

REVISIONIONISTS IN CRISIS



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Earlier this year, there took place the international conference of the so-called 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International'. This body, which claims the name Trotskyist, is in fact a product of groups which have abandoned the programme of Trotskyism and the building of revolutionary parties. Originating from the group following Michel Pablo in the 1953 split in the Fourth International, they have been supported since 1963 by the US Socialist Workers' Party. The documents of the recent conference of this Pabloite tendency are analysed here by Tim Wohlforth, secretary of the Workers League of the United States, which works in solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International.

BY TIM WOHLFORTH

PART THREE:

Internationalism and the

Socialist Workers' Party

ON JANUARY 2, 1961, the Socialist Labour League directed a letter to the National Committee of the Socialist Workers' Party in the United States (SWP). Referring to the Open Letter issued by the SWP in 1953, which led to the formation of the International Committee (IC), and assessing the political evolution of the Pabloites since that date, it proposed a discussion within the IC on the question of Pabloism. There was no ambiguity on where the SLL stood on this question: 'It is time to draw to a close the period in which Pabloite revisionism was regarded as a trend within Trotskyism'.

But the SWP leadership had already made a decision to proceed forthwith with re-unification with what was then called the International Secretariat. This was to be carried through politically on the basis of the common position the

SWP and the Pabloites were taking on the class nature of the Cuban state and a number of related developments particularly in the colonial world.

In fact, central to the SWP's conception of re-unification was that Pabloism and the 1953 split were under no condition to be discussed either among the International Committee supporters or with the Pabloites.

For instance Hansen notes in his 'Report on the World Congress', 'that at the Re-unification Congress we reached an agreement to leave the assessment of the differences of 1953 to a time in the future when we could discuss them in an educational way without any heat.'

For a period of two and a half years, from January 1961 to re-unification in the summer of 1963, the Socialist Labour League and ourselves sought to hold a discussion on the question of Pabloism, the political meaning of the 1953 split, and the evolution of the political formations since that date. We did not object to discussions with the Pabloites, and in fact it was the SLL which proposed a parity committee precisely to discuss questions in dispute. We were not even opposed to a re-unification of forces in principle as long as it was a principled re-unification.

We made absolutely clear our own assessment that re-unification must take place on the basis of the Tran-



James P. Cannon and the SWP followed a conscious policy of not seeking to give political leadership to the Fourth International



The SWP and the Europeans swept the question of China at the reunification congress under the rug only to have it burst forth into the open at the current congress

sitional Programme and that there must be an understanding that Pabloism as a political tendency is a fundamental revision of all the basic tenets of Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism. We stood by the assessment of the 1953 Open Letter:

'To sum up: The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally.' Unification yes, but only on the principled basis of a complete break with revisionism.

Differences

The SWP succeeded in holding off any serious discussion of the question of 1953 and everything that flowed from this at the 1963 Re-unification Congress and at the 1965 congress.

'Now the present congress,' Hansen notes, 'was different. We had some differences.' In fact all the questions submerged for the opportunist purpose of unification have reasserted themselves in a number of forms each in its own way pushing the forces of the United Secretariat towards the very discussion we proposed in 1961-1963.

We have already noted the theoretical and methodological continuity of the cover resolution, which everyone at the recent Pabloite congress supports, 'The New Rise of the World Revolution' with the essential revisions of Trotskyism instituted in 1950-1953 by Pablo. But this continuity has reasserted itself in other ways.

One example is the 'Draft Resolution On Our Tactics In Europe'. This resolution proposed a turn from the deep entrism practices of the European Pabloites in the whole period from 1950, when Pablo proposed it, to the last year or so. But it also contained a positive evaluation of this entrism. This, of course, raised a question which played a critical role in the 1953 split—Pablo's whole liquidationist proposal to dissolve our movement into the Stalinists which was taken up by the Cochran-Clarke opposition inside the SWP and used to justify their own desertion of the party. The document has been held over for further discussion but discussion will have to take place.

Then there is the question of China. Hansen explains how this question was handled in 1963:

'The other thing was that in 1963, certain differences on the question of China had to be considered. We had reached agreement on all other major questions in the world as we saw them at that time, with the exception of China. . . . They did not believe in the necessity of a political revolution. That was the key point, so we had some discussion on that question, and we reached agreement that what we would



Split in bureaucracy between Liu (above) and Mao found reflection in division among Pabloites



do was use a formula that included the substance of calling for a political revolution in China, but without naming it as such. That was the agreement that we reached in 1963.'

Faced with a fundamental difference on the key question of reform or revolution in China—the very question that was at the centre of the dispute in 1953 as it effected Stalinism as a whole—the whole matter was swept under the rug as a 'terminological' affair. All agreed not to use the term 'political revolution', but somehow its content would get through.

Then we come to the current conference and what was under the rug comes out flying all over the room. The SWP agrees to draft a resolution for the conference on the Cultural Revolution. This is sent to Europe where the European leadership 'edits' it. The editing consisted of such matters, as Hansen reports, of changing 'Stalinized Chinese Communist Party' to simply 'Chinese Communist Party'. In the interim the terminological difference of 1963 was cleared up for, as Hansen notes, 'Mao had come out for a political revolution in China'. But the difference in line which so obviously underlay the terminology of 1963 erupted in this form of 'editing'.

At this point the Europeans introduce the edited SWP resolution as the majority resolution and the SWP supporters counterpose the unedited edition as the minority report. But the question was not so simple as that. Peng Shu-tse enters the dispute with another minority report proposing

that the United Secretariat intervene on the side of restorationist Liu Shao-chi. Then in walks 'Comrade Capa of Argentina, who was also for an active policy of intervention in China, but he tended to be for intervention on the side of Mao'. As if things weren't confused enough Ernest Germain proposes to muddy the waters even further stating: 'that the area of agreement between the two documents was much more fundamental than the disagreements; that actually the two documents were almost the same so far as the points of agreement were concerned'.

No wonder one delegate described the discussion as a 'marital dispute between the Europeans and the Americans'. In fact the whole congress was marked by such marital disputes which reflected unclarity as to the causes of the original divorce proceedings.

At the very centre of this dispute was the impact upon the United Secretariat of the bureaucratic fissures within the Stalinist camp. One side tended to move towards Mao and another side towards the Kremlin variety of Stalinism. This in itself is another manifestation of the inability of the United Secretariat to start from the independent perspective of the working class in its struggle against both capitalism and Stalinism and develop a strategy on this basis. But this, in turn, demands a return to an understanding of the original 1953 split.

The spectre of 1953 haunted the proceedings of the congress in an even more fundamental way. The theoretical positions formulated by Pablo in 1950

took organizational forms by 1953 leading to the expulsion of the majority of the French section of the Fourth International, the emergence of the Lawrence faction within the British section which split, only to dissolve into the Communist Party, and the Cochran-Clarke faction within the SWP which utilized the new world reality theses and the entrism 'sui generis' as a cover for a split from the SWP and liquidationism. Now a new liquidationist tendency has grown up around Guevarism in Europe and Latin America. It has found an expression within the SWP through liquidationist tendencies among the youth of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA)—most particularly in the form of black members leaving the YSA for the Black Panthers.

Optimistic

The unmentioned question which lies behind the whole struggle of the SWP at this conference is: 'Are we headed for another 1953? Will it be necessary to issue another Open Letter to protect the SWP from a new form of Cochranism within its ranks? Will we be forced back into a discussion on 1953 in the course of this struggle?'

Hansen states near the end of his report on the congress: 'But it could turn out that the discussion on China and on the question of guerrilla warfare as it develops, the question of party building as it is associated with the problem of entryism, that all of this could turn out to be one of the richest and most educational discussions that the Fourth International and the world Trotskyist movement has had up to this point. That remains to be seen. My feeling is rather optimistic'.

He is optimistic but not totally convinced this is the way things will work out. It 'could' turn out that way but 'that remains to be seen'.

The spectre of 1953 haunts the SWP leadership today. It cannot be erased from their minds. There is the grave danger of history repeating itself, but in a far more disastrous way, for history is never an exact replica of the past. Today the International Committee exists independently of the Pabloites and the SWP. It is growing in strength and theoretical clarity. For the first time in history a Trotskyist daily paper is about to be launched in England. This cannot be ignored. It is an empirical fact—a fact brought into existence precisely through a principled struggle against Pabloite revisionism and pragmatism. The question of 1953 cannot be raised without raising at the same time the principled struggle of the International Committee based on the programme and method of the Transitional Programme.

There are certain central lessons of the 1953 split which must be assimilated by revolutionists today. The origins of the 1953 split must be traced back to the role of the SWP in the Fourth International since the death of Trotsky.

With the passing of the Voorhis Act in 1940 the SWP was barred from membership in the Fourth International by law. Ever since that time the SWP has not been able to be an affiliate of the Fourth International. So today its relationship to the United Secretariat is one of political solidarity just as the Workers' League stands in political solidarity with the International Committee. But this in no sense lessened the political role of the SWP as politically part of the Fourth International. The SWP has always played a very critical role in the development of the Fourth International—in its strength and in its weaknesses. It is with this understanding that we approach this question.

The SWP emerged after Trotsky's death as politically the leading party of the Fourth International. It was the one party with serious experience in the class struggle, in the construction of a serious movement, and a party which had the benefit of the closest political collaboration with Trotsky, particularly in the years from 1937-1940. Therefore the main responsibility for the leadership of the Fourth International fell to the SWP. But it was

precisely this responsibility which the SWP has refused to accept.

Hansen expressed this very clearly in his above quoted 'Report on World Congress':

'One of the things we have always held to—very consciously—was not to assume leadership of the International. We viewed our position, and our role, and our function, even though we were the most powerful sector of the movement for many years, as that of offering support—helping and supporting the key leaders but not substituting for them and not trying to assume leadership.'

With this conception, as soon as the war was over, the SWP gratefully foisted the responsibility of leadership of the world movement on to a group of Europeans—most notably Pablo, Germain and Frank.

This is how Cannon describes the situation in his 'Internationalism and the SWP', a report to the majority caucus during the Cochran fight:

'Our relations with the leadership in Europe at that time were relations of closest collaboration and support. There was general agreement between us. These were unknown men in our party. Nobody ever heard of them. We helped to publicize the individual leaders, we commended them to our party members, and helped build up their prestige.'

And so the SWP turned over responsibility for international leadership to these inexperienced and 'unknown men' and happily proceeded to concern itself primarily with American affairs. Of course the support the SWP offered was material, real, highly important. Its collaboration was of critical importance in the development of many of the sections—particularly the British. But this was not the same thing as leadership.

This refusal to assume leadership flowed from the very conception of internationalism developed by Cannon and the SWP. This is the way Cannon states it in this same speech:

'We don't consider ourselves to be an American branch office of an international business firm that receives orders from the boss. That's not for us. That's what we got in the Comintern. That's what we wouldn't take. And that's why we got thrown out. We conceive of internationalism as **international collaboration**, in the process of which we get the benefit of the opinions of international comrades, and they get the benefit of ours; and by comradely discussion and collaboration we work out, if possible, a common line.'

The same essential position was reiterated in the 1962 SWP resolution 'The Problems of the Fourth International—and the Next Steps':

'In our opinion internationalism is **essentially** a process of comradely discussion and collaboration in which the constituent sections of the world movement exchange views and jointly work out, if possible, common positions on the most vital problems of world politics.'

With such a perspective the question of leadership of the world movement loses its vital importance. Each party carries out its own tasks as it sees fit, collaborates with other parties on its own terms, and 'if possible' works out a joint line for the international movement. The national party emerges as the central thing, the international merely a clearing house for collaboration, a source for nice manifestos.

This conception of internationalism has as little in common with that of Lenin and Trotsky as do Stalin's dictatorial policies of transforming the Communist International into a docile adjunct of the Soviet Union's Foreign Office. For Cannon, as he does throughout this speech to the majority caucus, to equate the Comintern of Lenin and Trotsky with that of Stalin under the general heading 'Cominternism' is revealing in itself.

International

Lenin's and Trotsky's conception of internationalism flowed first of all from Marx's understanding of the international character of capitalist relations. It is this which creates the working class as an international entity which must develop an international programme and strategy in order to carry forward the revolution in any particular country. The international party is but the necessary organizational expression of this international programme and strategy. To see this international party as but a collection of individual national organizations which collaborate where possible and work out common positions where possible is a reflection of a view which sees the working class in national and not international terms.

The development of the national party with serious roots within the working class of a particular country is possible only if that party starts at all times from the international party, from its programme and strategy and takes as its major responsibility the development of that programme and strategy. Such a party must, of course, develop that strategy under the particular historical and economic conditions prevalent in the particular country, but this is only possible if the party begins first of all with the international perspective and actually deepens that international perspective through the process of concretizing it within the particular country. So it was

with Lenin and the Bolshevik party. But not with Cannon and the SWP.

And so the SWP placed the international movement in 'unknown hands', offered its support, printed the manifestos, but carried out its work within the United States with its own pragmatic methods and moods. Thus in 1947 Cannon developed his famous 'Theses on the American Revolution'. Reacting to the post-war strike wave, he projected a coming American revolution, despite the fact that world capitalism was entering a new and sustained period of economic boom.

He noted the effects of this new turn in Europe, but maintained that despite the impossibility of revolution in Europe at that time, the American revolution could proceed on its own. This was a form of reverse American exceptionalism which reflected that Cannon had learned nothing from Trotsky on the inter-relationship of the American and European revolutionary developments. The result was the party was completely unprepared for the McCarthy era and as a result the Cochran faction was able to utilize this demoralization and disorientation to carry out its liquidationist aims.

In 1950, when Pablo's revisionism had become so blatant as to raise serious questions in the minds of the SWP leadership and ranks, the SWP leadership consciously pulled back from any real confrontation with Pablo, hoping to avoid as long as possible a struggle which would require the SWP to assume international leadership. Again we refer to Cannon's speech of 1953:

'When Pablo wrote his article about "centuries of degenerated workers' states," we again had the most violent disagreement. We said, "What in the world is he talking about—'centuries of degenerated workers' states'?" In a world where capitalism is collapsing, and revolution is on the order of the day and revolution is going to be victorious—is it going to take centuries to liquidate the bureaucratic excrescences?

'I told Comrade Stein that I was going to have to write against that, that I didn't believe in that at all. But he said, "If you write against that you will strike at Pablo's prestige and you will make his position impossible. If it appears in the International that Cannon is attacking Pablo, the whole alliance will appear to be broken. The thing is so fragile that you just can't do that".'

And so they didn't. They avoided the political struggle, avoided the responsibilities for leadership such a struggle would entail, and built Pablo's prestige for three more years.

By 1952 Pablo was utilizing this prestige in a knock-down fight within the French section seeking to get it to liquidate 'sui generis' into the Stalinist



Ernest Mandel-Germain was one of the "unknown men" Cannon turned international over to after the war

movement seeing this movement being transformed under conditions of 'war-revolution' into a revolutionary force. He finally carried out his political line with an organizational move and expelled the majority of the French section.

The French comrades sent an appeal to Cannon and this is how Cannon explained his reaction:

'As the situation developed further, Renard, one of the French majority, appealed to me in a letter. I didn't answer him for months. I didn't see how I could write on the French question without referring to this organizational monstrosity that had been committed by the IS. I finally wrote my answer to him out of purely political considerations, and didn't mention the organizational violation at all. He had raised it in the letter, and I think that's the first time I ever answered a political letter and just pretended I hadn't read certain sections—those sections where he complained about the organizational violations.'

So Pablo's prestige was preserved for a little while longer, even at the cost of what was close to the destruction of our section in France.

Meanwhile a raging faction fight broke out within the SWP led by Cochran and Clarke. They based themselves on the liquidationist positions taken by the Third World Congress (1951). Cannon and the majority answered them by claiming that the decisions of the Third Congress did not apply to the United States as there did not exist any mass Stalinist or social-democratic party in this country. Liquidationism was all right for Europe but it was not to be imported into the United States.

Situation turns

Cannon's speech to the Majority Caucus on May 18, 1953, marked a turn in the situation.

'We have heard,' states the very first sentence, 'that the Cochranites are claiming in the party that they have the support of what they call "the international movement".' And the speech concludes: 'We hope to have the sympathy and support of the whole international movement. But if we don't have the sympathy and support of one individual here or there, or one group or another, that doesn't mean we will give up our opinions and quit the fight. Not for one moment. That only means that the fight in the SWP becomes transferred to the international field. Then we take the field, and look for allies to fight on our side against anyone foolish enough to fight on the side of Cochran.'

But still Cannon did his best to hold off an international struggle.

'We hope to avoid such a fight. We are not looking for it. We have no



Lenin addresses the Third Congress of the Third International. Lenin like Trotsky conceived of the international movement as a world party based on a common strategy, not collaboration where possible in the spirit of Cannon

tangible evidence to prove that there is any conspiracy against us, or any actions against us, on the international field. But if a fight should come, we will be prepared for it. That is the way we size this thing up.'

But there was a conspiracy, if one wishes to call it that. Pablo lined up with Cochran. And so the unavoidable international fight was on—and it was a quicky. In November 1953 the SWP printed its 'Open Letter' to Trotskyists throughout the world proclaiming a complete and uncompromising break with Pabloism and urging all Trotskyists to join with it in this struggle. The British and French groups responded and the International Committee came into being.

The SWP now faced the responsibility of taking the international leadership it had dumped in Pablo's lap after the war. But leadership, as Hansen puts it, is something which the SWP consciously seeks to avoid. And so, after a brief spate of articles in the 'Militant', the whole international question was filed in a drawer at 116 University Place, the British and French left as much as possible to their own devices and the political and theoretical struggle with Pabloism avoided.

The SWP, because it refused to function even under these new conditions from an international perspective, never really understood Pabloism. It fought Pablo's revisions with orthodoxy. Perhaps the finest expression of this orthodoxy was its 1953 resolution 'Against Pabloist Revisionism'.

Answering Pablo's theory of a new world reality based on the concept that the world relationship of forces had changed in favour of socialism—a concept which we noted in both the 1961 SWP international resolution and in the current 1969 resolution—the document stated:

'A rounded review and realistic résumé of the net result of the march of the international revolution from 1943 to 1953 leads to this conclusion.

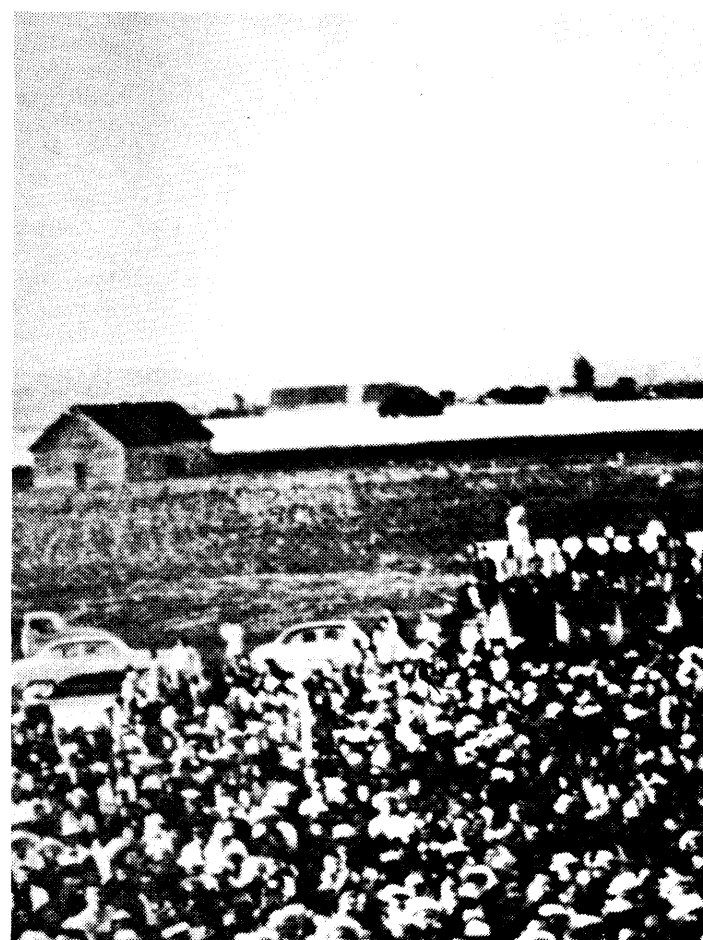
With all its achievements and greater potentialities, the failure of the revolution to conquer in one of the major industrialized countries has thus far prevented the revolutionary forces of the working class from growing strong enough to overwhelm the Kremlin oligarchy and give irresistible impetus to the disintegration of Stalinism. There has not yet been such a qualitative alteration in the world relationship of class forces.'

Since the SWP never probed the question of Pabloism to its methodological roots, Pabloist methods of thought were able to reassert themselves within the SWP under the empirical impact of new events. So, in 1961, reacting to Cuban developments, being pressed by the SLL for a real discussion of and real struggle with Pabloism, the SWP began to retreat back into the Pabloite camp. And retreat it was—retreat from a discussion which would have required of it an internal and external struggle for Marxism, a break with decades of pragmatism and purely American functioning, the assuming for the first time of an international strategy and real international leadership.

Honeymoon over

Well, some people never seem to learn. The honeymoon is now over. The cold water of the deepening international crisis is forcing upon the ranks of the United Secretariat a serious discussion of the very fundamentals of the movement. Some within the United Secretariat have actually developed the audacity to judge the SWP's functioning within its own precious sphere of American work. It seems that some at the congress were saying, according to Hansen, 'that if any conclusion was to be drawn it was that we were under the influence of the peace movement in the United States and that we were continuing in the tradition of "com-

*The Cuban 'miracle'
is over.
Fundamental problems
still face workers there,
but Castro (right) has
no program for them or
the workers and peasants
of Latin America.*



mentary' politics; that we comment and do not engage in action'. The majority at the congress voted the SWP down on the Latin American question and the Chinese question, and evinced such opposition to its resolution on youth radicalization that a vote on it had to be postponed to the future.

The question is now posed with all its sharpness and urgency before the membership of the SWP and YSA. They can allow their movement to continue as it has in the past, seeking to duck any real struggle for clarity internationally or within the SWP, and preparing to

break off all international political connections if it is impossible to so duck the issues, retreating this time completely into American national affairs without any cover at all.

Or the SWP ranks can insist on a serious discussion which delves the very depths of all questions from the point of view of the Marxist method and to their historical roots in the 1953 split and what preceded it.

The latter road leads in the direction which the International Committee has pioneered since 1963, the direction of

PART FOUR: Trotskyism and the Cuba question

WE must return to a thorough discussion of Cuba, which played such a central role in the 1963 reunification and today has become the central question which divides the United Secretariat supporters. First we must be absolutely clear that the position of guerrilla warfare which the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) now opposes is a position of which the SWP was the main propagator for a whole number of years beginning with 1961.

It was only an empirical reaction to the defeat of Guevara in Bolivia and the outbreak of struggle in the advanced countries which led the SWP to its present critical position on Guevarism. It neither predicted and prepared for the outbreak of revolution in May-June France nor warned and fought against guerrilla warfare in the period which preceded the defeat in Bolivia.

It was only the International Committee which upheld during this whole period the perspective of revolution in the advanced countries and exposed the dangerous character of rural guerrilla schemes in Latin America.

For instance the resolution around which the SWP carried through reunification in 1963 ('For Early Reunification of the World Trotskyist Move-

ment') had this paragraph of guerrilla warfare in it:

'Along the road of a revolution beginning with simple democratic demands and ending in the rupture of capitalist property relations, guerrilla warfare conducted by landless peasants and semi-proletarian forces, under a leadership that becomes committed to carrying the revolution through to a conclusion, can play a decisive role in undermining and precipitating the downfall of a colonial or semi-colonial power. This is one of the main lessons to be drawn from experience since the Second World War. It must be consciously incorporated into the strategy of building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.' So read point 13 of the 16 points around which reunification took place.

Much the same can be said for the accusation that the Latin American sections of the United Secretariat are today seeking to dissolve themselves into the Organization of Latin American States (OLAS) and the Castroite forces in Latin America. It is this policy which the SWP itself advocated in its resolution 'The Problems of the Fourth International—And the Next Steps':

'... We believe the Trotskyists of Cuba should seek to enter and take their place in the soon-to-be-formed unified revolutionary party where they can work loyally, patiently and confidently for the implementation of the fully revolutionary socialist programme which they represent. In addition to mobilizing support for the Cuban cause, as they are doing, the Trotsky-

ists throughout Latin America should try to bring together all those forces, regardless of their specific origins, which are ready to take the Cuban experience as the point of departure for the revolutionary struggle in their own countries.'

These liquidationist policies flowed quite logically from the characterization of the class nature of the Cuban state and of the Cuban government. If Cuba was, as the SWP's original Draft Theses maintained, 'a workers' state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule', it would therefore seem to follow that a petty-bourgeois grouping engaged in guerrilla warfare could create a workers' state. Thus an orientation towards and liquidation into such formations is perfectly logical. All this business about 'blunted instruments' and what it means in liquidating the conscious struggle for Marxist theory and the party then follows.

So far the SWP has not probed this root question, reacting as empirically to the failures of guerrilla warfare as it did originally to what it interpreted as its success. But the discussion must go beyond this level; it must return to an objective analysis of the origins and nature of the Castro regime and the Cuban state from the point of view of the Marxist method. Again and again we see every question must be probed to its roots.

The position the SWP took on Cuba is expressed in summary in their 1962 resolution:

'Facts, however, are stubborn things. It is a fact that capitalism was eliminated in 1960 and no longer constitutes the basis of Cuban social and economic life—and this overturn was directed by a leadership which did not explicitly call itself Marxist, until a year and a half after the overthrow of capitalism and does not avow Trotskyism to this day. As the precedents of the Soviet Union under Stalinism and then of Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China demonstrate, Cuba could not logically be defined as anything but a workers'

state, even if its political structure was not democratic and its leadership was non-Marxist.

'But the SLL comrades,' the resolution continues, 'do not want to admit even this much. They correctly view the deformed states in Eastern Europe dominated by the Kremlin as non-capitalist, but they refuse to grant that status to the uncorrupted workers' regime in Cuba. They set aside the traditional Marxist standards for determining the character of a workers' state and advance instead purely political criteria. They so exaggerate the importance of the subjective factor that they lose sight of the fundamental changes in the basic property relations.'

Facts, as we have noted earlier, stubborn or not, are transitory, changing things. It is one thing to 'recognize' them and it is quite another to understand them. For the former the empirical method suffices, but for the latter dialectics is essential to get at the underlying processes of change which produce the momentary appearances.

The SWP's theoretical approach to Cuba consists essentially of two methods used in combination and in this it reflects the methodological approach of bourgeois social science. First is empiricism. The facts are noted, collected. As Hansen put it in his speech to the 1961 SWP Plenum on Cuba:

'Now the conclusions that we have reached are not speculations, they're not projections, are not based on any political confidence in what the regime down there is going to do. Our characterizations simply reflect the facts, just the facts. The fact that the capitalists have been expropriated in Cuba. The fact that a planned economy has been started there. The fact that a qualitatively different kind of state exists there. No matter what you call these things, they are the facts that everyone has to start with.'

But the SWP does not stop with these 'facts' alone—and obviously much of the above that Hansen calls a fact is actually a conclusion he draws from certain empirical data. These facts are then interpreted on the basis



the international proletarian revolution.

The former road leads the movement into the arms of the American bourgeoisie. That is the logic of pragmatism, of nationalism. The International Committee will assist this process of clarification in every way it can, for much depends on it.

There is no longer room in the middle ground. The international crisis is upon us. Each political organization is tested daily, hourly. The tasks before us are tremendous, the potential fantastic. We have entered the era of the

European Revolution and the American evolution is fast at Europe's heels.

What Trotsky fought so hard for under such difficult conditions is now coming into life, into the reality of the mass movement of workers in all lands. There is no greater task nor more rewarding one than to take up NOW the struggle for the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International with its central task of building the Fourth International into the leadership of the workers of all countries.

of certain 'precedents'—the degeneration of the October Revolution and the establishment of workers' states after the Second World War in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China. From these precedents the SWP is able to develop a formula useful for labelling the facts it has gathered on Cuba.

Because all these states are workers' states, but in none of them do workers democratically rule, the SWP is able to remove from its definition of 'workers' state' the question of the nature of the regime. Because in some of these states—particularly Yugoslavia and China—the workers' state was established under the leadership of a Stalinized party we can remove from our consideration of Cuba the question of the nature of the leadership which came to power in Cuba. Thus we have a precedent for the formula that 'blunted instruments' can bring the workers to power under certain circumstances.

Formula

With these precedents utilized to remove from consideration all questions of leadership, consciousness and even what class carries through the revolutionary overturn, we are left with a very simple distilled formula: a workers' state equals a country where the basic means of production have been expropriated by the state, some form of overall state planning exists and the state also maintains a monopoly over foreign trade.

Suddenly theoretical work becomes simplicity itself. We have the facts at our disposal and we have a ready-made label with a simple, clear definition. The facts of Cuba fit the definition and therefore Cuba is a workers' state.

It is the syllogism of formal logic in all its beauty. The law of identity: $A = A$. The definition matches the facts. It is all so simple and clear that Hansen cannot understand how anybody could possibly object to it.

What we actually have here is an empirical gathering of facts which are

then matched to a metaphysical notion—the definition of a workers' state—abstracted out of the concrete development of history. Methodologically the SWP combines the worst features of empiricism with the worst features of metaphysics, which the empiricists sought to fight. To give pragmatism its credit, its one virtue was its war against superimposing on factual reality preconceived schemata—the old method of seeking to order and explain empirical development by imposing upon it fixed notions from one's head. Of course the pragmatist's notion that somehow theoretical understanding would emerge from out of the immediate appearance under study was just as blind.

Dialectics, as Lenin particularly emphasized over and over again, is always historically concrete and has nothing in common with schematism. We do not abstract from out of the development of workers' states in the post-war period certain formal criteria for labelling workers' states. Rather we seek to understand this development in all its complexity, rooting it in the historical circumstances of the time, the relationship of class forces, and particularly the inter-relationship between imperialists and the Soviet Union at the time.

If we do this we see that imperialism was forced to make a deal with the Soviet Union following the Second World War precisely in order to rebuild capitalism in the main industrial countries, laying the basis for the post-war boom which had such a reactionary impact on the class struggle in the advanced capitalist countries for so long. Unable to simultaneously wrest control of Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union and stabilize the political situation in Western Europe and America and other parts of the world, it was forced to grant Soviet hegemony in this region in return for Soviet aid in holding down the working class in imperialist-dominated regions. In time the Soviet Union was forced to carry through in a bureaucratic way social transformations in this region to secure

it at least temporarily as a buffer against the imperialists.

China fits into this picture—but not in a completely identical way. Here the internal factors of capitalist decay, in the face of a massive peasant-based army led by the Chinese Communist Party, placed both the Kremlin and the United States in a very difficult situation. Despite the wishes of both powers, Chiang Kai-shek could not stand on his own either ruling the country in his own right and certainly not as part of a coalition government with the CCP.

The choice before the United States was either to intervene in the civil war on the scale it presently has intervened in Vietnam—except multiplied to the figure of millions of American troops—or write off China to Mao. It was the latter course that the United States followed. And Stalin made the best of it after first pursuing the Utopian aim of a coalition government with tottering Chiang.

There are many lessons to be learned from this whole historical experience but they are mainly lessons rooted in a particular concrete context—a context which has long since changed. First and foremost is that the expansion of Stalinism into the Western and Eastern buffers of the Soviet Union in no way resolved the crisis of Stalinism, but as is now clear deepened this crisis (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Sino-Soviet split, etc.).

Secondly, these concessions, while detrimental to imperialism, made it possible for imperialism to strengthen itself in its main industrial bases thus presenting the working class with a very powerful, well-equipped enemy. The conclusion to be drawn from this whole experience, rather than all this impressionism about 'blunted instruments', is quite the opposite. The absolute necessity for the creation of the sharp instrument of the Bolshevik-Leninist party in every country of the world is a pre-condition for revolutionary advance in these countries.

The Cuban Revolution took place within a very different historical framework and was part of a different international process, representing different class forces. The very uneven development of world capitalism meant, that while as a whole capitalism in the 1950s went through a period of boom and expansion, this expansion effected only partially a very slim layer of the colonial peoples. The bulk of the peasantry found its conditions of existence deteriorating further as the advanced countries built their boom in part on the draining of the colonial countries—particularly in the form of a declining world market price for agricultural products.

The national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie were also placed in an impossible bind as in these countries what limited economic development that can take place is dependent on small surpluses of income from the sale of raw materials to the advanced countries. This set the stage for the profound upheavals in the colonial countries throughout this whole period which the Pabloites impressionistically reacted to. It also gave these upheavals a particular social character which in the end led to their general defeat.

Just as the proletariat in the advanced countries, while continuing to struggle, struggled on a much lower level than they do today and in a way which did not fundamentally challenge the political and social stability of these countries, so too, to a somewhat lesser extent, it was with the proletariat in the colonial countries. This left the stage to the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois nationalists and the peasantry. But these forces on their own, without the leadership of the proletariat in the backward and advanced countries, cannot make the fundamental break with capitalism necessary for the carrying through of the democratic revolution in these countries by going over to the socialist revolution.

These petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces were, however, capable of a number of very radical statist steps aimed at the very weak national bourgeoisie of these countries seeking to

substitute the functioning of the state for the absolute bankruptcy of the national bourgeoisie. In fact, to the extent that governments were able to function with even a limited Bonapartist immediate independence of the national bourgeoisie, they tended to act in the long terms of capital development against the immediate interests of these national bourgeois forces. Thus nationalizations took place in Burma, Ghana, Guinea, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Bolivia, Cuba, more recently in Peru and Chile.

Statism

First it should be pointed out that this statism has nothing in common with the state capitalism which Marx projected as a theoretical possibility, but a political and social impossibility. When Marx talked of this possibility, he projected it as the logical outcome of advanced capitalism with its tendency towards ever increasing monopolization. He also pointed out that the very same tendency produced greater and greater concentration of the proletariat and even if such a state were to emerge it would be so vulnerable to expropriation by the working class as to have only a momentary existence.

The statism we are talking about is a reaction to the extreme weaknesses of capitalism within the colonial backward countries. To apply the state capitalist term to this development is but another manifestation of the ahistorical schematic method we are fighting which shows the methodological identity between the state capitalists and the Pabloites.

In what fundamental way was the development of the Cuban Revolution qualitatively different from the statist processes in these other countries? In only one essential way, and as we shall see this was not a qualitative distinction—in its empirical turn to and support received from the Soviet Union.

Castro's move against American holdings in sugar was the critical step. Of course in itself the move was no more radical than the Mexican nationalization of oil, the Bolivian nationalization of tin, and the recent Peruvian nationalizations of oil and take-over of much of the land. What was different was that when the United States reacted to these moves by cutting off the sugar quota and refusing to grant any aid or credits to the impoverished Castro regime, Castro turned to the Soviet Union and received support. Then followed a series of swift back-and-forth retaliation moves which ended up with virtually all capitalist holdings in Cuba in the hands of the state and Cuba dependent on the Soviet countries both for aid and as an important market for its sugar.

So what actually emerged was a pragmatic bloc between the Castro petty-bourgeois nationalist regime and the workers' states at the expense of the United States. This raises several questions. First, did this bloc lead to the kind of internal transformations which took place in Eastern Europe and China? If we look at the question seriously and concretely and not superficially as does the SWP, we will immediately see a critically important class distinction between the Castro government and these other governments.

Purges

A deformed or degenerated workers' state is still a workers' state. The very process of expropriation of capital in these countries was accompanied by a process of the creation of this workers' bureaucracy through the taking over of the government by a workers' party, the Communist Party, and the purging of the government of all forces unreliable to the tasks this party had to carry out—some positive social tasks as well as reactionary tasks.

The Castro government is in no sense a workers' bureaucracy. In fact Castro has carried out a series of purges against even Stalinist elements within



The Cuban 'miracle' is over. Fundamental problems still face workers there, but Castro (right) has no program for them or the workers and peasants of Latin America.

mentary" politics; that we comment and do not engage in action'. The majority at the congress voted the SWP down on the Latin American question and the Chinese question, and evinced such opposition to its resolution on youth radicalization that a vote on it had to be postponed to the future.

The question is now posed with all its sharpness and urgency before the membership of the SWP and YSA. They can allow their movement to continue as it has in the past, seeking to duck any real struggle for clarity internationally or within the SWP, and preparing to

break off all international political connections if it is impossible to so duck the issues, retreating this time completely into American national affairs without any cover at all.

Or the SWP ranks can insist on a serious discussion which delves the very depths of all questions from the point of view of the Marxist method and to their historical roots in the 1953 split and what preceded it.

The latter road leads in the direction which the International Committee has pioneered since 1963, the direction of

the international proletarian revolution.

The former road leads the movement into the arms of the American bourgeoisie. That is the logic of pragmatism, of nationalism. The International Committee will assist this process of clarification in every way it can, for much depends on it.

There is no longer room in the middle ground. The international crisis is upon us. Each political organization is tested daily, hourly. The tasks before us are tremendous, the potential fantastic. We have entered the era of the

European Revolution and the American evolution is fast at Europe's heels.

What Trotsky fought so hard for under such difficult conditions is now coming into life, into the reality of the mass movement of workers in all lands. There is no greater task nor more rewarding one than to take up NOW the struggle for the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International with its central task of building the Fourth International into the leadership of the workers of all countries.

ists throughout Latin America should try to bring together all those forces, regardless of their specific origins, which are ready to take the Cuban experience as the point of departure for the revolutionary struggle in their own countries.'

These liquidationist policies flowed quite logically from the characterization of the class nature of the Cuban state and of the Cuban government. If Cuba was, as the SWP's original Draft Theses maintained, 'a workers' state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule', it would therefore seem to follow that a petty-bourgeois grouping engaged in guerrilla warfare could create a workers' state. Thus an orientation towards and liquidation into such formations is perfectly logical. All this business about 'blunted instruments' and what it means in liquidating the conscious struggle for Marxist theory and the party then follows.

So far the SWP has not probed this root question, reacting as empirically to the failures of guerrilla warfare as it did originally to what it interpreted as its success. But the discussion must go beyond this level; it must return to an objective analysis of the origins and nature of the Castro regime and the Cuban state from the point of view of the Marxist method. Again and again we see every question must be probed to its roots.

The position the SWP took on Cuba is expressed in summary in their 1962 resolution:

'Facts, however, are stubborn things. It is a fact that capitalism was eliminated in 1960 and no longer constitutes the basis of Cuban social and economic life—and this overturn was directed by a leadership which did not explicitly call itself Marxist until a year and a half after the overthrow of capitalism and does not avow Trotskyism to this day. As the precedents of the Soviet Union under Stalinism and then of Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China demonstrate, Cuba could not logically be defined as anything but a workers'

state, even if its political structure was not democratic and its leadership was non-Marxist.

'But the SLL comrades,' the resolution continues, 'do not want to admit even this much. They correctly view the deformed states in Eastern Europe dominated by the Kremlin as non-capitalist, but they refuse to grant that status to the uncorrupted workers' regime in Cuba. They set aside the traditional Marxist standards for determining the character of a workers' state and advance instead purely political criteria. They so exaggerate the importance of the subjective factor that they lose sight of the fundamental changes in the basic property relations.'

Facts, as we have noted earlier, stubborn or not, are transitory, changing things. It is one thing to 'recognize' them and it is quite another to understand them. For the former the empirical method suffices, but for the latter dialectics is essential to get at the underlying processes of change which produce the momentary appearances.

The SWP's theoretical approach to Cuba consists essentially of two methods used in combination and in this it reflects the methodological approach of bourgeois social science. First is empiricism. The facts are noted, collected. As Hansen put it in his speech to the 1961 SWP Plenum on Cuba:

'Now the conclusions that we have reached are not speculations, they're not projections, are not based on any political confidence in what the regime down there is going to do. Our characterizations simply reflect the facts, just the facts. The fact that the capitalists have been expropriated in Cuba. The fact that a planned economy has been started there. The fact that a qualitatively different kind of state exists there. No matter what you call these things, they are the facts that everyone has to start with.'

But the SWP does not stop with these 'facts' alone—and obviously much of the above that Hansen calls a fact is actually a conclusion he draws from certain empirical data. These facts are then interpreted on the basis

of certain 'precedents'—the degeneration of the October Revolution and the establishment of workers' states after the Second World War in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China. From these precedents the SWP is able to develop a formula useful for labelling the facts it has gathered on Cuba.

Because all these states are workers' states, but in none of them do workers democratically rule, the SWP is able to remove from its definition of 'workers' state' the question of the nature of the regime. Because in some of these states—particularly Yugoslavia and China—the workers' state was established under the leadership of a Stalinized party we can remove from our consideration of Cuba the question of the nature of the leadership which came to power in Cuba. Thus we have a precedent for the formula that 'blunted instruments' can bring the workers to power under certain circumstances.

Formula

With these precedents utilized to remove from consideration all questions of leadership, consciousness and even what class carries through the revolutionary overturn, we are left with a very simple distilled formula: a workers' state equals a country where the basic means of production have been expropriated by the state, some form of overall state planning exists and the state also maintains a monopoly over foreign trade.

Suddenly theoretical work becomes simplicity itself. We have the facts at our disposal and we have a ready-made label with a simple, clear definition. The facts of Cuba fit the definition and therefore Cuba is a workers' state.

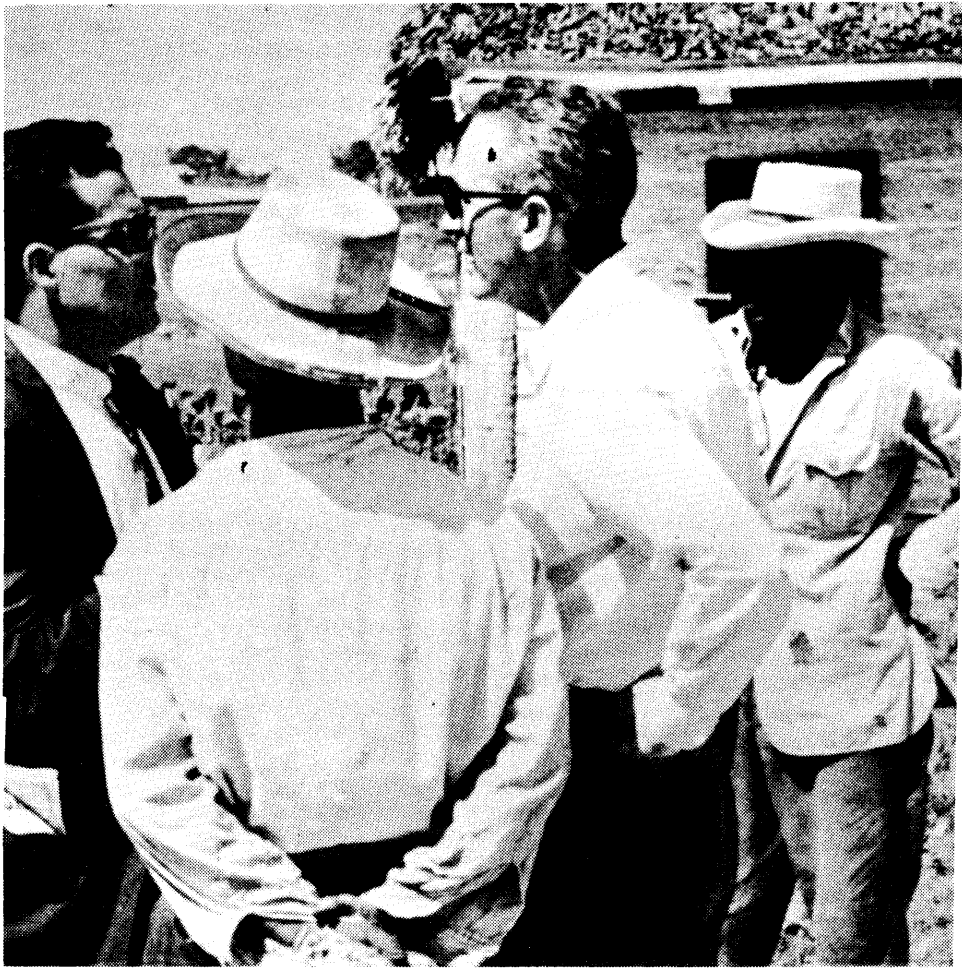
It is the syllogism of formal logic in all its beauty. The law of identity: $A = A$. The definition matches the facts. It is all so simple and clear that Hansen cannot understand how anybody could possibly object to it.

What we actually have here is an empirical gathering of facts which are

then matched to a metaphysical notion—the definition of a workers' state—abstracted out of the concrete development of history. Methodologically the SWP combines the worst features of empiricism with the worst features of metaphysics, which the empiricists sought to fight. To give pragmatism its credit, its one virtue was its war against superimposing on factual reality pre-conceived schemata—the old method of seeking to order and explain empirical development by imposing upon it fixed notions from one's head. Of course the pragmatist's notion that somehow theoretical understanding would emerge from out of the immediate appearance under study was just as blind.

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Farrell Dobbs (second from right) tours Cuba during period when the SWP uncritically supported the Castro leadership and urged the same liquidationist policies it now opposes

his government—as illustrated by the two Escalante affairs—and maintains complete control in the hands of the petty-bourgeois nationalist forces who came to power with him. In Cuba, and only in Cuba, the nationalizations were not accompanied by the emergence of a government controlled by the Stalinists. Instead we have to this day, as we had in 1961, a pragmatic bloc between a petty-bourgeois national formation at home and the Soviet Union abroad.

Secondly what remains a mystery to the Pabloites now becomes crystal clear. Why is it that for ten years following the Cuban Revolution 'no new workers' state has been established? It is clear that the extremely radical 'statist' direction of Cuba was only possible because of the support the Soviet Union gave to Cuba. If the Kremlin bureaucracy decides not to give such support, then this kind of development under this kind of leadership is impossible. But the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union is a counter-revolutionary force. Thus the 'Cuban road to revolution' is actually dependent on the goodwill of counter-revolutionaries.

Is it thus so surprising that the Soviet Union today does not consider it in her interests to involve herself in any more highly expensive Cuban 'experiment'? The Soviet Union leadership has also learned some lessons from Cuba. While undoubtedly it first viewed Cuba as just one more left-nationalist regime which could be bought off, perhaps to play a certain neutralist role, it has ended up having to assume a tremendous financial burden at a time when all its resources are stretched to the limit and now has a sore point which must be regulated for its strategy of working with the American imperialists.

The task of the socialist revolution in a backward country is to carry through the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution by proletarian methods, going over to socialist measures. This requires first of all industrialization and the raising of the productivity of labour together with an international revolutionary strategy. While the deformed workers' states have not as yet been able to raise the level of their economies to that of the advanced capitalist nations, and will not be able to do so as long as they remain under bureaucratic rule, it is a tribute to the class nature of these states that they have made definite economic development. Trotskyists note this progress as a tribute to the power of socialist property relations

and not to any ability of the bureaucracy.

The central economic task in Cuba is to free that country from its dependence on the one export crop of sugar and developing a more balanced economy through an industrialization programme. Such economic plans require the political power of the working class in Cuba, orientated towards an international revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Castro has openly abandoned even an attempt at this, placing even greater emphasis on the sugar crop than did Batista. The result is that the living standards of the Cuban people, to the extent they are not subsidized by the Soviet Union, are completely dependent upon the world price of sugar. This alone shows the dependence of Cuba on world capitalism, a problem qualitatively different from those facing the deformed workers' states, and illustrating once again that the petty-bourgeois nationalists, statism or no, Soviet aid or no, are unable to carry forward the bourgeois democratic revolution. To call Cuba a workers' state is to make a travesty of what we are fighting for—socialism itself.

Extreme crisis

When we understand Cuba in this scientific way, then we see Castro's policies and his failures as an expression of the class nature of his regime and state—not as a series of inconsistencies in the class nature of this state and regime.

Castro has followed a consistent line of opposition to the working class. He jailed Escalante as an agent of the Soviet Union, a workers' state, and because he advocated material incentives for the working class—and thus was even in a Stalinist way a reflection of the working class. But he was more than happy to support the Soviet Union when it meant imposing its will on the workers of Czechoslovakia and when the Czech example could be used to intimidate any oppositional elements in Cuba which could become vehicles for working-class struggle against his regime. Recently he has been cracking down on the Black Panthers. Even such a tendency as the Panthers displays an independence of the Cuban regime and thus is dangerous to Castro.

He ignored May-June in France, ignored the Mexican student rebellions and even complimented the 'progressive' character of the Mexican government following its bloody repression of the students. He utilizes guerrilla warfare as a pressure upon the governments of Latin America which refuse to recognize him—supporting it against his enemies, opposing it against his friends. He was more than happy to

block with the Stalinists at the Tri-Continental Congress against Trotskyism, only to suppress Stalinists within Cuba if he fears they in any way reflect the working class.

Today Castro faces his most extreme crisis. His sugar policy has collapsed around him with the smallest production in a number of years. As a result he has limited international reserves and is under the greatest pressure to ship almost all his sugar to meet contract terms with the Soviet countries. He is applying the greatest pressure on the Cuban working class, seeking to raise productivity without giving the workers anything in return—not to mention his use of unpaid labour in evenings and weekends for the sugar harvest. Resistance is growing within the Cuban working class to Castro. His international policies are completely bankrupt, especially following the Guevara adventure.

We cannot predict exactly what will happen next in Cuba, but the situation is becoming remarkably similar to that which preceded the fall of Ben Bella. Whether Castro will fall to the military or to other forces in his government, or make a deal on his own with the Americans, or limp on for a little longer, cannot be predicted.

But the Cuban 'miracle' is over. The fundamental problems facing the workers in Cuba remain. And Castro has no programme at all for the workers in Latin America or the world.

This task now falls to the Fourth International. We can carry out this task only if we completely destroy any remaining illusions about Castro, his real policies, the class nature of his regime and state.

It is the accumulation of these material, class contradictions in Cuba and on a world scale that is shaking the foundations of the so-called 'reunification' of the revisionists in 1963. Their haste to run behind Castro in 1961-1963 completed their rejection of the Marxist method. Its consequences are liquidation of even the semblance of independent programme and organization.

The Socialist Workers' Party refused in 1961-1963 to face up to the liquidationist character of their new allies in the Pabloite grouping. Now they face the choice of either being completely destroyed by this pragmatic alliance, or making one last effort to 'return to the road of Trotskyism'.

It is this great historical dilemma which provides the fuel for the crisis which has hit the revisionists. It gives the opportunity for the best elements in the SWP and sections of the United Secretariat to now insist on the discussion which was rejected in 1963 and to grasp the significance of the fight carried out by the International Committee.

Dear Comrades,

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Trotskyist movement in the United States, the Plenum of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party sends its revolutionary socialist greetings to orthodox Trotskyists throughout the world.

Although the Socialist Workers Party, because of undemocratic laws passed by the Democrats and the Republicans, is no longer affiliated to the Fourth International—the World Party of Socialist Revolution founded by Leon Trotsky to carry on and fulfil the programme betrayed by the Second International of the Social Democrats and the Third International of the Stalinists—we take interest in the welfare of the world-wide organization created under the guidance of our martyred leader.

As is well known, the pioneer American Trotskyists 25 years ago brought the programme of Trotsky, suppressed by the Kremlin, to the attention of world public opinion. This act proved decisive in breaching the isolation imposed by the Stalinist bureaucracy on Trotsky and in laying the foundation for the Fourth International. With his exile shortly thereafter, Trotsky began an intimate and trusted collaboration with the leadership of the SWP that lasted to the day of his death.

The collaboration included joint efforts to organize revolutionary socialist parties in a number of countries. This culminated, as you know, in the launching of the Fourth International in 1938. The Transitional Programme, which remains the keystone of today's programme of the world Trotskyist movement, was written by Trotsky in collaboration with the leaders

DOCUMENT

The SWP Open Letter Of 1953

We reprint below the complete text of "A Letter To Trotskyists Throughout The World", the famous "Open Letter" published by the SWP in November, 1953. It was on this fundamental basis that the International Committee was formed. The political essence of Pabloism described in this document survived the man Pablo and was the basis upon which the reunification of the SWP with Mandel and Company took place.

of the SWP and at his request was submitted by them for adoption at the Founding Congress.

The intimacy and thoroughness of the collaboration between Trotsky and the leadership of the SWP can be judged from the record of the struggle in defence of orthodox Trotskyist principles in 1939-40 against the Petty-Bourgeois Opposition headed by Burnham and Schachtman. That record has had a profound influence in shaping the Fourth International in the past 13 years.

After the murder of Trotsky by an agent of Stalin's secret police, the SWP took the lead in defending and advocating his teachings. We took the lead not from choice, but from necessity—the second world war forced the orthodox Trotskyists underground in many countries, especially in Europe under the Nazis. Together with Trotskyists in Latin America, Canada, England, Ceylon, India, Australia and elsewhere we did what we could to uphold the banner of orthodox Trotskyism through the difficult war years.

With the end of the war, we were gratified at the appearance in Europe of Trotskyists from the underground who undertook the organizational re-constitution of the Fourth International. Since we were barred from belonging to the Fourth International by reactionary laws, we placed all the greater hope in the emergence of a leadership capable of continuing the great tradition bequeathed to our world movement by Trotsky. We felt that the young, new leadership of the Fourth International in Europe must be given full confidence and support. When self-corrections of serious errors were made on the initiative of the comrades themselves, we felt that our course was proving justified.

However, we must now admit that the very freedom from sharp criticism which we together with others accorded this leadership helped open the way for the consolidation of an uncontrolled, secret, personal faction in the administration of the Fourth International which has abandoned the basic programme of Trotskyism.

This faction, centred around Pablo, is now working consciously and deliberately to disrupt, split, and break up the historically created cadres of Trotskyism in the various countries and to liquidate the Fourth International.

The Programme of Trotskyism

To show precisely what is involved, let us restate the fundamental principles on which the world Trotskyist movement is built:

- 1) The death agony of the capitalist system threatens the destruction of civilization through worsening depressions, world wars and barbaric manifestations like fascism. The development of atomic weapons today underlines the danger in the gravest possible way.
- 2) The descent into the abyss can be avoided only by replacing capitalism with the planned economy of socialism on a world scale and thus resuming the spiral of progress opened up by capitalism in its early days.
- 3) This can be accomplished only under the leadership of the working class in society. But the working class itself faces a crisis in leadership although the world relationship of social forces was never so favourable as today for the workers to take the road to power.
- 4) To organize itself for carrying out this world-historic aim, the working class in each country must construct a revolutionary socialist party in the pattern developed by Lenin; that is, a combat party capable of dialectically combining democracy and centralism—democracy in arriving at decisions, centralism in carrying them out; a leadership controlled by the ranks, ranks able to carry forward under fire in disciplined fashion.
- 5) The main obstacle to this is Stalinism, which attracts workers through exploiting the prestige of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, only later, as it betrays their confidence, to hurl them either into the arms of the Social Democracy, into apathy, or back into illusions in capitalism. The penalty for these betrayals is paid by the working people in the form of consolidation of fascist or monarchist forces, and new outbreaks of war fostered and prepared by capitalism. From its inception, the Fourth International set as one of its major tasks the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism inside and outside the USSR.
- 6) The need for flexible tactics facing many sections of the Fourth International, and parties or groups sympathetic to its programme, makes it all the more imperative that they know how to fight imperialism and all its petty-bourgeois agencies (such as nationalist formations or trade union bureaucracies) without capitulation to Stalinism; and, conversely, know how to fight Stalinism (which in the final analysis is a petty-bourgeois agency of imperialism) without capitulating to imperialism.

These fundamental principles established by Leon Trotsky retain full validity in the increasingly complex and fluid politics of the world today. In fact the revolutionary situations opening up on every hand as Trotsky foresaw, have only now brought full concreteness to what at one time may have appeared to be somewhat remote abstractions not intimately bound up with the living reality of the time. The truth is that these principles now hold with increasing force both in political analysis and in the determination of the course of practical action.

Pablo's Revisionism

These principles have been abandoned by Pablo. In place of emphasizing the danger of a new barbarism, he sees the drive towards socialism as 'irreversible'; yet he does not see socialism coming within our generation or some generations to come. Instead he has advanced the concept of an 'engulfing' wave of revolutions that give birth to nothing but 'deformed', that is, Stalin-type workers' states which are to last for 'centuries'.

This reveals the utmost pessimism about the capa-

cities of the working class, which is wholly in keeping with the ridicule he has lately voiced of the struggle to build independent revolutionary socialist parties. In place of holding to the main course of building independent revolutionary socialist parties by all tactical means, he looks to the Stalinist bureaucracy, or a decisive section of it, to so change itself under mass pressure as to accept the 'ideas' and 'programme' of Trotskyism. Under guise of the diplomacy required in tactical manoeuvres needed to approach workers in the camp of Stalinism in such countries as France, he now covers up the betrayals of Stalinism.

This course has already led to serious defections from the ranks of Trotskyism to the camp of Stalinism. The pro-Stalinist split in the Ceylon party is a warning to all Trotskyists everywhere of the tragic consequences of the illusions about Stalinism which Pabloism fosters.

In another document, we are submitting a detailed analysis of Pablo's revisionism. In this letter we will confine ourselves to some recent tests that show in the decisive field of action how far Pablo has gone in conciliation to Stalinism and how grave the danger is to the existence of the Fourth International.

With the death of Stalin, the Kremlin announced a series of concessions in the USSR, none of them political in character. In place of characterizing these as nothing but part of a manoeuvre aimed at further retrenchment of the usurping bureaucracy and part of the preparation for a leading bureaucrat to assume the mantle of Stalin, the Pabloite faction took the concessions as good coin, painted them up as political concessions, and even projected the possibility of the 'sharing of power' by the Stalinist bureaucracy with the workers. (*Fourth International*, January-February, 1953, p. 13.)

The 'sharing of power' concept, promulgated most bluntly by Clarke, a high priest of the Pablo cult, was indirectly sanctioned as dogma by Pablo himself in an unanswered but obviously leading question: Will the liquidation of the Stalinist regime take the form, Pablo asks, 'of violent inter-bureaucratic struggles between elements who will fight for the status quo, if not for turning back, and the more and more numerous elements drawn by the powerful pressure of the masses?' (*Fourth International*, March-April, 1953, p. 39.)

This line fills the orthodox Trotskyist programme of political revolution against the Kremlin bureaucracy with a new content; namely, the revisionist position that the 'ideas' and 'programme' of Trotskyism will filter into and permeate the bureaucracy, or a decisive section of it, thus 'overthrowing' Stalinism in an unforeseen way.

In East Germany in June the workers rose against the Stalinist dominated government in one of the greatest demonstrations in the history of Germany. This was the first proletarian mass uprising against Stalinism since it usurped and consolidated power in the Soviet Union. How did Pablo respond to this epochal event?

Instead of clearly voicing the revolutionary political aspirations of the insurgent East German workers, Pablo covered up the counter-revolutionary Stalinist satraps who mobilized Soviet troops to put down the uprising. ('... the Soviet leaders and those of the various "People's Democracies" and the Communist Parties could no longer falsify or ignore the profound meaning of these events. They have been obliged to continue along the road of still more ample and genuine concessions to avoid risking alienating themselves forever from support by the masses and from provoking still stronger explosions. From now on they will not be able to stop half-way. They will be obliged to dole out concessions to avoid more serious explosions in the immediate future and if possible to effect a transition "in a cold fashion" from the present situation to a situation more tolerable for the masses.' (*Statement of the I.S. of the Fourth International*, Published in the *Militant*, July 6.)

Instead of demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops—the sole force upholding the Stalinist government—Pablo fostered the illusion that 'more ample and genuine concessions' would be forthcoming from the Kremlin's gauleiters. Could Moscow have asked for better assistance as it proceeded to monstrously falsify the profound meaning of those events, branding the workers in revolt as 'fascists' and 'agents of American imperialism', and opening a wave of savage repression against them?

The French General Strike

In France, in August the greatest general strike in the history of the country broke out. Put in motion by the workers themselves against the will of their official leadership, it presented one of the most favourable openings in working class history for the development of a real struggle for power. Besides the workers, the farmers of France followed with demonstrations, indicating their strong dissatisfaction with the capitalist government.

The official leadership, both Social Democrats and Stalinists, betrayed this movement, doing their utmost to restrain it and avert the danger to French capitalism. In the history of betrayals it would be difficult to find a more abominable one if it is measured against the opportunity that was present.

How did the Pablo faction respond to this colossal event? They labelled the action of the Social Democrats a betrayal—but for the wrong reasons. The betrayal, they said, consisted of negotiating with the government behind the backs of the Stalinists. This betrayal, however, was a secondary one, deriving from their main crime, the refusal to set out on the road to taking power.

As for the Stalinists, the Pabloites covered up their betrayal. By that action they shared in the Stalinist betrayal. The sharpest criticism they found themselves capable of uttering against the counter-revolutionary course of the Stalinists, was to accuse them of 'lack' of policy.

This was a lie. The Stalinists had no 'lack' of policy.

Their policy was to maintain the status quo in the interests of Kremlin foreign policy and thereby to help bolster tottering French capitalism.

But this was not all. Even for the internal party education of the French Trotskyists Pablo refused to characterize the Stalinist role as a betrayal. He noted 'the role of brake played, to one degree or another, by the leadership of the traditional organizations—a betrayal is a mere 'brake'!—but also their capacity—especially of the Stalinist leadership—to yield to the pressure of the masses when this pressure becomes powerful as was the case during these strikes.' (*Political Note No. 1.*)

One might expect this to be sufficient conciliation to Stalinism from a leader who has abandoned orthodox Trotskyism but still seeks the cover of the Fourth International. However, Pablo went still further.

The Infamous Leaflet

A leaflet of his followers addressed to the workers at the Renault plant in Paris declared that in the general strike the Stalinist leadership of the CGT (main French trade union federation) 'was correct in not introducing demands other than those wanted by the workers'. This in face of the fact that the workers by their actions were demanding a Workers and Farmers Government.

Arbitrarily separating the Stalinist-headed unions from the Communist Party—evidence of the most mechanical thinking or evidence of deliberate design in covering up the Stalinists?—the Pabloites declared in their leaflet that so far as the significance of the strike and its perspectives were concerned 'this point only concerned the trade union secondarily. The criticism to make on this point does not apply to the CGT which is a trade union organization, which must first and foremost act as such, but to the parties whose role it was to point out the deep political significance of this movement and its consequences'. (Leaflet 'To the Workers' Organizations and to the Workers of Renault', dated September 3, 1953. Signed by Frank, Mestre and Privas.)

In these statements we see the complete abandonment of everything Trotsky taught us about the role and the responsibilities of the trade unions in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism.

Then the Pabloite leaflet 'criticizes' the French Communist Party for its 'absence of line', for simply placing itself 'on the level of the trade union movement instead of explaining to the workers that this strike was an important stage (1) in the crisis of French society, the prelude (1) to a vast class struggle, where the problem of workers power would be posed in order to save the country from capitalist swindling and open the way to socialism.'

If the Renault workers were to believe the Pabloites, all that the perfidious French Stalinist bureaucrats were guilty of was a trace of syndicalism instead of a deliberate betrayal of the biggest general strike in the history of France.

Pablo's approval of the policy of the CGT leadership seems scarcely credible, yet there is the inescapable fact staring one in the face. In the biggest general strike ever seen in France, Pablo blandly puts as 'correct', a French version of Gompers' bourgeois policy of keeping the unions out of politics. And this in 1953!

If it is incorrect for the CGT leadership to advance political demands in consonance with objective needs, including formation of a Workers and Farmers Government, then why is the Socialist Workers Party demanding of the present-day Gompers of the American trade union movement that they organize a Labour Party? A Labour Party that would aim at putting a Workers and Farmers Government in power in the United States?

Pablo's rubber-stamp OK appears in a still stranger light when we remind ourselves that the CGT leadership happens to be highly political. At the slightest gesture from the Kremlin, it is prepared to call the workers out on no matter what wild political adventure. Recall, for instance, its role in the events initiated by the anti-Ridgway demonstrations last year. These Stalinist trade union figures did not hesitate to call for strikes to protest the arrest of Duclos, a leader of the Communist Party.

The fact is that the CGT leadership revealed its highly political character once again in the general strikes. With all the skill of years of perfidy and double dealing, it deliberately tried to head off the workers, to stifle their initiative, to prevent the workers' political demands from breaking through. The Stalinist trade union leadership consciously betrayed. And it is this course of betrayal that Pablo calls 'correct'.

But even this does not complete the account. One of the principal aims of the Pabloite leaflet is to denounce French Trotskyists who conducted themselves in the Renault plant during the strike as genuine revolutionists. It specifically names two comrades who have 'been expelled from the Fourth International and its French Section for more than a year'. It states that this 'group has been expelled for reasons of indiscipline; and the orientation which it has followed, especially in the course of the last strike movement, is opposed to that actually defended by the PCI (French Section of the Fourth International)'. The reference to the 'group' is actually to the majority of the French Section of the Fourth International which was arbitrarily and unjustly expelled by Pablo.

Has the world Trotskyist movement ever before heard of such a scandal as officially denouncing Trotskyist militants to Stalinists and providing rationalizations to the workers for an abominable Stalinist betrayal?

It should be noted that the Pabloite denunciation of these comrades before the Stalinists follows the verdict of a workers' tribunal acquitting the Trotskyists in the Renault plant of slanders levelled at them by the Stalinists.

The American Pabloites

The test of these world events is sufficient, in our opinion, to indicate the depth of Pabloite conciliationism towards Stalinism. But we would like to submit for public inspection of the world Trotskyist movement some additional facts.

For over a year and a half, the Socialist Workers Party has been engaged in a struggle against a revisionist tendency headed by Cochran and Clarke. The struggle with this tendency has been one of the most severe in the history of our party. At bottom it is over the same fundamental questions that divided us from the Burnham-Schachtman group and the Morrow-Goldman group at the beginning and end of World War II. It is another attempt to revise and abandon our basic programme. It has involved the perspective of the American revolution, the character and role of the revolutionary party and its methods of organization, and the perspectives for the world Trotskyist movement.

During the post-war period a powerful bureaucracy consolidated itself in the American labour movement. This bureaucracy rests on a large layer of privileged, conservative workers who have been 'softened' by the conditions of war prosperity. This new privileged layer was recruited in large measure from the ranks of former militant sectors of the working class, from the same generation that founded the CIO.

The relative security and stability of their living conditions have temporarily paralyzed the initiative and fighting spirit of those workers who previously were in the forefront of all militant class actions.

Cochranism is the manifestation of the pressure of this new labour aristocracy, with its petty-bourgeois ideology, upon the proletarian vanguard. The moods and tendencies of the passive, relatively satisfied layer of workers act as a powerful mechanism transmitting alien pressures into our own movement. The slogan of the Cochranites, 'Junk the old Trotskyism', expresses this mood.

The Cochranite tendency sees the powerful revolutionary potential of the American working class as some far-off prospect. They denounce as 'sectarian' the Marxist analysis which reveals the molecular processes creating new fighting regiments in the American proletariat.

Insofar as there are any progressive tendencies within the working class of the United States they see them only in the ranks or periphery of Stalinism and among 'sophisticated' union politicians—the rest of the class they consider so hopelessly dormant that they can be awakened only by the impact of atomic war.

Briefly, their position reveals: Loss of confidence in the perspective of the American revolution; loss of confidence in the role of the revolutionary party in general and the Socialist Workers Party in particular.

Features of Cochranism

As all the sections of the world movement well know from their own hard and difficult experiences, pressures exist far greater than prolonged war prosperity and the sweep of reaction such as has been bearing down upon us in the United States. But the factor that sustains cadres under the most difficult circumstances is the burning conviction of the theoretical correctness of our movement, the knowledge that they are the living means for advancing the historic mission of the working class, the understanding that to one degree or another the fate of humanity depends on what they do, the firm belief that whatever the momentary circumstances may be, the main line of historic development demands the creation of Leninist combat parties that will resolve the crisis of humanity through a victorious socialist revolution.

Cochranism is the substitution of scepticism and theoretical improvisations and journalist speculations for this orthodox Trotskyist world outlook. It is this that has made the struggle in the SWP irreconcilable in the same sense that the struggle with the Petty-Bourgeois Opposition in 1939-40 was irreconcilable.

The Cochranites have manifested the following features in the course of the struggle:

1) Disrespect for party tradition and the historic mission of the party. Hardly an opportunity is lost by the Cochranites to denigrate, ridicule and preach contempt for the 25-year tradition of American Trotskyism.

2) A tendency to replace principled Marxist politics with unprincipled combinations against the party 'regime'. Thus the Cochranite faction is composed of a bloc of contradictory elements. One group, centred mainly in New York, favours a kind of 'entry' tactic in the American Stalinist movement.

Another group, composed of conservatized union elements, centred primarily in Detroit, sees little to be gained by turning to the Stalinists. It bases its revisionist outlook on an overestimation of the stability and lasting power of the new labour bureaucracy.

Also attracted to Cochranism are individuals grown tired, who can no longer stand the pressures of the present adverse conditions and who are looking for a plausible rationalization with which to retire into inactivity.

The cement binding this unprincipled bloc is common hostility to orthodox Trotskyism.

3) A tendency to shift the party away from what our main arena must be in America, the politically unawakened workers of the mass production industries. The Cochranites, in effect, dropped the programme of transitional slogans and demands which the SWP has used as a bridge toward these workers and argued that the majority in continuing this course was adapting itself to the backwardness of the workers.

4) A conviction that all possibility of the American working class coming forward in radical opposition to American imperialism before the Third World War is ruled out.

5) Gross experimental theorizing with 'left' Stalinism

that boils down to the extravagant belief that the Stalinists 'can no longer betray', that Stalinism includes a revolutionary side which makes it possible for the Stalinists to lead a revolution in the United States, in the process of which they would absorb Trotskyist 'ideas' so that the revolution would eventually 'right itself'.

6) Adaptation to Stalinism in the face of the new events. They support and defend the conciliation to Stalinism found in Pablo's interpretation of the downfall of Beria and the subsequent sweeping purges in the USSR. They repeat all the Pabloite arguments covering the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism in the great uprising of the East German workers and the French general strike. They even interpret the turn of American Stalinism toward the Democratic Party as a mere 'right oscillation' within a 'left turn'.

7) Contempt for the traditions of Leninism in questions of organization. For a time they attempted to set up 'dual-power' in the party. When they were rebuffed by the overwhelming majority of the party at the May 1953 Plenum, they agreed in writing to abide by the rule of the majority and the political line as decided by the Plenum. Subsequently, they broke their agreement, renewing their factional sabotage of party activities on a more feverish and hysterical basis than ever.

Cochranism, whose main features we have indicated above, was never more than a weak minority in the party. It would never have amounted to more than the most feeble and sickly expression of pessimism had it not been for the aid and encouragement it received from Pablo behind the backs of the party leadership.

Pablo's secret encouragement and support was exposed soon after our May Plenum, and since then Pablo has been openly collaborating with the revisionist faction in our party and inspiring them in their campaign of sabotage of party finances, disruption of party work and preparations for a split.

The Pablo-Cochran faction finally culminated this disloyal course with an organized boycott in New York of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration of the party which was combined with a wind-up rally in the New York municipal election campaign.

This treacherous, strike-breaking action constituted, in effect, an organized demonstration against the 25-year struggle of American Trotskyism, and, at the same time, an act of objective aid to the Stalinists who expelled the initiating nucleus of American Trotskyism in October 1928.

The organized boycott of this meeting was, in effect, a demonstration against the campaign of the Socialist Workers Party in the New York municipal election.

All who participated in this treacherous, anti-party action obviously consummated the split which they had long been preparing and forfeited all right to membership in our party.

Formally recording this fact, the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Plenum of the SWP suspended the National Committee members who organized the boycott and declared that all members of the Pablo-Cochran faction who participated in this treacherous, strike-breaking action or who refuse to disavow it have by that fact placed themselves outside the ranks of the SWP.

Methods of the Comintern

Pablo's duplicity in presenting one face to the leadership of the SWP while secretly collaborating with the revisionist Cochranite tendency is a method that is alien to the tradition of Trotskyism. But there is a tradition to which it does belong—Stalinism. Such devices, used by the Kremlin, were instrumental in corrupting the Communist International. Many of us had personal experience with all this in the 1923-28 period.

The evidence is now decisive that this way of operating is not an isolated aberration on the part of Pablo. A consistent pattern is apparent.

For instance, in one of the leading European sections of the Fourth International, an outstanding party leader received an order from Pablo, directing him to conduct himself as one 'who defends until the Fourth World Congress the majority line and the discipline of the International'. Along with the ultimatum Pablo threatened reprisals if his orders were not obeyed.

The 'majority' to which Pablo refers here is simply the modest label he places on himself and the small minority hypnotized by his revisionist novelties. Pablo's new line is in violent contradiction to the basic programme of Trotskyism. It is only beginning to be discussed in many parts of the world Trotskyist movement. Not having been backed by a single Trotskyist organization, it does not constitute the approved official line of the Fourth International.

The first reports we have received indicate outrage at his high-handed attempt to foist his revisionist views on the worldwide organization without waiting for either discussion or a vote. We have already enough information to state that the Fourth International is certain to reject Pablo's line by an overwhelming majority.

Pablo's autocratic demand to a leader of a section of the Fourth International to refrain from criticizing Pablo's revisionist political line is bad enough. But Pablo did not stop there. While trying to gag this leader and prevent him from participating in a free discussion in which the rank and file might benefit from his experience, knowledge and insight, Pablo proceeded to intervene organizationally, attempting to crystallize a minority revisionist faction to conduct war on the leadership of the section.

This procedure is out of the foul tradition of the Comintern as it underwent degeneration under the influence of Stalinism. If there were no other issue than this, it would be necessary to fight Pabloism to a finish to save the Fourth International from internal corruption.

Such tactics have an obvious purpose. They are part of the preparation for a coup by the Pabloite minority. Utilizing Pablo's administrative control, they hope to

impose his revisionist line on the Fourth International and wherever it is resisted to reply by splits and expulsions.

This Stalinist organizational course began, as is now quite clear, with Pablo's brutal abuse of administrative control in his disruptive campaign against the majority of the French section of the Fourth International more than a year and a half ago.

By fiat of the International Secretariat, the elected majority of the French section was forbidden to exercise its rights to lead the political and propaganda work of the party. Instead, the political bureau and the press were put under the control of a 'parity commission'.

At the time, we deeply disapproved this arbitrary action by which a minority was used to arbitrarily overturn a majority. As soon as we heard about it, we communicated our protest to Pablo. However, we must admit that we made an error in not taking more vigorous action. This error was due to insufficient appreciation on our part of the real issues involved. We thought the differences between Pablo and the French section were tactical and this led us to side with Pablo, despite our misgivings about his organizational procedure, when, after months of disruptive factional struggle, the majority was expelled.

But at bottom the differences were programmatic in character. The fact is that the French comrades of the majority saw what was happening more clearly than we did. The Eighth Congress of their party declared that 'a grave danger menaces the future and even the existence of the Fourth International . . . Revisionist conceptions, born of cowardice and petty-bourgeois impressionism have appeared within its leadership. The still great weakness of the International, cut off from the life of the sections, has momentarily facilitated the installation of a system of personal rule, basing itself and its anti-democratic methods on revisionism of the Trotskyist programme and abandonment of the Marxist method.' (*La Verite*, September 18, 1952.)

The whole French situation must be re-examined in the light of subsequent developments. The role the majority of the French section played in the recent general strike demonstrated in the most decisive way that they know how to uphold the fundamental principles of orthodox Trotskyism. The French section of the Fourth International was unjustly expelled. The French majority, grouped around the paper *La Verite*, are the real Trotskyists of France and are so openly recognized by the SWP.

Particularly revolting is the slanderous misrepresentation Pablo has fostered of the political position of the Chinese section of the Fourth International. They have been pictured by the Pablo faction as 'sectarians', as 'fugitives from a revolution'.

Contrary to the impression deliberately created by the Pablo faction, the Chinese Trotskyists acted as genuine representatives of the Chinese proletariat. Through no fault of theirs they have been singled out as victims of the Mao regime in the way that Stalin singled out for execution the entire generation of Lenin's Bolsheviks in the USSR, emulating the Noskes and Scheidemanns of Germany who singled out the Luxemburges and Liebknechts of the 1918 revolution for execution. But Pablo's line of conciliationism toward Stalinism leads him inexorably to touch up the Mao regime *couleur de rose* while putting grey tints on the firm, principled stand of our Chinese comrades.

What to do

To sum up: The lines of cleavage between Pablo's revisionism and orthodox Trotskyism are so deep that no compromise is possible either politically or organizationally. The Pablo faction has demonstrated that it will not permit democratic decisions truly reflecting majority opinion to be reached. They demand complete submission to their criminal policy. They are determined to drive all orthodox Trotskyists out of the Fourth International or to muzzle and handcuff them.

Their scheme has been to inject their Stalinist conciliationism piecemeal and likewise in piecemeal fashion, get rid of those who come to see what is happening and raise objections. That is the explanation for the strange ambiguity about many of the Pabloite formulations and diplomatic evasions.

Up to now the Pablo faction has had a certain success with this unprincipled and Machiavellian manoeuvring. But the qualitative point of change has been reached. The political issues have broken through the manoeuvres and the fight is now a showdown.

If we may offer advice to the sections of the Fourth International from our enforced position outside the ranks, we think the time has come to act and act decisively. The time has come for the orthodox Trotskyist majority of the Fourth International to assert their will against Pablo's usurpation of authority.

They should in addition safeguard the administration of the affairs of the Fourth International by removing Pablo and his agents from office and replacing them with cadres who have proved in action that they know how to uphold orthodox Trotskyism and keep the movement on a correct course both politically and organizationally.

With fraternal Trotskyist greetings,
National Committee of the SWP.

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