giving leadership in the women's movement, building a Trotskyist youth organisation etc.. We are no further forward in 'winning hegemony within the vanguard' nor have we made much impression on the organised workers' movement despite great expenditure of energy and interminable discussions. This after four years of the 'vanguard' line in Britain. We can only re-orientate the group by abandoning the line of the Europe document. This line in operation only helps to isolate us from the workers' movement by basing our orientation on the vacillating consciousness of the 'vanguard', instead of upon the actual rhythms of the class-struggle.

Axis or fetish?—Workers' Control.

The Document advises that the axis of our demands in the trade union movement should be the demand for workers' control. Leaving aside the advisability of making one category of demand in our transitional program the main axis for our work on a European scale for a prolonged period, the advice will be impossible to implement in reality without running counter at times to the actual thrust of the struggle. At some times the main axis of our agitation in the unions might be the fight against redundancies. In such a situation control demands would naturally be thrown up as a necessary supplement to the principal issue. At a time of the necessity for the arming of the workers, our main axis would be to press this demand. In such a situation we might well demand workers' control of production in the arms plants. But this would not be the axis of our intervention. The axis would remain the arming of the proletariat, the control demand arising as a necessary concomitant. Making the control demands the main axis raises the danger of turning this category of demands into a fetish to be brought out regardless of the actual stage of the struggle. The socialist movement has enough fetishes without our adding yet another. These

who pick out a particular part of the program of socialist revolution and make of it a distinguishing mark, especially for a prolonged period, do a disservice to the marxist program, which is a guide to action in the most varying circumstances. Fetishes which are still prominent in the socialist movement are; the general strike as the universal formula for all situations, or 'revolutionary violence' i.e. guns as the solution to the complex problems of making a revolution; rank and file committees is a favorite fetish in Britain; in the U.S.A. the Healyites make a fetish of the call for the creation of a labour party by the unions. The singling out of one category of demands as the main axis for a prolonged period runs counter to the dialectical method of the transitional program.

'Vanguardism' and the Struggle in Ireland.

The struggle of the Catholic people and their student allies for elementary rights in the North of Ireland rapidly grew into a confrontation with the forces of British imperialism. Feeding on the centuries-old struggle of the Irish for national freedom, the fight passed rapidly to the most advanced forms of struggle seen in Europe for a long time - mass demonstrations and meetings, mass non-co-operation with the authorities, armed defence of the Catholic areas, creation of 'no-go' zones. In defiance of abstract schemas the struggle in Ireland did not conform to the rhythms of the struggle of the organised working-class either in Ireland or in Britain. The duty of British revolutionaries was clear - to pitch into struggle with a perspective of building a movement massive enough to hinder and if possible completely prevent the British government from blocking the process of permanent revolution unfolding in Ireland. Such a movement would have the potential, not only of aiding the Irish, but of bringing down the government, creating new possibilities for working-class struggle in Britain.

What was needed was a policy which could reach out to broad layers of the British population. The obvious key demand to campaign for was the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Incredible as it may seem this course was rejected by the 1971 Conference of the IMG, on the grounds that such a campaign might be supported by people for the wrong reasons. The basis of any campaign had to be, according to the leadership, identification with the forces leading the struggle in Ireland. The seen was set for the promotion of such slogans as 'Victory to the IRA' which effectively rule out the possibility of our reaching out and mobilising the large numbers necessary to have any effect in helping the embattled Irish. The Derry massacre led to a wave of revulsion in wide circles in Britain. Even so the IMG leadership's approach was as abstract and sectarian as ever. 'Red Hole' headlines read, "Avenge Derry. Open the Second Front. Victory to the IRA." No concept of reaching out with headlines such as, "No more Derrys - Bring the Troops Home."

The sectarian 'ultra-revolutionary' line has done nothing effectively to aid the Irish struggle. This line confines us to small circles which have no perspective of reaching out to wider layers in Britain, least of all the organised workers' movement. Our work on Ireland is in an impasse. The latest leadership 'perspective' is that the reformist Labour Party may break its bi-partisan policy with the Tories on Ireland and provide the basis for a large 'Troops Home' movement. Such is the course of the leadership's 'revolutionary defeatist' position on Ireland; ultra-left sectarianism - dead end - disillusion - tail-ending of the reformists.

A New Theory ? For Europe?

The European Document passes over the experience of how the British section carried out a policy of capitulationist self-isolation in relation to the struggle in Ireland. Where do the supporters of the Document stand on this question? Does support for the Europe Document mean support for the IMG leadership policy on Ireland? An unequivocal answer is in order. In the absence of any critical assessment of this line in the Document, it can only be assumed that the IMG was only carrying out the 'vanguard' line in relation to Ireland. The results of the 'vanguard' line applied to Ireland is a damning indictment of that line.

But there is another dimension worth mentioning. Some of the supporters of the Europe Document are on record as being in agreement with the American Trotskyists that in relation to Vietnam it is much better to build a massive movement for U.S. withdrawal rather than concentrating on giving ourselves a more radical image to a few hundred people. (See Germain's report to the IEC Plenum Dec. '69)

Surely this attitude is valid for British revolutionaries in relation to Ireland. But the IMG leadership has done the opposite. The leadership has refused to build, or attempt to build, a massive movement for British withdrawal from Ireland. The leadership has concerned itself with presenting 'a more radical image' to smaller circles. The Document tacitly endorses the IMG line on Ireland. This contradiction in method can only arouse the suspicion that what is involved is the birth-pangs of a new theory. This theory would be called the theory of sectarianism sui generis, and could guide the activities of the European sections for the next 15 years until they tumble to the method of the transitional program (pragmatically of course).

The 'vanguard' line - a recipe for disintegration.

The line of the Europe Document (with all its ambiguities) is nothing new for us in Britain. The majority leadership of the IMG supports the Document. It signals no new approach for them. The IMG has been carrying out this 'vanguard' line for four years. Where has it got us? It has not won us 'hegemony within the vanguard', or 'an implantation in the working class.' Adaptation, gimmicks and confusion have taken the place of a consistent and clear political line. Even worse, it has meant the disintegration of our leadership cadre. The united 1971 majority is now composed of three or four vying 'groupings', who all swear by the Europe Document. The only thing is they disagree what it means. The reason is simple. The 'vanguard' line has something for everybody, and consequently nothing for anybody. Nothing will come of nothing - we cannot build on confusion and question marks.

PART V.

Some Questions of Method in Building Sections.

Sectarian socialism.

What is the political method of the sectarians? Fundamentally, the sectarians do not approach political questions from the point of view of what they have in common with those who are questioning or rebelling against the evils of capitalism. Sectarians are blind to, the positive aspects of the elementary manifestations of discontent and revolt. Consequently the sectarian is unable to relate to the existing inadequate consciousness of the mass in such a way

help build on this consciousness and transform it, by means of relating the activity of the masses, into revolutionary consciousness. Often in fear of being tainted by the backward thinking of the masses, sectarians see only the negative side, the inadequacies of the present consciousness and activity. Consequently their method of approach is to emphasize always what distinguishes their consciousness from that of others. Instead of proposing joint action on the basis of what they have in common with others, the sectarians resort to ultimatums and invariably hunt for something to distinguish them. Marx explained this disease over a hundred years ago, but his followers have succumbed to it again and again. Lenin and Trotsky had to wage a fight against sectarians in the Third International and much of Trotsky's writing is concerned with combatting the disease in all its manifestations in the ranks of the Bolshevik-Leninists and the Fourth International. The 'vanguard' line of the Europe Document has been the breeding ground for sectarian methods in our own movement in the past period. Only a change of line can put the sectarian process in reverse.

Broadly speaking, sectarianism in the IMG expresses itself as an unwillingness or refusal to struggle for partial and democratic demands.

Democratic rights and the proletarian leadership.

In the epoch of imperialism, capitalism becomes more and more incompatible with any kind of democracy. Whole nations are enslaved and denied the democratic right of national self-determination. Capitalism, even in its period of ascent when it swept away much of the accumulated rubbish of previous social orders, never provided equal democratic rights for women, let alone liberation. Today the struggle for women's rights, for national rights, for any extension of democratic rights runs counter to the interests of the bourgeoisie. At a time when the bourgeoisie has turned against the extension of democratic rights and seeks to curtail those won in the past, the leadership of the struggle to defend and extend these rights passes to another class, the proletariat, and its leadership. Any notion that any other class or any other leadership should be left with the task of defending democratic rights and fighting for the rights of the oppressed nationalities etc., is departing from the politics of Leninism.

Those revolutionaries who turn away from raising and fighting for democratic demands do so for various reasons, among them; 1) The notion that, since bourgeois democracy is a hypocritical fraud it is 'breeding illusions' among the masses to fight for democratic demands. 2) Democratic demands have something to do with Parliamentarism, so such demands can be left to parliamentary cretins. 3) As the social crisis deepens, some revolutionaries feel that democratic demands become superceded.

These positions are false; 1) because it is necessary to defend all positions which the masses have gained under capitalism. Democratic rights assist the proletariat to organise itself as a class. Bourgeois repression makes this task harder; 2) because it is the certainty that parliamentarians will seek to divert any struggle to parliamentary channels that compels revolutionaries to give leadership to the struggle for democratic demands, and fight for them with revolutionary means, that is through independent mass action and not through reliance on parliaments and courts of law; 3) because democratic demands can never be superceded as long as capitalism lasts. This is part of the teaching of our theory of Permanent Revolution. Revolutionaries who imagine that democratic demands have been superceded can only be mistaking the consciousness of the few for the needs and the consciousness of the masses.

Not all the time in the World to indulge sectarian politics.

The Leninist line that the fight for democratic demands requires proletarian revolutionary leadership has not gone unchallenged in our movement in recent years. The question was raised at the Ninth World Congress by some of the French comrades in discussing the youth resolution. Some comrades felt that the students had our-grown democratic demands.

In Britain incorrect positions have been advanced by the majority leadership. In the 1971 Conference resolution we read:

"Revolutionaries are duty bound to support all struggles of the masses - despite their limited nature, and reformist or nationalist leaderships. We, therefore, support all democratic and reformist demands providing they have the function of stimulating mass struggle. We will always join such struggles ourselves. We, on the other hand, do not ourselves intervene by advancing a programme of democratic and reformist demands. In whatever field we are operating (as distinct from giving general support from the outside) we struggle for a transitional programme. In the course of doing this we will, naturally, say that we support or even adopt the democratic or reformist demands of others. But these latter demands will not be the kernel of our intervention." ("No, we haven't Got all the Time in the World." page 33.)

Behind the refinements what is being said is this; we support democratic demands from the outside. These demands are the demands of others. We do not raise such demands ourselves. The 'others' who do raise them can only be - 'democrats' and reformists. So the line is; leave the leadership of the movement to the reformists when it is at the stage of democratic and partial demands; meanwhile we'll support the movement from 'outside' (wherever that is.) We'll be along later with transitional demands. There is a division of labour, you see, between us and the reformists.

Here we get to one of the roots of the sectarian politics of the last few years. Leave the reformists to raise in their confused way the democratic rights of the Vietnamese while we do super-revolutionary things. Ditto with Ireland. Wait around till the Labour Party lays the basis for a 'Troops Home' movement. After all we don't raise democratic demands.

This is a **caricature** of Bolshevism. It is in line with the 'vanguard' line of the Document. Our politics have been undermined by this line. Far from winning hegemony in the vanguard, what has really happened is that the various currents in the vanguard are winning hegemony in our own ranks.

.....